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# The Neighbourhood of Peckham, Southwark : a Study of the Process of Gentrification between 1997 and 2022

Habiba Jelali

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par

**Habiba JELALI**

Le 20 octobre 2023

**The Neighbourhood of Peckham, Southwark:**  
**A Study of the Process of Gentrification between 1997**  
**and 2022**

Directeur de thèse :

Monsieur David FÉE

**JURY**

Mme Emmanuelle Avril (Professeure, université Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris 3), Présidente

M. David FÉE (Professeur, université Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris 3) Directeur

M. Timothy WHITTON (Professeur, université Clermont Auvergne) Rapporteur

Mme Charlotte GOULD (Professeure, université Paris Nanterre), Rapporteuse

Mme Cécile DOUSTALY (Professeure, université de Cergy-Pontoise),

M. Stéphane SADOUX (Maître de conférences, université Grenoble Alpes)

Maison de la recherche, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle, 4 rue des Irlandais, 75005 Paris, France





## Summary

This thesis is about the process of gentrification and how urban policies in London have been playing a major role in the process since the New Labour government in 1997. Various policies which were implemented contributed to a shortage in social housing, encouraged private investments, and intensified the housing crisis in London. Gentrification, or “urban regeneration”, was used as a political tool and a solution to economic decline. Despite advocating for community and social inclusion, these policies created tension between social classes, leading to the displacement of the working classes to areas far from the centre of the capital, and therefore, led to the drastic transformation of neighbourhoods and loss of working-class identity. This study examines the impact of these policies on the Peckham neighbourhood, and is divided into four sections and a total of ten chapters. The first section provides a historical background that explains the housing issues in London, and provides descriptive details of Peckham. The second shows how gentrification was planned and promoted at three different levels: national, regional (Greater London) and local. The third section examines the physical urban and social changes during two decades, and tackles Peckham’s image as constructed by the press. It highlights how gentrification was viewed and created, and how its definition evolved over time on national and local levels. In addition, it shows how artists perceive the neighbourhood, demonstrating their significant role in creating its new identity. The final section focuses on the impact these policies had on Peckham. It examines direct and indirect displacement linked to gentrification and the different forms of resistance and anti-gentrification movements that arose in Peckham.

**Key terms:** gentrification – Peckham – urban policies – housing – displacement.

## Résumé en Français

Cette thèse porte sur le processus de gentrification et la manière dont les politiques urbaines à Londres ont joué un rôle majeur dans le processus depuis le gouvernement néo-travailliste de 1997. Diverses politiques mises en place ont contribué à la pénurie de logement social, ont encouragé les investissements privés, et ont intensifié la crise du logement à Londres. La gentrification, ou la « régénération urbaine », a été utilisée comme un outil politique et une solution au déclin économique. Bien que ces politiques plaident en faveur de la communauté et de l'inclusion sociale, elles créent des tensions entre les classes sociales, ce qui engendre le déplacement des classes populaires vers des quartiers éloignés du centre de la capitale, et ainsi, entraîne des transformations radicales et une perte de l'identité populaire du quartier. Cette étude examine l'impact de ces politiques sur le quartier de Peckham, et est divisée en quatre parties et un total de dix chapitres. La première partie offre un contexte historique expliquant les problèmes de logement à Londres et fournit des détails descriptifs sur Peckham. La seconde partie porte sur la manière dont la gentrification a été planifiée et encouragée à trois niveaux différents : national, régional (le Grand Londres) et local. La troisième partie examine les changements physiques urbains et sociaux, durant deux décennies, et traite de la manière dont l'image de Peckham a été construite par la presse. Elle met en lumière comment la gentrification a été perçue et alimentée, et comment sa définition a évolué au fil du temps au niveau national et local. De plus, elle montre comment les artistes perçoivent le quartier, en démontrant leur rôle significatif dans la création d'une nouvelle identité. La dernière partie porte sur l'impact de ces politiques sur Peckham. Elle examine le déplacement de population direct et indirect lié à la gentrification, les différentes formes de résistance, et les mouvements anti-gentrification qui ont émergé à Peckham.

**Mots clés :** gentrification – Peckham – politiques urbaines – logement – déplacement.

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*To my family*

# Table of Contents

<b>Summary</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Acknowledgments</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>List of figures</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>List of Tables</b> .....	<b>17</b>
<b>List of Abbreviations</b> .....	<b>18</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>19</b>
<b>Part I - Setting the scene</b> .....	<b>39</b>
<b>Chapter 1 - The Housing Context from a Historical Perspective</b> .....	<b>40</b>
<b>1.1. Urban Regeneration – Conceptualization and Contextualisation</b> .....	<b>42</b>
<b>1.2. Different Phases of Urban Regeneration in the UK before 1997</b> .....	<b>43</b>
<b>1.3. The Origin of the Housing Crisis before 1997</b> .....	<b>44</b>
1.3.1. The Impact of the Conservative Government under Margret Thatcher on the Housing Market (1979-1990) .....	46
1.3.2. Major’s Response to Thatcher’s Policies .....	53
<b>Chapter 2 – Introducing Peckham</b> .....	<b>56</b>
<b>2.1. Historical Overview</b> .....	<b>56</b>
<b>2.2. Demographic and Socio-Economic Profile</b> .....	<b>59</b>
2.2.1. Population Trends and Shifts in Demographics .....	59
2.2.2. Income Levels .....	64
<b>2.3. Physical Landscape and Built Environment</b> .....	<b>68</b>
2.3.1. Housing Stock.....	68
2.3.2. Conservation Area .....	73
2.3.3. Institutions: Schools and Churches .....	74

2.3.4. Public Spaces and Transportation.....	74
<b>Part II Production Factors – Three Levels of Urban Policy and Physical Consequences.....</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>Chapter 3 National Policy – 25 Years of Urban Policies since Labour 1997 .....</b>	<b>80</b>
3.1. Urban Policy under The New Labour Government 1997-2010 .....	82
3.2. Urban Policy since the Coalition Government.....	93
3.3. Urban Policy since 2015 to 2022 .....	96
<b>Chapter 4 The Greater London Authority: Addressing the Housing Crisis and Making London a World City .....</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>4.1. Structure and Responsibilities of the GLA .....</b>	<b>101</b>
4.1.1. The Mayor of London .....	102
4.1.2. The Assembly and its Role.....	104
<b>4.2. London as a World City.....</b>	<b>105</b>
4.2.1. Initiatives Implemented since 2000 under Three Mayoralities.....	107
4.2.2. The Olympics 2012 and their Impact on the Capital .....	115
<b>4.3. The Greater London Authority and Housing.....</b>	<b>118</b>
4.3.1. Housing under Livingstone .....	120
4.3.2. Under Boris Johnson.....	123
4.3.3. Under Sadiq Khan .....	125
<b>Chapter 5 The Urban Policy of the Borough of Southwark: Facing the Housing Crisis and Shaping Gentrification .....</b>	<b>131</b>
<b>5.1. The Borough: Structure and Role .....</b>	<b>132</b>
5.1.1. The Structure of a Borough Council.....	133
5.1.2. The Borough’s Role.....	135
<b>5.2. The London Borough of Southwark.....</b>	<b>136</b>
5.2.1. A brief history of the London Borough of Southwark.....	137
5.2.2. Population and Ethnic Diversity .....	139
5.2.3. Wards and Districts .....	141
5.2.4. Households and Housing in Southwark .....	143
<b>5.3. Southwark’s Housing Policy .....</b>	<b>148</b>
5.3.1. Southwark’s Largest Estate Regeneration Schemes.....	150
5.3.2. From “Degeneration” to “Regeneration”: A Critique of Southwark’s Plans.....	154
<b>5.4. Southwark Council Shaping Gentrification .....</b>	<b>157</b>

<b>Chapter 6 Physical Changes in Peckham since 1997.....</b>	<b>167</b>
<b>6.1. Physical Changes .....</b>	<b>168</b>
6.1.1. Peckham Rye Park .....	168
6.1.2. Peckham Coal line.....	170
6.1.3. Peckham Library .....	174
6.1.4. Peckham Arch.....	176
6.1.5. Bellenden Road Regeneration Scheme .....	178
<b>6.2. Commercial Changes: The Shopping Street of Peckham/ the Heart of Peckham.....</b>	<b>180</b>
6.2.1. Rye Lane .....	181
6.2.2. Aylesham Centre .....	183
6.2.3. New Projects to be Implemented in the Neighbourhood .....	186
<b>Conclusion of Part II.....</b>	<b>189</b>
<b>Part III – Beyond Production Factors .....</b>	<b>191</b>
<b>Chapter 7 Image and Discourse: The Press .....</b>	<b>193</b>
<b>7.1. Peckham as a Rough Neighbourhood.....</b>	<b>198</b>
7.1.1. National Coverage .....	198
7.1.2. Local coverage .....	206
<b>7.2. Trendy Peckham .....</b>	<b>214</b>
7.2.1. National Coverage .....	216
7.2.2. Local Coverage.....	219
<b>7.3. Acknowledging gentrification? .....</b>	<b>224</b>
7.3.1. National Coverage .....	225
7.3.2. Local Coverage.....	231
<b>Chapter 8 Art in Peckham: Peckham through the eyes of artists.....</b>	<b>239</b>
<b>8.1. Cultural Scene and Image in Peckham before 2000 .....</b>	<b>242</b>
8.1.1. Artistic Heritage.....	242
8.1.2. Peckham on Television: Early Image and Reputation.....	245
<b>8.2. Art since 2000: Art and the Neighbourhood’s Identity .....</b>	<b>247</b>
8.2.1. Art Galleries and Platforms.....	247
8.2.2. Other Artist Hotspots and Rooftops .....	249
<b>8.3. Artists’ Perspective of the Neighbourhood .....</b>	<b>250</b>
8.3.1. Contrasted Image .....	251

8.3.2.	“Peckham is Changing for the Better” .....	254
8.3.3.	Home and Belonging?.....	258
<b><i>Part IV The Consequences: Resistance and Displacement .....</i></b>		<b>261</b>
<b><i>Chapter 9 Resistance to Gentrification .....</i></b>		<b>263</b>
<b>9.1.</b>	<b>Different Forms of Resistance to Gentrification in London .....</b>	<b>266</b>
9.1.1.	Art Activism .....	267
9.1.2.	Organised Resistance .....	270
<b>9.2.</b>	<b>Resistance in Peckham .....</b>	<b>273</b>
9.2.1.	Individual Resistance in Peckham.....	274
9.2.2.	Organised resistance in Peckham.....	275
9.2.3.	Art Activism in Peckham.....	280
<b><i>Chapter 10 Gentrification-induced Displacement .....</i></b>		<b>287</b>
<b>10.1.</b>	<b>The Notion of Displacement and its Impact .....</b>	<b>289</b>
10.1.1.	The Notion of Displacement in the Process of Gentrification .....	289
10.1.2.	Homing and Un-homing: Displacement’s impact .....	293
<b>10.2.</b>	<b>Displacement in London .....</b>	<b>294</b>
<b>10.3.</b>	<b>Displacement in Peckham: The Working-Class Displacement .....</b>	<b>298</b>
<b>10.4.</b>	<b>Retail Displacement and Replacement in Peckham.....</b>	<b>305</b>
<b><i>Conclusion .....</i></b>		<b>309</b>
<b><i>Bibliography .....</i></b>		<b>313</b>
<b><i>Appendices .....</i></b>		<b>345</b>
<b><i>Index .....</i></b>		<b>370</b>

# List of figures

## Introduction

Figure 1 – Applying the Recommendation of the Integrated Theory by Chris Hamnett on the Neighbourhood of Peckham

## Chapter 1

Figure 1 – Annual Average Change in Real House Prices in OECD Countries (1970-2013)

Figure 2 London House Prices Newly Built Property vs an Established Property

Figure 3- Housing Supply and House prices in England

Figure 4 - London Population since 1931-2030

Figure 5 - Annual Trend in Household Tenure, London, 1981 to 2018

Figure 6 - Average Price of Property (all property types) between December 1997 and June 2017

Figure 7 - New Builds and RTB Sales of Public Housing 1980-81 to 2012-13

## Chapter 2

Figure 1 – Population in Peckham Ward 2011

Figure 2 – Religions in Peckham Ward 2011

Figure 3 – Languages Spoken in Peckham Ward in 2011

Figure 4 – Population in Rye Ward in 2011

Figure 5 - Languages spoken in Rye Ward in 2011`

Figure 6 - Religions in Rye Ward in 2011

Figure 7 - Average Household Income in Peckham Rye in the Year 2001/2002

Figure 8- Average Household Income in Peckham Rye in the Year 2012/2013

Figure 9- Average Household Income in The Lane in the Year 2001/2002

Figure 10- Average Household Income in the Lane in the Year 2012/2013

Figure 11- Average Household Income in Peckham in the Year 2001/2002

Figure 12 - Average Household Income in Peckham in the Year 2012/2013

Figure 13 - Dwellings, Household Spaces, and Accommodation Type in Peckham Ward 2011

Figure 14 - Historical Sold Prices in Peckham from 2009- 2019

Figure 15 - The Two Railway Stations Situated in Peckham: Peckham Rye Station and Queens Road Peckham

### **Chapter 3**

Figure 1- A Summary of the New Vision of Urban Living from the Urban White Paper

### **Chapter 4**

Figure 1 – Elections of Mayors of London since 2000

Figure 2 – Government Estimates of New Build Completions and Net Change in London's Housing Stock, 1960 to 2020

Figure 3 – London Affordable Housing Delivery

### **Chapter 5**

Figure 1- London Boroughs and Districts Map

Figure 2 - The London Borough of Southwark within Inner London and Greater London

Figure 3 – Results of local elections since 1998

Figure 4 - A map of Southwark's ward boundary changes which came into effect on 3 May 2018. The wards in yellow will be represented by two councillors and the pink wards by three.

Figure 5 – Proportions of homes rented from the council

Figure 6 – Housing stock in Southwark between 1981 – 2020

Figure 7 - Breakdown of new homes built in Southwark between 2012/13 and 2015/16

Figure 8 – Heygate Estate Leaseholders Displacement Map

Figure 9 – Gentrification in the Borough of Southwark

### **Chapter 6**

Figure 1 - Two Photographs of the Park when it was created in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century and in 2010

Figure 2 – The Route where the Coal Line will be Located

Figure 3 – Peckham Library Inside and Out

Figure 4 – Peckham Arch

Figure 5 - Bellenden Road before Renewal

Figure 6 – Bellenden Road after Renewal

Figure 7 - Site Map of the Aylesham Centre



## **Chapter 7**

Figure 1 – An article published by *The Guardian* entitled “A Year in Peckham”

Figure 2 – Article published in October 2002 by *The Observer* to spot Future Regenerated/Gentrified Neighbourhoods

Figure 3 – An Article published by The Evening Standard, on May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2000 to emphasise on how trendy Peckham is becoming.

Figure 4 – Article published by *Southwark News* on 5 July 2001, the Copy was found in Southwark Archives

Figure 5- Article found in Southwark Archives entitled “Society fears for Loss of Rich History”

Figure 6 – Article published by *Southwark News* found in Southwark Archives

Figure 7 – Photographs of the Peckham Peace Wall

Figure 8 – Photographs from - “Peckhamania: Out on the Town in London’s Newest Hotspot.”

Figure 9 – Black Icon Portraits Landmark in Peckham

## **Chapter 9**

Figure 1 – Poundland Postcard

Figure 2 – Soho The Bohemian Quarter Postcard

Figure 3 – Peckham Centre Town

# List of Tables

Table 1 - Proportion of Residents by BME Group .....	63
Table 2 - Race and Ethnicity in Southwark, London and England.....	140
Table 3 - Overview of Tenure by Number of Households and as Percentage of all Households .....	143

# List of Abbreviations

**AAAP** – Aylesbury Action Plan

**CPO** – Compulsory Purchase Orders

**GLA** – Greater London Authority

**LBS** – London Borough of Southwark

**LOCOG** – London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games

**LSP** – Local Strategic Partnerships

**NDC** – New Deal for Communities

**NRF** – Neighbourhood Renewal Fund

**PPG3** – Planning Policy Guidance 3

**SC** – Southwark Council

**SLG** – South London Gallery

**SRB** – Single Regeneration Budget

**TfL** – Transport for London

# Introduction

“The process of gentrification, most notably in the past two decades, has since spread to parts of London in which it would have likely been inconceivable to an observer in the past.”<sup>1</sup>

London has experienced significant demographic and urban changes. Housing prices have skyrocketed, making it one of the most expensive cities in Europe to live in. According to Hastings International, an international estate agency, housing prices in the British capital have increased by at least 275% between 2000 and 2022, while the average earnings have only increased by 65% over the whole UK.<sup>2</sup> The demand for housing has significantly outstripped the supply leading to a steep rise in prices. Several factors have contributed to this housing crisis including a growing population, and limited availability of land for new construction, but it is mainly explained through the process of gentrification, a process that is defined as “a process of class and spatial restructuring in which urban neighbourhoods undergo physical and demographic transformations, as working-class and low-income residents are displaced by middle- and upper-class households.”<sup>3</sup>

Gentrification has been pronounced in different neighbourhoods in the twentieth century particularly in east London (for example in Hackney, and Shoreditch), and in northern areas of the city, such as Islington,<sup>4</sup> yet becoming more noticeable in what used to be deprived working-class and multi-ethnic neighbourhoods such as Peckham, a neighbourhood located in south-east London in the London Borough of Southwark. As seen in the above quote taken from a study

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<sup>1</sup> Adam Almeida. “Pushed to the Margins: A Quantitative Analysis of Gentrification in London in the 2010s.” *Runnymede Trust and Class*. 2021, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Backlog. “Average House Prices Since 2000.” *Hastings International*, <[<sup>3</sup> Neil Smith. “The Revanchist City.” \*International Journal of Urban and Regional Research\*, vol. 13, no. 4, 1989, pp. 625-34.](https://www.hastingsinternational.com/content/news/263-london-house-prices-since-2000#:~:text=London%20House%20Prices%20for%20First%2DTime%20Buyers%20Since%202000&text=In%202022%2C%20this%20has%20increased,grown%20by%20at%20least%20275%25.> https://www.hastingsinternational.com/content/news/263-london-house-prices-since-2000#:~:text=London%20House%20Prices%20for%20First%2DTime%20Buyers%20Since%202000&text=In%202022%2C%20this%20has%20increased,grown%20by%20at%20least%20275%25.> Accessed on 25 July 2023.</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

<sup>4</sup> Claire Colomb, “Gentrification and Community Empowerment in East London”, *Whose Urban Renaissance?*, Kate Shaw and Libby Porter (eds), Routledge, 2009, p. 157-166.

about gentrification in London,<sup>5</sup> the process has spread to reach previously deprived and neglected neighbourhoods. These formerly neglected areas, often considered less desirable due to various factors such as high crime rates, deteriorating infrastructure, and socio-economic challenges, have now attracted urban renewal and experienced rapid changes.

In relation to Peckham specifically, formerly associated with high crime rates and violence, this deprived neighbourhood has undergone a significant transformation in recent years. Historically, the district was part of the Metropolitan Borough of Camberwell until 1965 before becoming part of the newly created London Borough of Southwark.<sup>6</sup> Over the last two decades, the area has experienced population growth, with a notable increase between 2001 to 2011 (from 11,262 in 2001, to 14,493 by 2011). The growth rate slowed down slightly in the most recent decade (2011 to 2021) with a figure of 14,785 in 2021.<sup>7</sup> Regarding the occupational distribution of Peckham residents between 2001 and 2011, data indicates a shift in the occupational distribution, with an increase in higher-skilled and professional occupations. For instance, the percentage of “professionals” increased from 10.49% in 2001 to 16.34% in 2011, indicating a significant rise.<sup>8</sup> No precise data was found for 2021, but, the website ILIVEHERE indicated that “Peckham has 20% more higher and intermediate managerial, administrative or professional households than the national average.”<sup>9</sup>

Despite its reputation, Peckham has, surprisingly, begun to attract residents from the middle and upper middle-classes who are now purchasing properties, undertaking renovations, and choosing to establish their homes in the area. This unexpected influx of newcomers has played a part in reshaping the character and dynamics of Peckham, challenging its previous reputation and contributing to its ongoing urban renewal.

Urban changes and transformations in the neighbourhood have become obvious since the beginning of the twenty-first century. This can be seen in media coverage. Newspaper articles

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<sup>5</sup> Adam Almeida. “Pushed to the Margins: A Quantitative Analysis of Gentrification in London in the 2010s.” *Runnymede Trust and Class*, 2021.

<sup>6</sup> Edward Walford, 'Camberwell'. *British History Online*, originally published in Cassell, Petter & Galpin, *Old and New London*, vol. 6, London, 1878, pp. 269-286, <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/old-new-london/vol6/pp269-286>> Accessed 17 April 2018.

<sup>7</sup> The UK Office for National Statistics, found in “Peckham Ward in London.” City Population, <[https://www.citypopulation.de/en/uk/london/wards/southwark/E05011110\\_peckham/](https://www.citypopulation.de/en/uk/london/wards/southwark/E05011110_peckham/)> Accessed 25 July 2023.

<sup>8</sup> VInsight. “Peckham, Southwark: Ward Level Demographics Composition Covering the Last Two Census.” *VInsight*, <<https://vinsights.co.uk/CensusWard/E05000546>> Accessed 25 July 2023.

<sup>9</sup> ILIVEHERE. “Socio-economic statistics for Peckham, Southwark.” ILIVEHERE, <[https://www.ilivehere.co.uk/statistics-peckham-southwark-29814.html#google\\_vignette](https://www.ilivehere.co.uk/statistics-peckham-southwark-29814.html#google_vignette)> Accessed 25 July 2023.

began changing tone around 2005, but this became more obvious around 2011, with headlines shifting from, for example, “violence and disorder” in the neighbourhood to “come and visit the area it is becoming safe.” For example, one of the newspaper articles that attracted attention was published by the *Telegraph* in 2005 and entitled “*Come to Peckham, it’s not nearly as bad as you think.*” The journalist wrote:

*“Forget the eight or nine people machine-gunned outside Chicago’s nightclub a year or two back, Peckham is now a happening place, full of architectural, artistic and culinary interest, where house prices, particularly in the increasingly chi-chi Bellenden Renewal Area, are rocketing.”*<sup>10</sup>

The article invited people to visit the neighbourhood, highlighting that the area is not what it used to be. In 2011, another article was published by *the Guardian* entitled “Let’s Move to Peckham, South London.”<sup>11</sup> This article lists a number of “good” reasons to move to the neighbourhood: good schools, restaurants and bars, and of course, cheap housing.

Urban and physical changes have participated in the shift of the neighbourhood’s image, as underlined in *the Peckham and Nunhead Area Action Plan*:

There have been many changes in the last few decades particularly within Peckham. As part of the Peckham Partnership Programme over 2,000 new Homes and three new parks (Central Venture Park, Jowett Street Park and Calypso Gardens) have been developed in North Peckham.<sup>12</sup>

These urban developments have not only altered the physical landscape of the neighbourhood but also attracted attention from investors, developers, and middle-class individuals seeking new housing opportunities in Peckham. This has resulted in rising property prices and increased living costs, making it challenging for long term residents, particularly those from lower-income backgrounds, to afford housing in the area. It has led to the displacement of some of the neighbourhood’s original residents, and reshaped the identity of the neighbourhood. In another words, such developments have contributed to the process of gentrification.

These rapid changes and the emergence of the process in a deprived neighbourhood such as Peckham make it an intriguing case study warranting further scrutiny and study. Hence, studying Peckham between 1997 and 2022 is highly significant. This timeframe encompasses

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<sup>10</sup> Neil Tweedie. “Come to Peckham, it’s not Nearly as Bad as You Think.” *The Telegraph*, 8 September 2005.

<sup>11</sup> Tom Dyckhoff. “Let’s Move to Peckham, South London.” *The Guardian*, 23 September 2011.

<sup>12</sup> Southwark Council, *Peckham and Nunhead Area Action Plan: Development Plan Document*, November 2014, p. 19.

a crucial period of urban change and development in deprived areas in the British capital. This era includes the arrival of Tony Blair's Labour government in 1997 which emphasised regeneration, neighbourhood renewal and urban renaissance, as well as subsequent years that witnessed an acceleration of gentrification processes. Above all, it marks the creation of a new institution, the Greater London Authority (GLA) and that of the office of Mayor. Thus, this period witnessed major changes in the governance of the capital. The timeframe of this study ends in 2022, as it is a practical end point. Ending research in 2022 allows for a contemporary analysis, making the findings timely and relevant. The deliberate 25-year span allows for a longitudinal analysis that can track the evolution of gentrification in Peckham over time. This period is long enough to observe substantial changes and provide coherent analysis. In addition, Southwark Council has announced future development schemes in Peckham in *The Southwark Plan 2019-2036*,<sup>13</sup> which was adopted in 2022, and which may lead to further urban, physical and social changes; analysing ongoing projects may lack the depth and substantiated insight that is crucial for an academic study.

By focusing on this specific period, the study can capture the key policies, initiatives, and changes that shaped the neighbourhood's physical, social and economic landscapes. It further allows for an effective analysis of the process of gentrification and its impact on residents.

In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms and diverse aspects involved in the process of gentrification in Peckham, it is imperative to begin by grasping the fundamental meaning of 'gentrification' through a clear and well-defined concept. Gentrification is a nuanced process. It has different types and forms and depends on where and when it takes place. It predominantly explains the transformation of a run-down lower-income class area to a renovated higher-income class area, or abandoned areas which are transformed to middle-class neighbourhoods, or, in other cases, areas transformed from middle-class neighbourhoods to upper middle-class neighbourhoods. According to Ruth Glass, the Marxist sociologist who coined the term in 1964 in her book, *London: Aspects of Change*:

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 been 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. Nowadays, many of these houses are being sub-divided into costly flats or 'houselets' [...]. Once this process of 'gentrification'

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<sup>13</sup> Southwark Council. *The Southwark Plan 2019-2036 (for Adoption 2022)*. Southwark Council, 2019.

starts in a district, it goes until all or most of the original working-class occupiers are displaced, and the whole social character of the district is changed.<sup>14</sup>

Glass coined the term to describe and explain the process of the way in which Victorian houses previously occupied by the working class were divided, restored and rented more expensively to people from the middle and upper classes. She combined two words in order to form the word “gentrification”. As Gould argues, Ruth coined the term ‘gentrification’ as the word ‘regeneration’ used so far had not been able to stress the negative consequences of the phenomenon.<sup>15</sup> The first word of the term is “gentry”, a noun denoting the middle or upper classes, and was used to coin “gentrify”, a verb that means to replace the working class by the middle and upper classes. The second part of the word is the suffix “-cation” which means action or a process. Gentrification is therefore the process of transforming a neighbourhood into a middle-class area by attracting wealthier residents and introducing amenities that cater to their preferences. The process often involves the renovation of housing stock, leading to increased property value and rental yield, making the neighbourhood less affordable for existing lower-income residents. As property prices increase, long-term residents are often priced out of an area and face indirect displacement. A form of direct displacement can be perceived in ongoing gentrified neighbourhoods when low-income tenants are forced to leave their homes. As property values rise, landlords seeking to capitalise on increased demand may employ tactics such as significant rent hikes, or non-renewal of tenancy agreements. In extreme cases, landlords wishing to evict tenants in order to rent or sell their properties for increased profit, may resort to harassment to force them to leave, a phenomenon referred to as Rachmanism.<sup>16</sup>

Direct or indirect displacement contributes to the transformation of a neighbourhood’s socio-economic composition, as lower-income residents are forced to seek housing in less expensive areas, while middle-class individuals and households move in, reshaping the neighbourhood’s demography and character.

Even though Ruth Glass coined the phrase “gentrification” and provided a definition for the process in the 1960s, she also acknowledged that the process of gentrification had already

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<sup>14</sup> Ruth Glass. *London: Aspects of Change*. MacGibbon and Kee, 1964, p. xvii-xix.

<sup>15</sup> Charlotte Gould. "Britain's Pop Ups." *InMedia: the French Journal of Media and Media Representations in the English-Speaking World*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2020.

<sup>16</sup> Rachmanism refers to the exploitative practices of unscrupulous landlords or property owners, named after Peter Ruchman, a notorious figure in the housing market in London during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.



existed for a long time and had been observed in various forms. Historically,<sup>17</sup> similar processes with different labels had been seen in cities such as New York (“brownstoning”), San Francisco (“red-brick-chic”) and Toronto (“whitewalling”). The term has since evolved and expanded to encompass various types of gentrification, with forms and causes beyond its original definition, which is referred to as ‘classical gentrification’<sup>18</sup> or ‘first-wave gentrification’. The evolving nature of the term reflects the ongoing development and understanding of the complex phenomenon of gentrification.

A simple definition for this complex process was provided by Lees, Slater and Wyly:<sup>19</sup> “Gentrification [is] the transformation of a working class or vacant area of the central city into middle-class residential or commercial use.” As with many other researchers, these scholars link the process to class and to central areas of cities. However, it is crucial to note that gentrification can extend beyond the central areas of a city and encompass peripheral areas as well.

It is also important to understand that the process is complex. According to Robert A. Beauregard, a professor of Urban Planning and Presentation at Columbia GSAPP, and an expert in urbanization in the United States, attempts to explain the term, should avoid a simple definition. He claims that “[d]ifferent layers of meaning still clothe the historical specificity of gentrification, and mask the particular confluence of societal forces and contradictions which account for its existence.”<sup>20</sup> Anne Clerval, a French geographer, supported this idea and explained that the meaning had continued to change and evolve since the 1960s. For instance, during the 1960s, the term was formulated by Glass to criticize the process that excludes and displaces the working class, and pushes them far from the centre of the city. During the 1970s and 1980s, the term began to include resistance, and since the 1990s it has become closely connected with reference to the housing crisis.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Loretta Lees, et al. *Gentrification*. Routledge, 2008. p. 6.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>19</sup> Loretta Lees, et al. *The Gentrification Reader*. Routledge, 2010, p. xv.

<sup>20</sup> Robert A. Beauregard. “The Chaos and Complexity of Gentrification”, in Smith, N. and P. Williams (eds.) *Gentrification of the City*, 1986, and in Lees, Loretta, Tom Slater, and Elvin Wyly, *The Gentrification Reader*. Routledge, 2010, p. 11.

<sup>21</sup> Anne Clerval. « La gentrification à Paris intra-muros : dynamiques, spatiales, rapports sociaux et politiques publiques. » Diss. Université Paris 1-Panthéon Sorbonne, 2008, sous la direction de Petros Petsimeris et Catherine Rhein. « La notion de gentrification apparaît donc comme un cadre théorique utile à l’analyse des transformations sociales et urbaines de l’espace parisien, » p. 6.

As explained, the term “gentrification” has negative connotations as it leads to the displacement of lower-income residents from their previous homes, hence creating social exclusion and division. The process of gentrification is frequently associated with deprived neighbourhoods in inner cities going through urban and social changes. It is a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon influenced by a range of factors such as local history, economic conditions and government policies, and can be accounted for by various theories and explanations.

### **Gentrification: Forms, Causes, and Different Phases**

Beside the classic gentrification that was defined by Glass, other forms of the process have been conceptualized by other scholars, such as “New-Build gentrification”. This form has several characteristics in common with classic gentrification but without the displacement of former residents. For example, housing projects that occur in brownfields are considered new-build gentrification.

Such projects are considered as a form of gentrification because they share a series of features with classic gentrification: (i) reinvestment of capital in inner cities, (ii) social upgrading of locale by incoming high-income groups, (iii) landscape changes, and (iv) direct or indirect displacement of low-income groups. [...]. As the brownfield areas concerned are usually not inhabited, the displacement of lower-status populations is mainly indirect.<sup>22</sup>

Rural gentrification, mentioned by Parsons in 1980,<sup>23</sup> presents a form of gentrification that challenges previous explanations of the process primarily tied to inner cities. While earlier definitions associated gentrification with urban areas, rural gentrification demonstrates that the phenomenon can also occur in countryside settings. It shares similar characteristics with urban or classic gentrification, such as middle-class households moving into appealing rural areas. However, unlike urban gentrification, rural gentrification does not involve displacement, but rather presents affordability challenges for low-income households who cannot afford to reside in these desirable areas. Some may argue that this form of gentrification does not fit within the traditional understanding of the term.

Super-gentrification is a particular form of the process. It is the gentrification of an already gentrified neighbourhood. It demonstrates that gentrification may not have an ending, but rather a continuation. It “show[s] that super-gentrification has particular causes and effects that are

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<sup>22</sup> Patrick Rérat, et al. “New Forms of Gentrification: Issues and Debates.” *Population, Space and Place*, vol. 16, no. 5, 2009, p. 36.

<sup>23</sup> David Parsons. “Rural Gentrification: The Influence of Rural Settlement Planning Policies.” *Department of Geography Research Paper 3*, University of Sussex, 1980, and mentioned as well in Loretta Lees, et al. *Gentrification*, London: Routledge, 2008, p. 129.

different to those associated with classic gentrification that has progressively taken over much of inner London over the last 30 or 40 years.”<sup>24</sup> It was highlighted by Lees in 2006 in Barnsbury, inner London, an area which witnessed three waves of gentrification.

Other forms<sup>25</sup> of gentrification were constructed such as studentification (urban and economic changes affected by students), commercial gentrification (the gentrification of commercial areas and streets), tourism gentrification (urban and economic changes linked to tourists in the case of the emergence of activities and services that target tourists specifically), provincial gentrification and many others. All these definitions show the complexity of gentrification.

Besides the different forms, there are different phases of gentrification as will be visible in this thesis. For instance, first stage models of gentrification were developed by Clay<sup>26</sup> in the late 1980s in order to explain the different stages of the process. Clay divides gentrification into four stages. The first stage represents the beginning of gentrification. It starts with small groups from the middle class buying cheap housing, moving into the neighbourhood in question and renovating the dwelling for personal use. This stage does not show displacement of existing residents. The second stage includes a second-wave of newcomers. These newcomers buy cheap housing, renovate it for sale or rental, renovation spreads, and some displacement is perceived. The third stage is identified when the area attracts individual investors and media attention: “Physical improvements become even more visible because of their volume and because of the general improvements they make to the whole area. Prices begin to escalate rapidly,”<sup>27</sup> and tension between existing and new residents is detected. Displacement of working-class residents continues, which leads to the fourth stage. The fourth stage does not represent the end of the process but a continuation. At this stage, services and commercial activities that target the new residents begin to emerge and spread.

The process of gentrification has become one of the daily issues in the largest cities worldwide. Gentrification has been theorized by geographers and researchers creating a global debate, not only in terms of definitions, but also in identifying its causes. Three major approaches were developed in the late twentieth century: Neil Smith studied gentrification in the United States

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<sup>24</sup> Tim Butler and Loretta Lees, “Super-gentrification in Barnsbury, London: Globalization and Gentrifying Global Elites at the Neighbourhood Level”, *Transactions of The Institute of British Geographers*, Vol. 31, Issue 4, December 2006, p. 467–487.

<sup>25</sup> Loretta Lees, *Gentrification*. Routledge, 2008, p. 130.

<sup>26</sup> Phillip L. Clay, “The Mature Revitalized Neighbourhood: Emerging Issues in Gentrification”, Loretta Lees, et al. *The Gentrification Reader*. Routledge, 2010, p. 37-38

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

and developed his theory of “Rent Gap”. David Ley examined the process in Canada and came up with the “New Middle Class” theory and the importance of education. Finally, Chris Hamnett tried to explain the reasons for the emergence of this phenomenon in London, and came up with the “Integrated theory”, based on the reasons behind the appearance of this process in a specific area.

One of the main theorists is Neil Smith, a Scottish geographer and academic, who developed a gentrification theory called the “Rent Gap” applicable to late 1970s American cities. This theory is based on an economic explanation and a Marxist perspective. According to Smith, “[g]entrification, briefly defined as the transformation of inner-city working-class and other neighbourhoods to middle- and upper-class residential, recreational, and other uses, is clearly one means by which the rent gap can be closed, wholly or partially.”<sup>28</sup> The definition, he posits, is similar to the classic gentrification defined by Glass. However, Smith believes that the previous literature on the process was narrowed down and divided into two areas, cultural and economic: cultural factors linked to the emergence of a new class, and the economic factors related to the rapid increase in housing. However, these factors are not sufficient to detect the process in a particular place. He explains that:

To explain gentrification according to the gentrifier’s actions alone, while ignoring the role of builders, developers, landlords, mortgage lenders, government agencies, real estate agents, and tenants, is excessively narrow. A broader theory of gentrification must take the role of *producers as well as consumers into account*, and when this is done, it appears that the needs of production - in particular the need to earn profit are a more decisive initiative behind gentrification than consumer preference.<sup>29</sup> [*Italics mine.*]

Smith examines the process through three different scales: social change (the neighbourhood), physical change (housing stock), and economic change (land and housing markets), focusing mainly on the latter. According to Smith, gentrification is related to unequal development and a housing crisis and takes place mainly in city centres. He explains the process by focusing on geographical tension created by investment and investors (public or private: e.g. politicians, bankers, real estate agents) who invest in the inner city, and their participation in the development of the area which leads to the process of gentrification. He links capitalism and

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<sup>28</sup> Neil Smith. “Gentrification and the Rent Gap.” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 77, No. 3, September 1987, p. 462.

<sup>29</sup> Smith Neil, “Toward a Theory of Gentrification: A Back to the City Movement by Capital, not People.” *Journal of the American Planning Association*, vol. 45, No. 4, 1979, p. 540.

the emergence of new markets to the evolution of the process. Smith provides several examples of factors that lead to this gentrification.<sup>30</sup>

- Private investors who invest in cheap housing, renovate it and sell it at a higher price
- Individual landlords who buy, renovate and rent their properties at a higher price
- Owners who buy cheap housing for themselves, then renovate and occupy it

Smith highlights the importance of the centrality of the neighbourhoods or to their accessibility and proximity to inner cities, saying that this is key to drawing investors' attention to a particular neighbourhood and their interest in investing and renovating deteriorated housing in a deprived area which creates a rent gap thereafter.

Slater, another pioneer in the field of geography and a lecturer in urban studies at Edinburgh University, defends this rent gap theory. He concludes that, "The rent gap, taken seriously, forces analysts to confront class struggle, and the structural violence visited upon so many working class people in contexts these days that are usually described as 'regenerating' or 'revitalizing'."<sup>31</sup> He highlights that gentrification is not merely a neutral or benevolent process of urban renewal but can perpetuate social injustice by marginalising and displacing working-class communities.

Slater clarifies the rent gap theory in three ways.<sup>32</sup> First, he believes that the theory is not only about the economy but also about the role played by the state in economic conditions that contribute to gentrification. Second, the theory helps in understanding the circulation of interest-bearing capital in urban land markets, with the focus here on investments and investors. Third, the theory is not a predictive model that anticipates the process of gentrification in neighbourhoods.

Even though this theory was and has been one of the fundamental explanations of the process that helped in its understanding, Smith's theory led to misunderstandings, occasional errors, and was criticized as limited and lacking an explanation of the role of reproduction and consumption: "[it] begin[s] and end[s] in the economic sphere of production, and does not

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<sup>30</sup> Anne Clerval. « La gentrification à Paris intra-muros : dynamiques, spatiales, rapports sociaux et politiques publiques », Diss. Université Paris 1-Panthéon Sorbonne, 2008, sous la direction de Petros Petsimeris et Catherine Rhein. p. 25.

<sup>31</sup> Tom Slater, "Clarifying Neil Smith's Rent Gap Theory of Gentrification." *Tracce Urbane, Italian Journal of Urban Studies*, Vol. 1, 2017, p. 97.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89-93.

consider how changes in these other two spheres structure, produce and even represent gentrification. Needless to say, these three weaknesses are interrelated.”<sup>33</sup>

The Rent Gap theory was also criticised by David Ley, another geographer and a professor at the University of British-Columbia in Canada, in his article “The Rent Gap Revisited”,<sup>34</sup> published in 1987, for focusing only on income and rent while education and occupation are also very important and can be indicators of gentrification. He goes further and adapts a theory, which is the emergence of a new middle class.

David Ley worked on gentrification in Canadian neighbourhoods and wrote about the emergence of a “new middle class” theory in the 1980s. He focused mainly on urban development. He relates gentrification to post-industrial societies, the increase of service employment and the creation of a new white-collar class. “[He] sees property activity as stimulated by the market power of the growing white-collar labour force, which is a product of changes in economic and employment structure.”<sup>35</sup> Ley believes that the process is not related to investors who invest in properties but simply to individuals, a new middle class,<sup>36</sup> who seek proximity to the inner city. Therefore, for Ley, gentrification is based on socio-economic factors.

He mainly focuses on individuals and their choices to develop devalued areas that lead to gentrification, and the creation of a new middle class, the “gentrifiers”. Some researchers would go even further and categorize these gentrifiers. For example, D. Rose (1984)<sup>37</sup> divides gentrifiers according to their financial status: artists and middle-class intellectuals may move to cheap areas and may start the process of gentrification. They would then attract members from their own demographic to the area.

Ley also highlights the indirect role played by artists in this process, as they are also considered part of the middle-class population. He claims that “[m]ore generally, the intentionalities of the artist and the entrepreneur seem to move opposite in directions. The anti-bourgeois, anti-

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<sup>33</sup> Robert A. Beauregard. “The Chaos and complexity of gentrification.” *Gentrification of the City*, Routledge, 2013, pp. 35-55, p. 13.

<sup>34</sup> David Ley. “Reply: The Rent Gap Revisited.” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, vol. 77, No. 3, 1987.

<sup>35</sup> Chris Hamnett. “The Blind Men and the Elephant: The Explanation of Gentrification.” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, vol. 16, No. 2, 1991, p. 177.

<sup>36</sup> David Ley. “Alternative Explanations for Inner-City Gentrification: A Canadian Assessment.” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, vol. 76, No. 4, 1986, p. 522.

<sup>37</sup> Rose Damaris. “Rethinking gentrification: Beyond the Uneven Development of Marxist urban Theory.” *Society and Space*, vol. 2, No. 1, 1984.

conformist dispositions of the artist sit uneasily with the servant of a mass society.”<sup>38</sup> Artists, as they look for authentic areas in city centres to fulfil their interest, attract a wealthier population such as commercial entrepreneurs who themselves modify the neighbourhoods as their “creative” businesses target creative artists.

Ley underlines the necessity of the cultural field in the process. He studies gentrifiers’ motivations and behaviours, and focuses on their choice of location which modifies the housing market. This illustrates another major difference between the Rent Gap theory and Ley’s theory. However, just like Smith’s theory’s, Ley’s theory was criticized as insufficient to determine the existence or the emergence of the process.

Chris Hamnett, a professor of geography at King’s College London, explains the process of gentrification differently by adopting an integrated theory of both economic and cultural theory: the rent gap and the emergence of a new middle class. Hamnett identifies the theories of both Smith and Ley as complementary, considering them both necessary in explaining the process of gentrification. Because of the complexity of the process, Hamnett believes that the term has created a battleground between geographers, saying:

[...] the most important explanation for the prominence of gentrification in contemporary literature is that it represents one of the key theoretical and ideological battlegrounds in urban geography, and indeed in human geography as a whole, between the liberal and humanists who stress the key role of choice, culture, consumption and consumer demand, and the structural Marxists who stress the role of capital, class production and supply.<sup>39</sup>

Hamnett tackles the issue of gentrification from a different perspective. His approach is not limited to a single theory that explains the process. He agrees with Smith regarding how gentrification is related to the production of urban space and the important role played by the housing market. He also agrees with Ley, who emphasizes the importance of gentrifiers and their consumption and reproductive orientations (motives) that lead to changes in the economic and urban structure, which is followed by the emergence of gentrification. According to his study and, “[l]ooking at Ley’s early work in general, it can be argued that its strength lies in its focus on the changes in the social and spatial divisions of labour, and the concentration in a limited number of ‘post-industrial’, service-dominated cities, of a professional and managerial

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<sup>38</sup> David Ley. “Artists, Aestheticisation and the Field of Gentrification.” *Urban Studies*, vol. 40, No. 12, 2003, p. 2530.

<sup>39</sup> Chris Hamnett. “The Blind Men and the Elephant: The Explanation of Gentrification.” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, vol. 16 No. 2, 1991, p. 174.

elite.”<sup>40</sup> He also agrees with the rent gap and the obvious link between land and property value, positing that:

The key for Smith is the relationship between land and property value. When depreciation of the existing structures has proceeded far enough, the point is reached where the capitalized ground rent of site or neighbourhood is less than its potential ground rent in its ‘highest and best use’. This is the rent gap, and according to Smith, gentrification or redevelopment, can occur when the gap is wide enough to ensure profit.<sup>41</sup>

The rent gap does not, however, fully explain the gentrification process, a point which Hamnett and Beauregard agree on,<sup>42</sup> as the process is more complex and cannot be applied to every gentrified area. Therefore, Hamnett believes that both theories are limited and that each geographer possesses only ‘part’ of the answer, as “each of the major theories has perceived only parts of the elephant of gentrification.”<sup>43</sup> In other words, the two individual theories do not completely explain the origin of the process, and that the aforementioned two theorists have only focused on one aspect and neglected the other, making their theories insufficient to solely explain this area of study. Instead, Hamnett explains the emergence of gentrification through four requirements: <sup>44</sup>

- 1- The emergence of suitable areas for gentrification
- 2- The emergence of potential gentrifiers
- 3- The attractiveness of the area (the environment: central and inner city)
- 4- The cultural preference of the area and the services provided

Hamnett focuses on the centrality and the attractiveness of the inner city to potential gentrifiers who renovate and participate in gentrifying a particular neighbourhood and argues that gentrifiers are of primary importance in the process and that they are the agents whose motives to “invest” in inexpensive inner-city housing lead to the social and urban transformation of the gentrified area. Hamnet also highlights the importance of physical renovation of deteriorated housing, believing that this leads to an increase in housing prices, displacement of working-class residents, and to gentrification, and that, “it is the combination of social, physical, and

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.

<sup>42</sup> Robert A Beauregard. “The Chaos and Complexity of Gentrification.” *Gentrification of the City*. Routledge, 2013, p. 13.

<sup>43</sup> Chris Hamnett. “The Blind Men and the Elephant: The Explanation of Gentrification.” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, vol. 16, no. 2, 1991, p. 175.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 186.



economic change that distinguishes gentrification as an identifiable process/set of processes.”<sup>45</sup> He also focuses on the important role played by governments and government policies in redeveloping neighbourhoods, which fund renovation programs to improve housing in deprived areas while attracting investors and developers, thereby leading to increased property value and rental yield, hence creating social inequality.

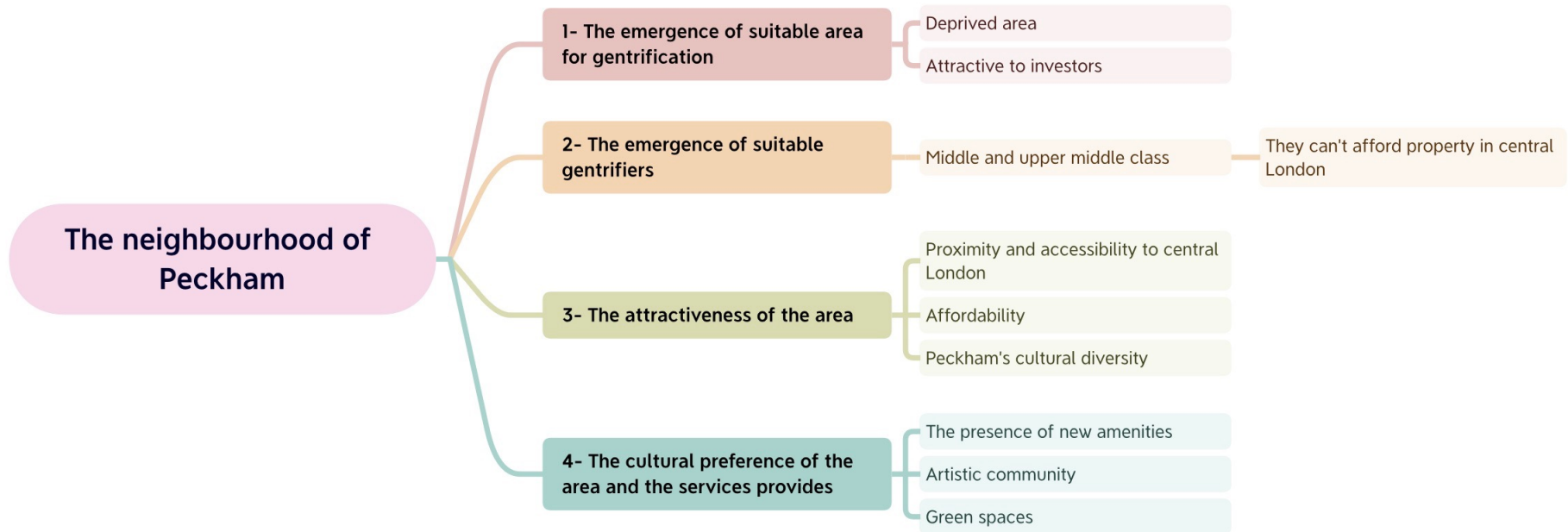
Returning now to Peckham, an area of interest in terms of gentrification for several reasons. It is currently described as a trendy, vibrant, and elegant place to spend your day,<sup>46</sup> compared to its frightening reputation just a decade ago, when it was infamous for gangs and criminal activity. In fact, Peckham meets the four requirements of the integrated theory by Chris Hamnett that contributed to the process (Figure 1). First, Peckham had previously been considered a deprived neighbourhood with its share of social and economic challenges. However, it also possessed certain characteristics that made it suitable for gentrification, such as its location within London and its proximity to transportation links, making it accessible to other parts of the city. It is also a deprived area, so inexpensive to invest in. Second, Peckham caught the attention of middle class and upper middle-class individuals (potential gentrifiers) seeking new housing. The neighbourhood’s proximity to central London, combined with improved perceptions of safety and accessibility, made it an attractive option for those looking for property in the capital while enjoying a more affordable, and vibrant area. Third, Peckham’s cultural diversity (for example its artistic community, independent shops, trendy cafés) and the presence of new amenities and green spaces made the area more desirable and attractive to live in. Fourth, Peckham’s cultural identity and the services provided played an essential role in improving the neighbourhood’s appeal and in contributing to the gentrification process.

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<sup>45</sup> Quoted in Chris Hamnett. “The Blind Men and the Elephant: The Explanation of Gentrification.” p.175-176.

<sup>46</sup> Jordy Dikala. “A Brief History of Peckham.” *South London Club*, South London Club, 28 October 2017, <<https://www.southlondonclub.co.uk/blog/a-brief-history-of-peckham> .> Accessed 2 December 2018.

**Figure 1 – Applying the Recommendation of the Integrated Theory by Chris Hamnett on the Neighbourhood of Peckham**



Regeneration policies and schemes also played an important role in the process of gentrification in Peckham as we shall see. After the Labour government was elected under the leadership of Tony Blair, there was a major focus on regenerating deprived areas and improving residents' living conditions. A fitting example is the publication of *Bringing Britain Together: A National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal*<sup>47</sup> one year after the general election, and the third report published by the *Social Exclusion Unit*, an organisation which was launched on 8 December 1997, a few months after New Labour took office, in order to target deprived neighbourhoods suffering from high unemployment, and crime rates, poor living conditions and inadequate housing. This publication led to the implementation of several regeneration schemes and initiatives that led to the transformation of deprived areas into areas more desirable and attractive to the wealthier classes. In Peckham, Southwark Council also played a significant role in regenerating the area as will be explained further on. Certain schemes implemented by the council led to the reduction of affordable council housing which was not replaced, while attracting private investment, leading to state-led gentrification.

State-led gentrification is indeed another form of gentrification seen when governments (or local authorities) facilitate and promote the transformation of neighbourhoods by attracting higher-income residents through urban regeneration schemes. It is further explained by socially mixed policies being implemented which contribute to attracting middle-class residents, increasing housing prices, and, thereby, the displacement of previously existing working-class residents. According to an earlier study, “[t]enure mixing policies typically entail the introduction of more expensive owner-occupied dwellings and more affluent residents to targeted neighbourhoods, frequently at the cost of affordable rental housing for lower income tenants.”<sup>48</sup>

## Research Question

Visible and rapid urban changes over the preceding 25 years, further accelerating in the last ten years, have made Peckham a relevant area for study, as does the lack of academic research on the subject in this particular neighbourhood, with few articles having been published since

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<sup>47</sup> Social Exclusion Unit. *Bringing Britain Together: A National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal*. HMSO, 1998.

<sup>48</sup> Cody Hochstenbach. "State-led gentrification and the changing geography of market-oriented housing policies." *Housing, Theory and Society*, vol. 34, no. 4, 2017, p. 400.

2014. Media focus on these changes encourages research into an understanding of the gentrification process, with a view to examining ways in which Peckham may be different from other “gentrified” areas. This thesis posits that gentrification in Peckham can be explained more in terms of production factors, and less by those of consumption. The aim, therefore, is to investigate the role played by regeneration schemes and policies implemented by national, regional, and local authorities in Peckham between 1997 and 2022. It examines the impact of these initiatives on the neighbourhood’s development, and the mechanisms of gentrification that have unfolded. Additionally, the study focuses on understanding how these changes have affected the lower-income residents in Peckham. We will seek to measure the extent in gentrification in Peckham by using multiple yardsticks such as housing prices, housing tenures, social composition, income, population displacement and change in Local services and businesses.

By delving into these aspects, the research aims to contribute to the academic discourse surrounding the gentrification of Peckham and shed light on the unique dynamics at play in the area. It seeks to fill the gap in existing research and provide insights into the experiences and challenges faced by lower-income residents amidst the regeneration and gentrification processes.

## **Methodology**

This thesis takes an interdisciplinary approach, combining political science and *civilisation* approaches, as this thesis is part of Anglophone studies and what is called in France *civilisation* (civilisation). Atkinson has highlighted that gentrification is a multifaceted phenomenon that encompasses various dimensions, including economic, geographic, sociologic and political.<sup>49</sup> To address these diverse facets, this research employs a variety of theoretical lenses and methodologies typical of *civilisation*, and its interdisciplinary features.<sup>50</sup> The political approach

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<sup>49</sup> Rowland Atkinson. "Introduction: Misunderstood Saviour or Vengeful Wrecker? The many Meanings and Problems of Gentrification." *Urban Studies*, vol. 40, no. 12, 2003, pp. 2343-2350.

<sup>50</sup> Vincent Latour defines civilization studies as interdisciplinary, integrating insights from history, sociology, anthropology and more. However, its complexity arises from the difficulty in distinguishing civilization scholars from other social science professionals like historians or sociologists whose boundaries have blurred over time due to various fields influencing and blending into one another. Vincent Latour. "De l'interdisciplinarité et du comparatisme en civilisation britannique." *Revue Française de Civilisation Britannique*, vol. 24, no. XXIV-1, 2019.

allows for an examination of the role of government policies, urban planning, and political decision-making in driving the process of gentrification in Peckham. This perspective helps uncover the power dynamics between different actors, such as national governments, local authorities, and their impact on the gentrification process.

The *civilisation* approach also provides insight into the broader cultural and historical context of Peckham and gentrification as it incorporates a sociological perspective in order to understand the deep impacts of the process on the social fabric of the neighbourhood. This sociological lens investigates the intricate social relations, community dynamics and the effects of gentrification on various social groups. Finally, this research also draws on ethnographic methods and tools as it relies on participant observation as a means of collecting data and understanding cultural phenomena.

It was necessary to use a quantitative and qualitative method to scrutinize, understand, and explore the process of gentrification in Peckham, together with its stages and evolution. This approach aimed to provide a nuanced and multi-dimensional analysis of the phenomenon. Quantitative methods were adopted to gather and analyse data related to gentrification. This included variables such as changes in property prices, demographic shifts, and income levels. There was, therefore, a need to study the grey literature that included government and local authority reports, planning materials, community publications and social media posts and blogs. In fact, the grey literature represents a major part of the sources adopted in this study. Academic literature was also essential in order to provide a conceptual and theoretical framework for the different aspects of the process of gentrification in Peckham.

Access to the Southwark Archives and Peckham Library was key. It helped to access different material inaccessible online, such as historical records, documents, photographs, and other valuable sources. Fieldwork was also important. Physically visiting Peckham multiple times over the years was beneficial to observe the physical, social and cultural transformations that were taking place in the neighbourhood. Fortunately, I managed to visit Peckham five times between 2016 and 2022 where I stayed for three to four weeks (2016, 2017, and 2018), and five to ten days (2021 and 2022). These trips helped me to develop a deeper understanding of the neighbourhood's unique characteristics and dynamics, and allowed me to track the progression of the process and its impact. It also allowed me to engage with the locals. In total, more than 40 interviews with residents, and 22 with artists, were conducted.

Semi-structured interviews based on a set of open questions were deployed. This allowed for gathering genuine thoughts and perceptions. According to Adams, an academic and

psychologist who focused and developed semi-structured interviews as [a particularly useful research tool in situations where little is known about the topic of interest - where the topic of interest may be particularly sensitive [...] and where the variability rather than commonality of responses is the focus.]”<sup>51</sup> Given that gentrification is a multifaceted phenomenon and can be considered sensitive, the use of this tool was appropriate for the context.

## **Limitations**

It is important to acknowledge that this study encountered certain limitations that should be taken into consideration. For instance, it was not possible to meet politicians and political figures in order to conduct interviews with them. Several councillors were contacted by email and phone, and during events in of Peckham, but they all refused to be interviewed, particularly after hearing the term “gentrification.” New middle-class residents were also very reluctant to contribute when interviewed, this can be explained by the possibility that they did not want to be labelled gentrifiers, and, therefore, sometimes avoided answering questions, refusing politely.

A further challenge encountered during the writing process was the presence of overlapping topics and ideas, making it difficult to avoid repetition. Despite efforts to maintain coherence and organisation, the interrelated nature of certain themes posed a significant hurdle to ensuring a seamless flow of ideas without duplicating content.

## **Structure**

This thesis is structured into four major sections. The first part, divided into two chapters, provides a background to the study of Peckham. The first chapter summarises the housing context while the second one introduces Peckham. The second part falls into three chapters, and addresses the three levels of policies that influenced gentrification as well as production factors. Chapter 3 tackles 20 years of national urban policies since the election of New Labour under the leadership of Tony Blair in 1997, as well as subsequent governments. It examines how their policies promoted the process of gentrification. Chapter 4 focuses on the role played

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<sup>51</sup> Eike Adams. "The joys and challenges of semi-structured interviewing." *Community Practitioner*, vol. 83, no. 7, 2010, pp. 18-22.

by the Greater London Authority (“GLA”) since its establishment in 2000 and its significant influence in shaping London as a world city and thereby fostering the gentrification process. Chapter 5 examines the role played by the local authority, in this case, Southwark Council. It highlights the Council’s regeneration schemes which, despite advocating for community and social inclusion, favoured wealthier classes and were, therefore, pro-gentrification. Chapter 6 highlights the physical urban and social changes that have occurred in Peckham. It also explores the political initiatives that have triggered these changes, and highlights their role in the gentrification of the neighbourhood.

The third part of this thesis focuses on the constructed image of the neighbourhood that has accompanied these changes. This part is divided into two chapters. Chapter 7 tackles the role played by the written press. Its purpose is to understand how Peckham’s image was constructed through the written press (national, regional and local), and how the gentrification process in the neighbourhood has been perceived over the last two decades. Finally, Chapter 8 focuses on the image constructed and shaped by artists and its evolution over time, as art became part of the neighbourhood’s identity.

The fourth part of this thesis focuses on resisting gentrification as a response to the process and the displacement of the lower-income population, which is one of the impacts. Chapter 9 examines anti-gentrification movements, both spontaneous and organised, within the neighbourhood, including community-based initiatives. Finally, Chapter 10 provides a conceptual framework of the gentrification-induced displacement, and its impact on the working-class population in neighbourhoods undergoing gentrification. The chapter further investigates the decanting process in Peckham, and explores the different forms of displacement experienced within the neighbourhood.

# Part I - Setting the scene

As mentioned in the introduction, this thesis primarily examines policies implemented since 1997, coinciding with the advent of the New Labour government, and the establishment of the new institution, the GLA, three years later. However, in order to understand these policies and their involvement in the process of gentrification, it is essential to understand the contextual background. Hence, this section serves to set the scene and is structured around two brief chapters.

Chapter 1 delves into the housing context from a historical perspective, offering insights into the urban policies that shaped the period between 1945 and 1997. By delving into this historical development and identifying key factors, it aims to provide essential contextual information for the subsequent analysis.

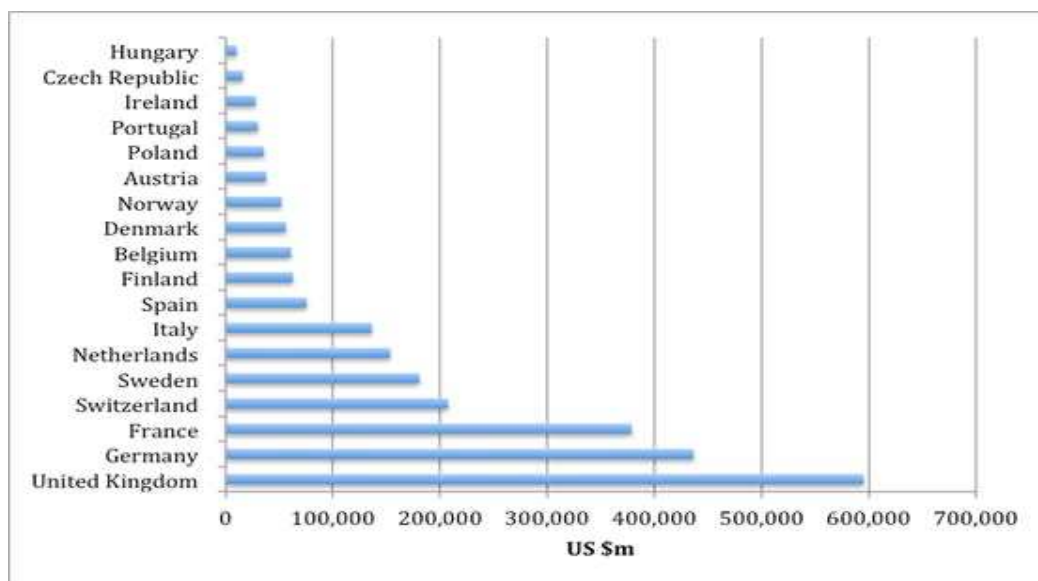
Chapter 2, on the other hand, examines the socio-economic profile and built environment of the neighbourhood of Peckham. Its aim is to provide a larger image of the area in order to understand the broader policy impacts and shifts, laying a detailed exploration of the gentrification process in subsequent sections.



# Chapter 1 - The Housing Context from a Historical Perspective

The UK is considered to have the most developed investment property market in Europe<sup>52</sup> which means much of the country's housing system is subject to private investment. Yet, the UK is one of the countries that suffered most from the housing crisis, sustaining the fastest growth in house prices between 1970 and 2013 compared to other members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operational and Development (OECD) (Figure-1). One reason is linked to demand surpassing supply, creating a shortage of affordable housing.

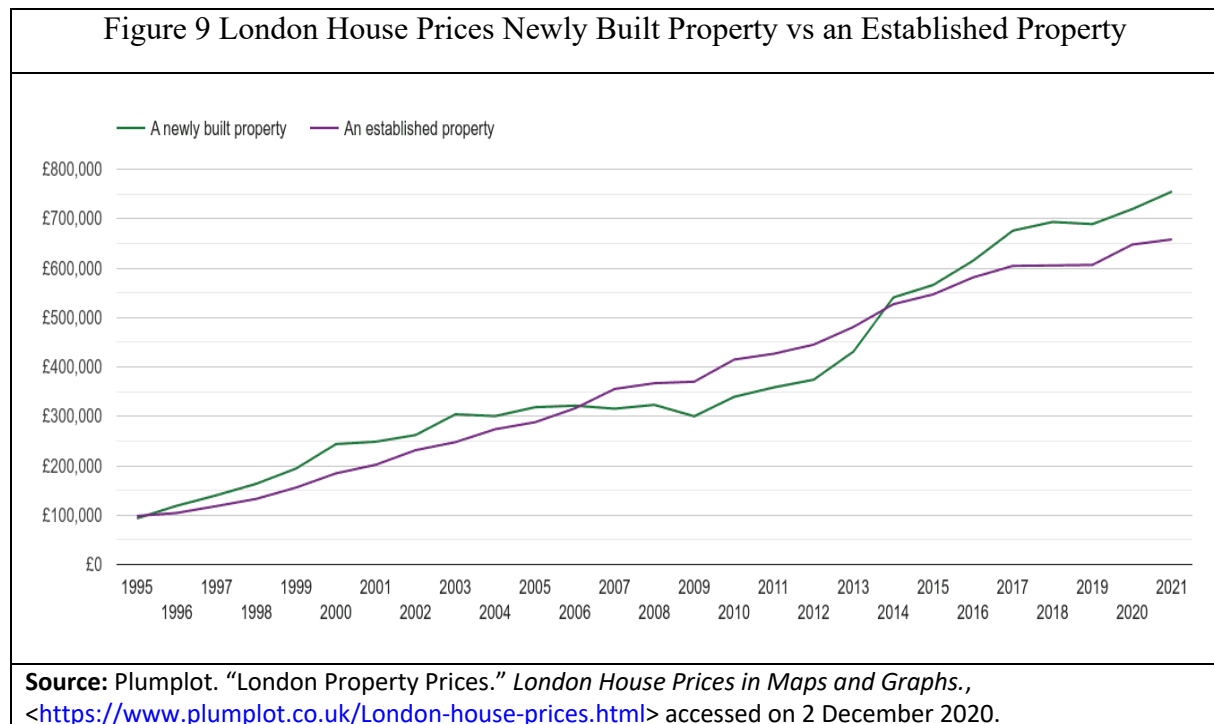
Figure 8 - Annual Average Change in Real House Prices in OECD Countries (1970-2013)



**Source:** Michael Edwards. "Prospects for Land, Rent, and Housing in the UK Cities." *Foresight, Government Office for Science*, 2015. Retrieved from: <[www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/planning/news/2015/jul/government-office-sci-ence-publishes-report-prospects-land-rent-and-housing-in-uk-cities](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/planning/news/2015/jul/government-office-sci-ence-publishes-report-prospects-land-rent-and-housing-in-uk-cities)> accessed on 14 January 2021.

<sup>52</sup> Michael Edwards. "The Housing Crisis and London." *City*, vol. 20, n. 2, 2016, p. 228.

The last three decades have seen London rents and house prices skyrocket at an alarming rate in conjunction with overcrowding and widespread gentrification. The following figure reveals that in the twenty years between 1995 and 2015, prices of both newly built and existing housing had not just doubled or tripled, but had increased sevenfold (from £100,000 in 1995 to approximately £600,000 in 2015). London became the preserve of the affluent while the less fortunate were (and continue to be) priced out.



The Housing Crisis in the UK emerged owing to multiple factors: changing demography, an increase in smaller households, changes to supply and demand, the lack of affordable housing, and the increase in land banking by developers, among others – all exacerbated by continuously failed policies which include unequal distribution of housing and a lack of social housing.

This chapter is divided into three subsections. The first subsection contextualises the term “urban regeneration” which has been used as part of a political discourse. The second subsection provides information about the different phases of urban regeneration in the UK generally, but particularly in the British capital. Finally, the third subsection explains the origin of the housing crisis, which is still a question today.

## 1.1. Urban Regeneration – Conceptualization and Contextualisation

First, a clear definition of urban policy is needed in order to understand the housing crisis and how the government and local authorities addressed it. Urban policies represent a set of strategies, regulations and plans implemented by governments and local authorities in cities and urban areas. They aim to address various aspects of urban issues including social, economic, environmental, and spatial dimensions. According to Andrew Tallon, “Urban policy can be viewed as spatial in that it relates to urban areas and urban processes, and to the populations who live in urban areas, and particularly the resolution of urban problems.”<sup>53</sup>

Studying and understanding the term ‘regeneration’ is also essential in this context as its emergence is linked to the continuous changes, and challenges, faced by towns and cities over time, but also because it is linked to the process of gentrification. According to The World Bank Group, “[o]ne of the unintended consequences of urban regeneration is gentrification.”<sup>54</sup> The terms ‘urban regeneration’ has been used over recent decades to identify a programme or scheme to address urban issues and as part of urban policies. It is a political response to economic social problems by politicians and developers, presented as a policy, scheme or project. The regeneration process can address various economic, physical, and environmental topics such as employment, education and housing. It is considered a continuous process, and “a long-term cycle of activity”<sup>55</sup> that solves particular issues presented at any given time. It is therefore essential to consider the importance of locality: areas, where urban regeneration strategies are implemented, are all unique. As a result, strategies can differ from one place to another, just as urban issues vary in different places

Urban regeneration is an inevitable process. It is claimed that “[n]o town or city is immune from either the external forces that dictate the need to adapt or the internal pressures that are present within urban areas and which can precipitate growth or decline”.<sup>56</sup> In the UK, for example, urban regeneration schemes can be traced back to late-nineteenth and early-twentieth

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<sup>53</sup> Andrew Tallon. *Urban Regeneration in the UK*. Routledge, 2013, p. 4.

<sup>54</sup> The World Bank. “Managing the Potential Undesirable Impacts of Urban Regeneration: Gentrification and Loss of Social Capital.” The World Bank Group, <<https://urban-regeneration.worldbank.org/node/45>.> Accessed on 1 August 2023.

<sup>55</sup> Peter Roberts and Hugh Sykes. eds. *Urban Regeneration: A handbook*. Sage, 1999, p. 6.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

century responses to the London Victorian slums.<sup>57</sup> These slums were neglected, and had poor living conditions, which therefore led to social problems (overcrowding, diseases, etc.). To address these issues and enhance urban conditions, several measures were taken.<sup>58</sup> It is worth mentioning that the term has only been used since the Second World War. It is difficult to trace back the exact origins of what shapes current urban regeneration owing to the diverse literature on the topic. There are few written sources dealing with specific and targeted topics relating to regeneration, such as economic, social and environmental aspects.

As mentioned previously, urban renewal and regeneration programmes, even though potentially beneficial to social and urban conditions, remain controversial. Several urban scholars have concluded that urban regeneration programmes can lead to gentrification. Some scholars would further argue that policies such as mixed community policies as part of regeneration represent gentrification in disguise.<sup>59</sup> These policies lead to a reduction in social housing, and the exclusion of certain social classes in city centres. This will be further developed when reviewing national urban policy since 1997 in the third chapter.

## **1.2. Different Phases of Urban Regeneration in the UK before 1997**

The United Kingdom has been undergoing urban regeneration since the 1950s. Post-war damage to the UK triggered these policies as a way to restore and rebuild the country. Recent research<sup>60</sup> has established that urban regeneration in the UK went through different phases since the Second World War. The first phase was from 1945 to 1965. During a period of reconstruction, the government focused mainly on solving urban issues related to housing problems caused by the rise of population and aimed to control urban development and end housing problems through Town and Country Planning. One of the programmes was called *New Towns*, a publicly funded programme implemented following advice from the Reith Committee (also known as the *Committee on New Towns*), which was set up to tackle overcrowded and deprived areas.

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<sup>57</sup> During the Queen Victoria reign, overcrowded slums emerged as a result of the lack of the interference of the Victorian authorities and the ignorance of the Victorian society to these poor areas.

<sup>58</sup> Peter Roberts. "The Evolution, Definition and Purpose of Urban Regeneration." *Urban Regeneration: A handbook*. Sage, 1999, p. 11.

<sup>59</sup> Loretta Lees. "New Gentrification battlefields: The Demolition of Council Estates in London." *Cornell in Rome Programme*, April 2018.

<sup>60</sup> Andrew Tallon, *Urban Regeneration in the UK*. Routledge, 2010.

By the time of the second period of revitalisation between 1965 and 1979, society had grown increasingly polarized, and, with poverty now widespread, this led to a shift in urban policy which would now be area-based. Such policies mainly focused on small projects as well as local social issues and needs and fostered community involvement. One of the major programs implemented during this period was the Urban Programme in 1968, an area-based programme that funded projects linked to education and youth.

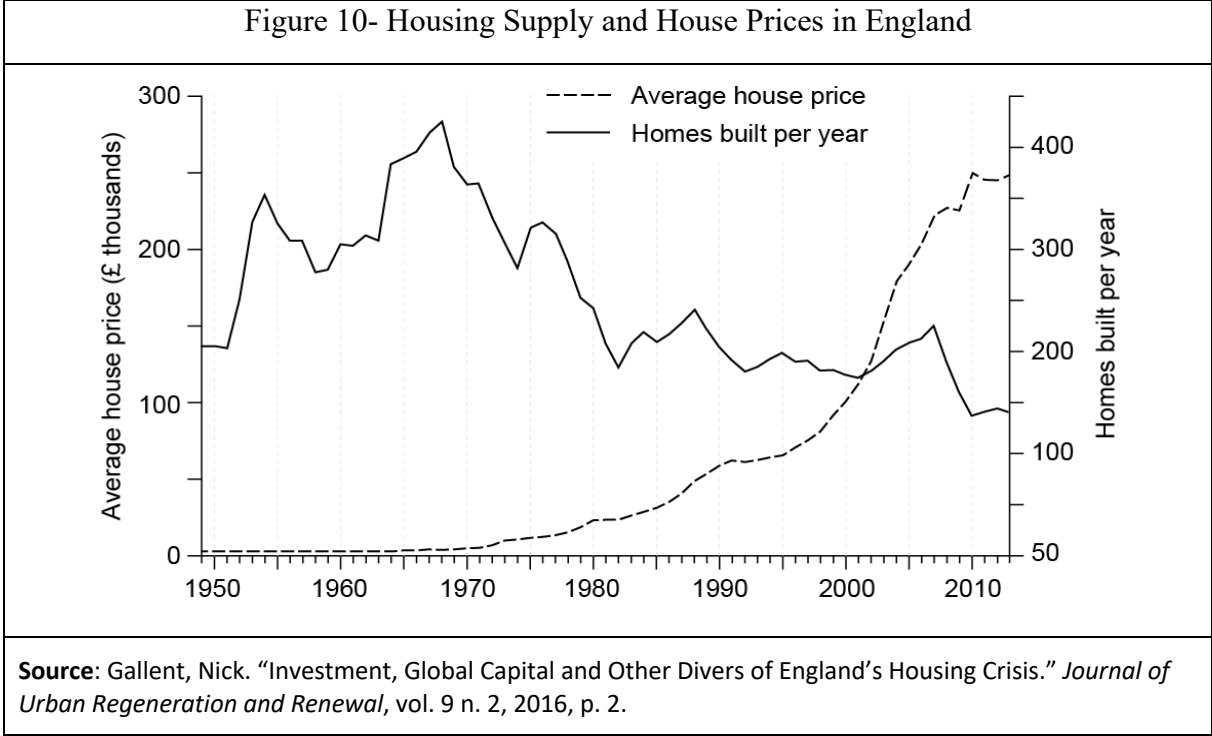
The third phase, between 1979 and 1990, came under the conservative government of Margaret Thatcher, and highlighted a new approach based on neo-liberal philosophies of the private sector. This time the aim was to solve unemployment issues by promoting economic growth. This period evidenced an extreme shift in approach from public and social welfare to private and property-led approaches, and from local government to local governance.

A later phase of urban regeneration took place in the 1990s, between 1990 and 1997, under John Major's Conservative government, in response to new urban problems, and was a continuation of previous policies. The previous government had focused predominantly on the role of the private sector, whereas under Major, as previously mentioned, there was a slight shift towards focusing on a three-way multi-sectoral partnership based on public, private and community organisation. Understanding this historical context is crucial in unravelling the complexities surrounding the housing crisis, and later the post-1997 national urban policy.

### **1.3. The Origin of the Housing Crisis before 1997**

After the Second World War, and until the early 1950s, the country was in need of major reconstruction alongside suitable urban policies. Therefore, as part of the urban policies implemented, there was a major focus on housing. The *1949 Housing Act* was implemented under a Labour government led by Clement Attlee to encourage publicly funded buildings. Thanks to the system of government subsidies and controlled rents, a significant amount of social housing was built, partly to replace the housing stock which was demolished during the slum clearances. A sharp increase in housing supply can be noted in 1952, with fluctuations in the following years (Figure 3). Two years later, the *1954 Housing Rent and Repairs Act* encouraged private owner-occupation, rent increases, and renting private property, thus

reviving the private sector. Also implemented during the post-war era, and caused by the economic crisis, was the *Housing Subsidies Act of 1967*, enacted under a Labour government, as it “make[s] provision with respect to financial assistance towards the provision, acquisition or improvement of dwellings and the provision of hostels; and for connected purposes.”<sup>61</sup> This act, therefore, also encouraged social housing to be built once again.



In the early 1970s, there was a slight policy shift with the implementation of the *1972 Housing Act*, which started to reduce subsidies for council housing, which explains the decrease in housebuilding (figure 3), and which replaced controlled rents with “fair” rents. The major shift, however, was perceived in the 1980s owing to policies developed during Margret Thatcher’s leadership of the Conservative government, which are now considered the origins of the current housing crisis. Figure 3 illustrates a sharp decrease in new houses built per year during the early 1980s, while average house prices began to increase rapidly, creating an inequitable distribution.

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<sup>61</sup> The Parliament. *Housing Subsidies Act 1967*. *Legislation Gov.UK*, <<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1967/29/introduction/enacted>> Accessed 11 July 2023.

### 1.3.1. The Impact of the Conservative Government under Margret Thatcher on the Housing Market (1979-1990)

The housing crisis can be traced back to Thatcher's government whose housing policies were mainly based on home-ownership.<sup>62</sup> This Conservative government was known for its privatisation policies, encouraging private investment through tax incentives and other measures which were socially and economically detrimental to the country, intensifying inequalities and poverty countrywide. According to Gordon et al., "Between 1997 and 1994-5, the incomes of the richest tenth of the population grew by 68 per cent, while those of the poorest grew only 10 per cent, before housing costs and fell 8 per cent after housing costs."<sup>63</sup> Although it is evident that the housing crisis was caused by multiple factors, privatisation and property-led regeneration policies were major factors.

In London, rapid population increases have been evident since the late 1990s. Figure 4 illustrates a dramatic post-Second World War decrease in population (from 8.6 million in the late 1930s to 6.8 million by the 1980s) which stagnated in the 1990s before increasing over the last two decades to reach 8.2 million in 2011 and 8.9 million in 2018. This trend can be explained by the rise in immigration in recent decades. According to migration statistics, a major part of the UK's migrant population is based in London. Between 2001 and 2009, the population increased by more than 430,000 inhabitants (accounting for over 16% of the UK increase). During the same period, "London attracted 1,380,000 migrants from Overseas and 1,460,000 from the rest of the UK. Of those leaving London 2,100,000 went to the rest of the UK and only 820,000 went Overseas."<sup>64</sup> In 2019, 35% of the capital's population was born overseas.<sup>65</sup>

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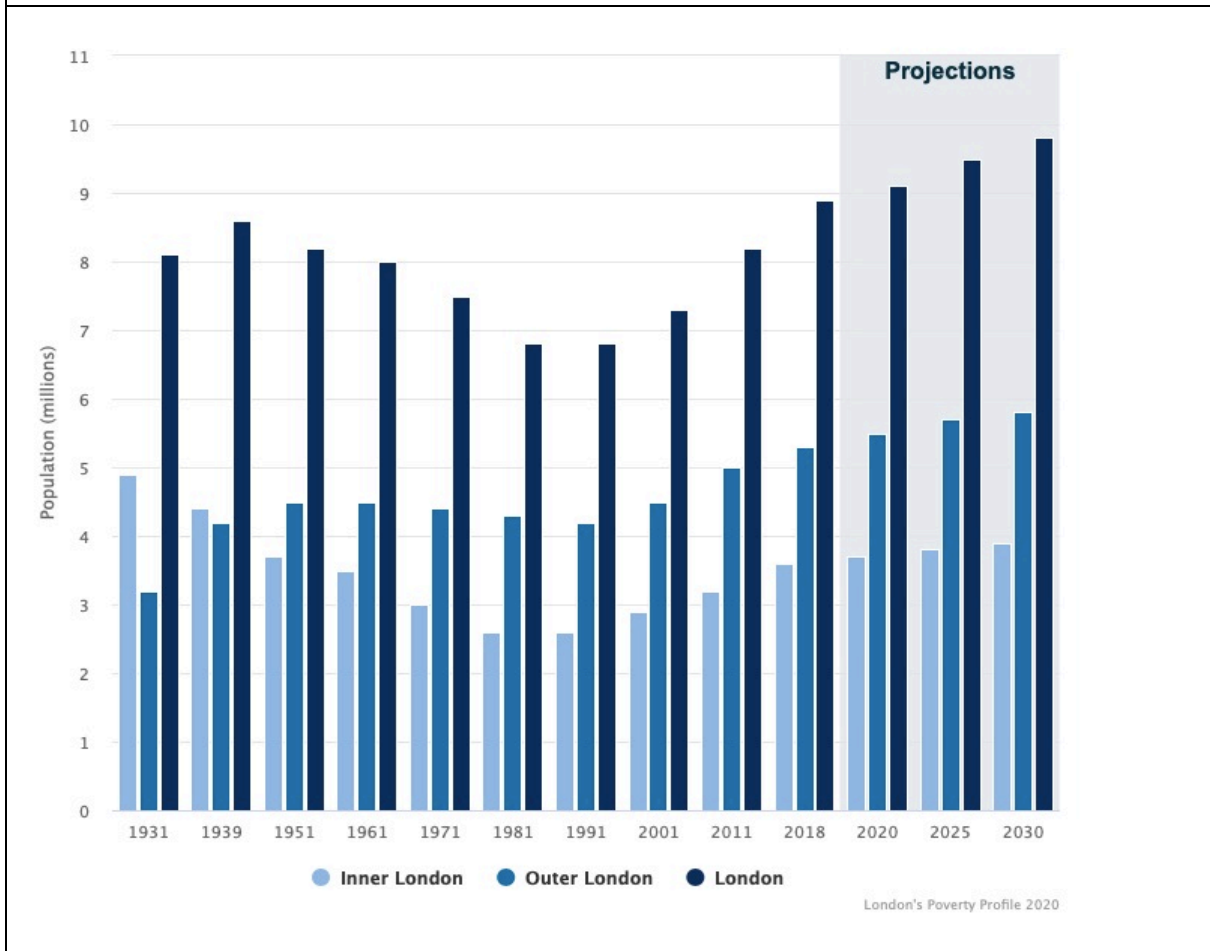
<sup>62</sup> Rob Imrie, and Mike Raco. "Community and the Changing nature of Urban Policy." *Urban Renaissance? Policy Press*, 2003, pp. 3-36, p. 3.

<sup>63</sup> D. Gordon et, al. *Poverty and social exclusion in Britain*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2000, p. 8.

<sup>64</sup> John Hollis. "Focus on London: Population and Migration." *Greater London Authority*, 2010, p. 4.

<sup>65</sup> Georgina Sturge. "Migration Statistics." *House of Commons Library*, August 2021, <[www.commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn06077/](http://www.commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn06077/)> Accessed 10 July 2021.

Figure 11 - London Population since 1931-2030



**Source:** "Population of London, London Population Growth - Trust for London." *Trust for London*, 2020, [www.trustforlondon.org.uk/data/population-over-time/](http://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/data/population-over-time/).> Accessed on 2 September 2021. Originally taken from *London's Poverty Profile 2020*.

In addition to the demographic changes witnessed in London over recent decades, there has also been a shift in class distribution within the capital. A growing high-income professional and managerial class has contributed to a change in the class structure. It has been reported that a significant increase in the middle class, comprising new white-collar and managerial groups, has emerged between the rich and poor in London.<sup>66</sup> Driven by globalization, new types of employment opportunities have emerged, resulting in far fewer manual jobs being available. The shift of manual work away from central areas of London has also contributed to class disparity in relation to housing supply and demand. This has resulted in the emergence of

<sup>66</sup> Tim Butler. "The new urban intermediaries? The new middle classes and the remaking of London." *Journal des anthropologues*, n. 77-78, pp. 83-97. <<http://journals.openedition.org/jda/3065>> Accessed on 11 July 2021.



gentrified cities on a global scale and has contributed to the polarisation and reshaping of society and social geography.<sup>67</sup> Additionally, this phenomenon has brought about changes in addition to reshaping the housing market. Both the emerging middle class and government policies have contributed to the escalating housing costs, although to varying degrees. While the emergence of the middle class has had some influence, it is important to note that government policies since the late 1970s have significantly shaped the housing market. Notably, the surge in homeownership during the 1980s resulted in a reduction in the availability of social housing, further exacerbating the situation.

Figure 5 shows how social housing has been decreasing sharply over the last three decades in London, while also illustrating that mortgaged homes significantly increased in the 1980s. This is explained by *The Housing Act of 1980* passed by Parliament under Thatcher's government. This Act gave council tenants the right to buy their homes from local authorities and other bodies. Tenants even received discounted purchase prices according to the duration of their council tenancies. For example, tenants who had lived in their homes for three years would receive a 33% discount on the market price for a house, and 40% for a flat, while tenants who had been residents for twenty years received a 50% discount.<sup>68</sup> In the private sector, the *Housing Act of 1988* gave private-sector landlords the right to terminate tenancies at any time. Rent regulations were reduced, enabling landlords to demand drastically higher rent for their properties.<sup>69</sup>

Again, under Thatcher, a scheme called *Mortgage Interest Relief at Source* ('MIRAS'), was introduced in 1983 in order to facilitate access to mortgages. Although abolished by Gordon Brown, Chancellor of the Exchequer (1997-2007), in April 2000, it allowed future property owners tax relief on interest payments on their mortgages.

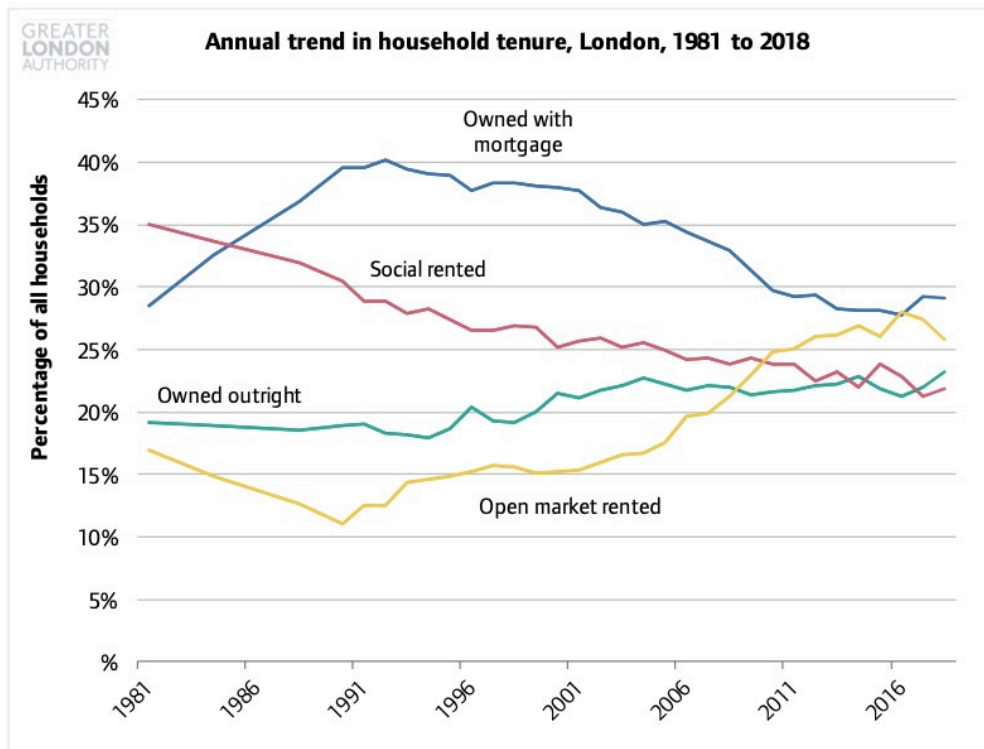
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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> Parliament. "Housing Act 1980." *Legislation.gov.uk*, Queen's Printer of Acts of Parliament, <[www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1980/51/enacted](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1980/51/enacted)> Accessed on 5 September 2021.

<sup>69</sup> Tessa Shepperson. "Explaining the Housing Act 1988." *The Landlord Law Blog*, 15 August 2018, <[www.landlordlawblog.co.uk/2018/08/15/explaining-housing-act-1988/](http://www.landlordlawblog.co.uk/2018/08/15/explaining-housing-act-1988/)> Accessed on 5 September 2021.

Figure 12 - Annual Trend in Household Tenure, London, 1981 to 2018



**Source:** Mayor of London. "Housing in London 2019: The Evidence Base for the Mayor's Housing Strategy." Greater London Authority, September 2019.

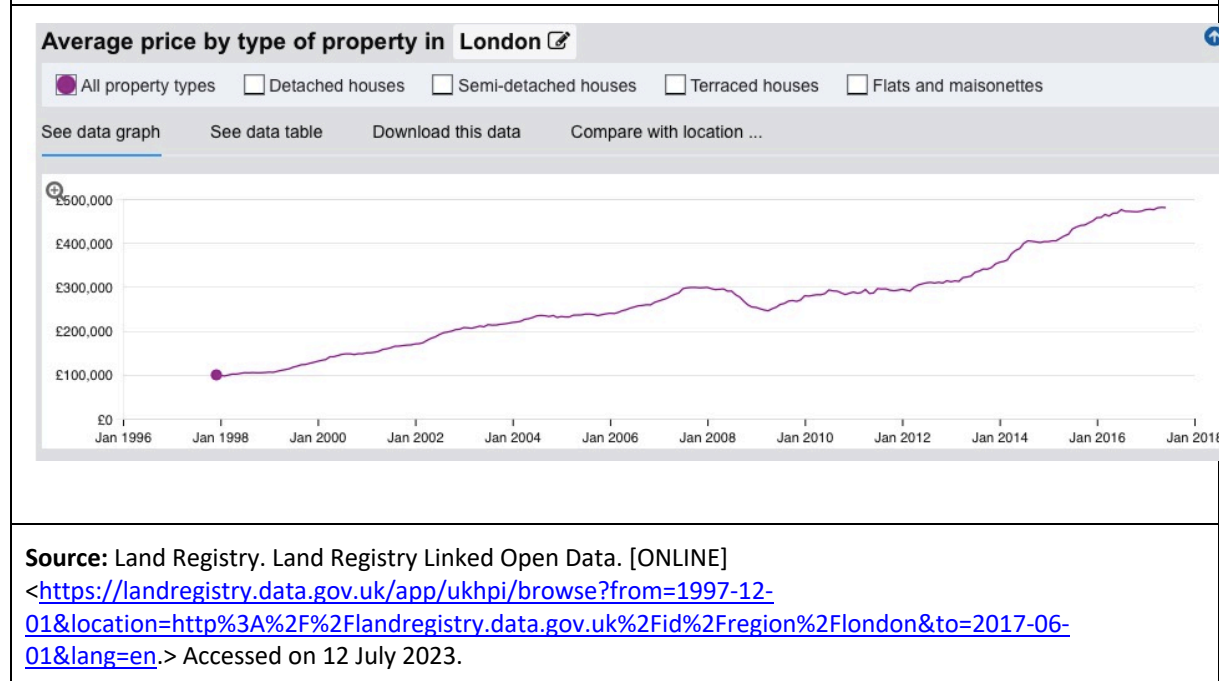
This growing gap has made it increasingly challenging for individuals and households to afford suitable housing options. According to the Land Registry,<sup>70</sup> house prices in London increased by approximately 400% between 1997 and 2017 (Figure 6). Meanwhile, the median household income in London for the same period experienced a modest growth: the average (median) gross weekly earning in London increased from £400,00 in 1997 to £691,10, representing a percentage increase of approximately 72%.<sup>71</sup> It is, therefore, important to note that this growth of income does not align with the trends in housing prices. It is also worth mentioning that the

<sup>70</sup> Land Registry. Land Registry Linked Open Data. [ONLINE] <<https://landregistry.data.gov.uk/app/ukhpi/browse?from=1997-12-01&location=http%3A%2F%2Flandregistry.data.gov.uk%2Fid%2Fregion%2Flondon&to=2017-06-01&lang=en>> Accessed on 12 July 2023.

<sup>71</sup> Welsh Government. "Average Earnings Data by UK Country/English Region." Stats Welsh, 6 December 2022, <<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Business-Economy-and-Labour-Market/People-and-Work/Earnings/medianweeklyearnings-by-ukcountryenglishregion-year>> Accessed 1 August 2023.

inequality of incomes within London is stark, with the wealthiest 10% of Londoners earning over ten times the income of the poorest 10% of the population.<sup>72</sup>

Figure 13 - Average Price of Property (all Property Types) between December 1997 and June 2017



**Source:** Land Registry. Land Registry Linked Open Data. [ONLINE] <<https://landregistry.data.gov.uk/app/ukhpi/browse?from=1997-12-01&location=http%3A%2F%2Flandregistry.data.gov.uk%2Fid%2Fregion%2Flondon&to=2017-06-01&lang=en>> Accessed on 12 July 2023.

A recent report, studying housing affordability on an international scale, has shown:

On average, in England and Wales, the Median affordability Ratio indicates that median house prices have risen at 2.6 times the rate of median full-time earnings. The largest increase has occurred in Greater London, where house prices increased at 3.4 times the rate of earnings between 1997 and 2021.<sup>73</sup>

This substantial gap between housing prices and earnings highlights the significant challenges faced by individuals and families in these areas when it comes to accessing affordable housing. Furthermore, analysing the role of the Conservative government under Margaret Thatcher (from 1979) provides valuable insight into the factors that have contributed to the current state of housing affordability. As previously mentioned, the Conservative government of that time under the leadership of Margaret Thatcher encouraged property ownership (and what it referred

<sup>72</sup> City Intelligence. *The State of London: A Review of London's Economy and Society*. Greater London Authority, June 2023, <<https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/state-of-london>> Accessed in 12 July 2023.

<sup>73</sup> Wendell Cox. "Demographia International Housing Affordability – 2023 Edition." *Urban Reform Institute*, 2023. <<http://demographia.com/dhi.pdf>> Accessed in 12 July 2023.

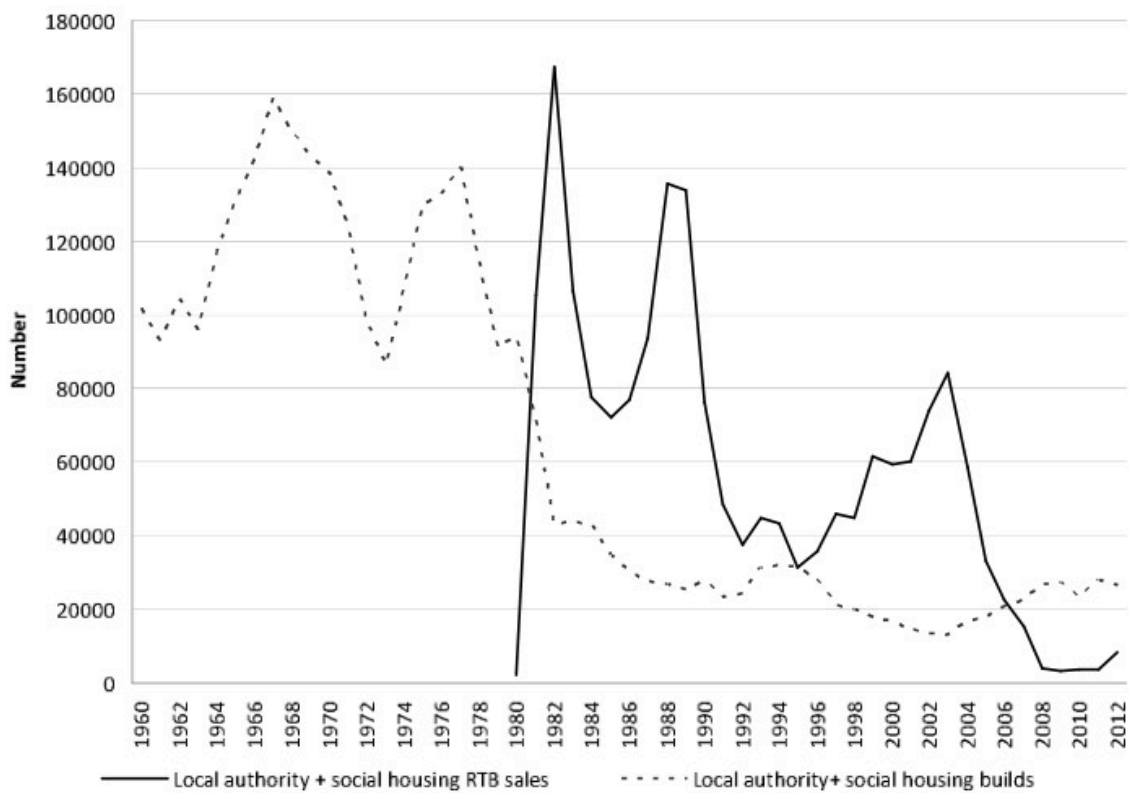
to at the time as a “property-owning democracy”), by giving socially-housed tenants the right to buy and by also facilitating access to mortgages. This was one of Thatcher’s major policies that had a deep impact on the housing crisis. It has led to a diminished council housing stock which was partially sold off without being replaced. Figure 7 shows that between 1980 and 1982 in excess of 160,000 council properties were sold, compared to the 80,000 built. It also indicates a drastic drop in the number of council housing sold between the years 1984-1985 and 1988-1991, explicable with reference to Chancellor Norman Lamont’s decision to raise interest rates from 9.7% to 15.4%. This move forced thousands of mortgagors to sell their properties owing to being unable to keep up with their mortgage repayments.<sup>74</sup> Figure 7 also shows that the selling-off of council housing continued with some fluctuation until 2003-2004 when the number of residential properties sold decreased drastically from 80,000 to fewer than 10,000 by 2008. Further, the number of new-build social housing units also fell drastically from 140,000 in 1976 to approximately 20,000 in 1992. There was a slight increase in buildings between 1992-1994, and 2008-2012, but the overall trend has been a deficit in council housing stock.

Besides the right to buy, Thatcher’s government encouraged urban regeneration by fostering partnerships with private developers in order to revitalise neglected and declining urban areas. The focus was not solely on housing but also on establishing mixed-use developments that combined residential and commercial spaces. It is, therefore, important to note that Thatcher’s emphasis on urban regeneration through public-private partnerships aligned with her broader vision of promoting free-market principles and reducing the role of the state.

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<sup>74</sup> David Fée. “Acknowledging the Limits of Thatcherism: Housing Policies during the Major Years.” *Observatoire de la société britannique*, vol. 7, 2009.

Figure 14 - New builds and RTB Sales of Public Housing 1980-81 to 2012-13



**Source:** Disney, Richard and Guannan Luo. "The Right to buy public housing in Britain: a welfare analysis." *Institute for Fiscal Studies*, 2014. Original source: Department of Communities and Local Government Housing Statistics.

These factors have contributed to increasing housing prices and the lack of affordable housing, both serious consequences for housing markets. Increased demand in the capital led to overcrowding, while demand outstripped supply leading to significant rises in house prices.

Furthermore, these factors affected not only low-income households but also middle-class households with a higher income who were not eligible for social housing, and who would previously have been expected to buy their own property but could no longer afford the housing prices.<sup>75</sup> Reduction in social housing has also contributed to the growth in social inequalities and pricing out low-income households.

<sup>75</sup> Michael Edwards. "The Housing Crisis in London." *City*. Vol. 20, n. 2, 2016, p.14.

In summary, Thatcher's government played an essential role in reducing social housing. Subsequent governments did not diverge from this policy and chose to continue implementing similar policies which were primarily focused on regeneration rather than construction. For example, John Major's Conservative government (1990-1997) continued the 'right to buy' policies.

### 1.3.2. Major's Response to Thatcher's Policies

The housing crisis was the result of a continuation and accumulation of failed policies. Thatcher's social revolution is considered to be the start of the housing crisis. By the late 1980s, house prices had doubled, the problem of providing a home for everyone remained unsolved and, on top of the economic recession, social housing decreased dramatically, and continuously, in the following decades.

In 1990, Margaret Thatcher resigned, leaving the government to her successor John Major, the next Conservative Prime Minister. Major, faced with a housing crisis, was intent on changing previous policies implemented by his predecessor, yet continued encouraging housing property. In 1992 the Conservative government, under Major's leadership, once again won the general election. According to his 1992 manifesto, the Party wanted "to do more to encourage the wider distribution of wealth throughout society. Sustaining not just a home-owning but a capital-owning democracy is crucial to our vision for the 1990s."<sup>76</sup> The Party also emphasised the role that individuals should play and the limited role the government had.

In 1994, the government introduced *the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB)*, a regeneration fund programme that replaced several existing projects of the time, to enhance living conditions in deprived areas. The SRB project ran from 1994 to 2002. It was seen as a useful tool to deliver policies but was overshadowed by other initiatives.<sup>77</sup> The programme represented a catalyst for regeneration but encountered limitations. After a period of up to five years, funded projects

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<sup>76</sup> The Conservative Party. "Conservative Party Manifesto – 9 April 1992," 1992. <<https://johnmajorarchive.org.uk/1992/04/09/conservative-party-manifesto-9-april-1992/>> Accessed on 2 September 2021.

<sup>77</sup> Philipp Booth, et al. "British Urban Policy since 1997: Change and Continuity." *Hommes Et Terres Du Nord*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2002, p. 37.

were expected to be self-sustained or to find alternative funding. The project also attracted profit-seeking developers and did little to serve the needs of local residents.<sup>78</sup>

This government also introduced the *Housing White Paper of 1995*, similar in scope to the *Housing Paper of 1987* introduced by Thatcher, which represented a continuation of the ‘right to buy’ policy. Consequently, the number of properties local authorities sold increased between 1995 and 1997, while the number of new-build social housing continued to drop.

The Conservative government under both Margret Thatcher and John Major persisted with the ‘right to buy’ and encouraged homeownership, even though these policies worsened the housing situation. Observations suggest this scenario may be directly linked to the Party’s ideologies (such as privatization), while also being used as a tool to attract future votes from new property owners.<sup>79</sup> Indeed, homeownership, as part of privatization, plays an important role in redefining and reshaping the role of the state. The Conservative government advocates a sense of personal responsibility that is supposed to lead to social stability. However, one study<sup>80</sup> argues that understanding the continuity policies of Major’s government is complex. Major had inherited serious housing problems from decades of failed policies since the Second World War, made worse by his predecessor.

To sum up, the Conservative governments did not solve urban decline and created further housing issues. Their focus on homeownership and the right to buy council property, combined with the lack of construction in the private sector, led to a serious shortage of social housing. Because no policy existed to replace the share of council housing that was sold, house prices increased sharply throughout the UK, most dramatically in the capital: house prices almost doubled in Greater London between 1995 and 1997.<sup>81</sup>

These failed policies paved the way for their opponent, the Labour Party, or, more specifically *New Labour*, to introduce an “Urban Renaissance” programme in an attempt to solve housing issues and other problems. This will be further developed in the third chapter, which focuses on the national urban policies implemented under different governments from 1997 to 2022. This timeframe is crucial as the period between 1997 and 2022 witnessed significant urban

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<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> David Fée. “Acknowledging the Limits of Thatcherism: Housing Policies during the Major Years.” *Observatoire de la société britannique*, vol. 7, 2009.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> Plumplot. “London Property Prices.” *London House Prices in Maps and Graphs.*, <[www.plumplot.co.uk/London-house-prices.html](http://www.plumplot.co.uk/London-house-prices.html)> Accessed on 2 September 2021.

transformations in the UK, particularly in London, with various neighbourhoods experiencing gentrification. This timeframe also coincides with a period of socio-economic shifts in London, including changes in population demographics, employment patterns, and income inequality. Studying this period can therefore help identify the relationship between these broader socio-economic changes and the process of gentrification. However, as this part of the thesis provides a historical context and set the scene, the subsequent chapter focuses on an in-depth exploration of the neighbourhood of Peckham, and provides a thorough description (historical, demographic and social).



# Chapter 2 – Introducing Peckham

The district of Peckham, located within the borough of Southwark, has been the canvas for a dynamic interplay of urban development, and shifting social landscapes. As urbanisation and socio-economic dynamics continue to evolve, Peckham has not been immune to the process of gentrification. This chapter explores the historical overview of the neighbourhood, and also its demographic and socio-economic makeup, physical environment, and vibrant community. Its aim is to provide a comprehensive and detailed description of Peckham. By situating Peckham within its historical context, this chapter seeks to uncover how urban, social and economic changes have influenced its current identity.

This chapter is divided into three sub-sections. The first sub-section explores the historical overview of the area. The second sub-section examines the demographic and socio-economic profile. It sheds light on the neighbourhood's population trends, including its vibrant diversity and analyses the shifts in demographics and income levels that have shaped its social fabric. Finally, the third subsection tackles the physical landscape and environment. This entails an examination of its architecture, housing, and the overall built environment that shapes Peckham's urban fabric.

## 2.1. Historical Overview

Peckham's history dates back to at least the 11<sup>th</sup> century when it was a small settlement in the county of Surrey. The name Peckham is believed to have Anglo-Saxon origins. According to Beasley, it originally comes from:

Old English Peac-ham<sup>82</sup> – village by a hill. We cannot be sure which hill – Nunhead hill, Telegraph Hill or Honor Oak Hill? Manorial and other evidence strongly suggests that it was Nunhead hill. Here stood

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<sup>82</sup> "Peac" means hill and "ham" means village in old English.

the original Manor of Bredinghurst which may be identified with ‘lands of Pecheham’ belonging to Bishop Maminot at the time of the Domesday Survey. Peckham was called Pecheha in Domesday Book.<sup>83</sup>

Peckham was a rural area until the Industrial Revolution,<sup>84</sup> when the district was transformed into an industrial urban area. In some readings, centuries ago, the land where Peckham is now located, was once partly covered by water. In the nineteenth century, it became a village surrounded by fields, later it was joined to other villages by roads and streets, and people started to build their houses in the area, thanks to the *Peckham Building Society* that was founded in the nineteenth century and made it easier for people to borrow money in order to buy their dwellings. Actually, “[s]ome of the houses that were built when the neighbourhood began to grow can still be seen. Fashionable houses, in which fairly wealthy people lived, still exist to the west of Rye Lane.”<sup>85</sup> Some buildings or houses were improved and well-maintained, while others were completely replaced.

Peckham has undergone several changes during the last couple of centuries, before becoming the Peckham of today. According to the chronological order provided by Tim Charlesworth, who according to the *Peckham Peculiar* wrote the first modern history book about the architecture of the area:<sup>86</sup>

- In the pre 19<sup>th</sup> century, the area was mainly rural, with no church, and a few buildings; such as the Old House.
- In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it became more accessible with the newly built bridges across the Thames and later by the railway that was installed in 1865. Roads were improved, and the population started to grow, and wealthy clerks and artisans became more and more attracted to the area. By the end of the century, green spaces were shrunken, and several buildings were added, such as terrace houses, hence a suburban growth.
- At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Peckham was considered one of the most crowded areas, with overly-crowded homes.
- During WWII, Peckham suffered the damages of the Blitz, which led to rebuilding the area (mainly council housing) and the coming of new residents.

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<sup>83</sup> John D. Beasley. *Origin of Names in Peckham and Nunhead*. South Riding Press, 1993, p. 61.

<sup>84</sup> The industrial revolution was a period from the 18th to 19th century during which major changes occurred in agriculture, manufacturing, mining, transportation, and technology. It began in Britain and spread to other parts of the world.

<sup>85</sup> John D. Beasley. *The Story of Peckham*. Council of the London Borough of Southwark, 1983, p. 6.

<sup>86</sup> Peckham Peculiar. “Buy the Book.” *Peckham Peculiar*, 24 November 2023. <<https://peckhampeculiar.tumblr.com/post/103457719849/buy-the-book-part-1-chener-books>> Accessed on 2 August 2023.

- Finally, from the 1970s till the end of the century, lack of funding led to stagnation and no further development.<sup>87</sup>

Since the 1970s, the area has started to gain a bad reputation with the increase in unemployment, crime rates, and deprivation. Indeed, crime rates in Peckham were extremely high, with the increase in gang activity. In 2000, a 10-year-old schoolboy Damilola Taylor<sup>88</sup>, on his way home from the library, was stabbed to death by two children of 12 and 13 years old. The atrocity of this killing is still remembered by residents and non-residents of the area. In fact, Peckham is still a rough area compared to other neighbourhoods in London today. The UK Crime Stats website shows that crimes in Camberwell and Peckham<sup>89</sup> represented an average of 1500 crimes per month in 2020 compared to 1800 crimes per month during the year 2011.<sup>90</sup> These crimes include burglary, robbery, theft (various types), drugs, weapons, and many others. In January 2021, according to the Metropolitan Police website, the crime rate comparison shows seven crimes per thousand residents in Peckham, compared to six crimes per thousand in Southwark generally.<sup>91</sup>

In 2010, *The Metropolitan Police* published a report<sup>92</sup> describing Peckham as a “crime hotspot” full of gangs. It created the image of an unsafe neighbourhood, which was encouraged by the media, over the years. However, the area is coming to be seen differently as a result of several regeneration programmes that have been implemented. It is becoming even a “mecca for young hipsters,”<sup>93</sup> according to the tabloid, *The Standard*, Homes & Property section. This will be further developed in chapter 7.

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<sup>87</sup> Tim CHARLESWORTH, *The Architecture of Peckham*, 1988.

<sup>88</sup> He was a Nigerian boy, sent by his family seeking a brighter future in August 2000, and settled in Peckham. He was killed two months after arriving to the UK.

<sup>89</sup> I found difficulties in finding stats only for Peckham.

<sup>90</sup> Crime in Camberwell and Peckham. UK Crime Stats,” <<https://www.ukcrimestats.com/Constituency/65913>> Accessed on 3 August 2022.

<sup>91</sup> Metropolitan Police. “Crime Rate in Peckham in 2011.” Metropolitan Police, <<https://www.met.police.uk/a/your-area/met/southwark/peckham/>> Accessed on 3 August 2022.

<sup>92</sup> Joan Leary, and Sgt Mark Deacon. *Talking the Hardest: Taking on Gang Culture in London*. Metropolitan Police, 2010, <<https://popcenter.asu.edu/sites/default/files/library/awards/goldstein/2010/10-16.pdf>> Accessed on 3 August 2022.

<sup>93</sup> Ruth Bloomfield. “The Future Property Plan for Peckham: Residents Campaign to Shape the Future of this fast-Changing South London Suburb.” *The Evening Standard*, 22 August 2019, <<https://www.homesandproperty.co.uk/property-news/buying/first-time-buyers/the-future-property-plan-for-peckham-residents-campaign-to-shape-the-future-of-this-fastchanging-a132891.html#gallery>> Accessed on 3 August 2022.

## 2.2. Demographic and Socio-Economic Profile

### 2.2.1. Population Trends and Shifts in Demographics

The district of Peckham is composed of different wards: Peckham Ward, Rye Lane Ward, Peckham Rye Ward, and part of Queens Road and Nunhead Ward (Appendix 6). The area is known for its widely diverse and multi-cultural communities. The perfect example is the multi-lingual interactions witnessed in Rye Lane, with a third of shop owners conversing in at least four languages originating from all over the world including Nigeria, Uganda, Somalia, Kenya, the Middle East, the Indian sub-continent, Vietnam, and many other regions.<sup>94</sup> Peckham is one of the most culturally diverse areas in Southwark and London, it is known for its Caribbean community and more recent South American community.

According to the 2001 Census of Publication Statistics for Parliamentary Constituencies,<sup>95</sup> 35% of the population of the constituency of Camberwell and Peckham were black residents, the highest black percentage of all constituencies, and a total of 46% non-white population. Using a quantitative approach to collect data was very important to understand how heterogenous the neighbourhood is today, but challenging, given the whole district does not represent one “entity” but several wards that changed over time. For example, the north of Peckham belonged to Liddle Ward in 2001 and that ward does not exist anymore. On the other hand, the constituency is much larger. In this case, the constituency of Camberwell and Peckham includes Camberwell, Peckham, and Nunhead.

According to the Census of 2011, 50% of the residents of Peckham Ward were black (compared to 27% for Southwark as a whole), and 29% were white residents (compared to 54% for the whole of Southwark).<sup>96</sup> According to Peckham demographic data in 2011,<sup>97</sup> 52% were British (Figure 1), and 60% were Christian (Figure 3). The data also shows in excess of ten languages being spoken in the ward (Figure 2). By 2021, the demographic trends show slight shifts: the

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<sup>94</sup> Suzanne M. Hall, “Super-diverse street: A ‘Trans-ethnography’ Across Migrant Localities.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, October 2013, Vol. 38, No. 1, 22-37, p.22.

<sup>95</sup> Julien Anseau. *2001 Census of Population: Statistics for New Parliamentary Constituencies*. Statistic Resource Unit, April 2008.

<sup>96</sup> Mentioned in *Southwark Ward Profile*. Southwark Council, 2017.

<sup>97</sup> *Peckham Demographics: Southwark and England*, 2011, <[www.peckham.localstats.co.uk/census-demographics/england/london/southwark/peckham](http://www.peckham.localstats.co.uk/census-demographics/england/london/southwark/peckham)> Accessed 22 January 2018.

black population had slightly decreased to 46.8%, and the white population remained almost constant at 28.3%. The Christian population also experienced a decrease to 55%.<sup>98</sup>

In Peckham Rye, a ward in the district, data<sup>99</sup> indicates that more than 70% of residents were born in England (Figure 3), a significantly high proportion compared to Peckham Ward. Furthermore, almost 90% of the residents in Peckham Rye speak English (Figure 4), and almost 50% identify as Christian (Figure 5). Ethnically speaking, the ward is composed of 64.2% white and 23.2% black residents (a distribution that contrasts with the 50% black population in Peckham Ward).<sup>100</sup> By Census 2021, subtle shifts were observed: the white population decreased slightly to 61.4%, the black population to 22.1%, and the Christian population dropped to 40%.<sup>101</sup> These figures highlight the differences in cultural and racial compositions between the two wards. It also underlines that Peckham Rye is inhabited by a more homogeneous population. This is also explained by the fact that Bellenden Road, located in the ward, witnessed urban regeneration in the late 1990s which led to physical improvements in the area.

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<sup>98</sup> City Population. "Peckham Ward in London." City Population, December 2022, <[https://www.citypopulation.de/en/uk/london/wards/southwark/E05011110\\_peckham/](https://www.citypopulation.de/en/uk/london/wards/southwark/E05011110_peckham/)> Accessed 25 July 2023.

<sup>99</sup> Peckham Rye Demographics: Southwark and England, 2011, <<http://peckham-rye.localstats.co.uk/census-demographics/england/london/southwark/peckham-rye/>> Accessed 29 January 2020.

<sup>100</sup> Southwark Council. *Peckham and Nunhead Community Council Profile*. Southwark Council, 2011.

<sup>101</sup> City Population. "Peckham Rye Ward in London." City Population, December 2022, <[https://www.citypopulation.de/en/uk/london/wards/southwark/E05011111\\_peckham\\_rye/](https://www.citypopulation.de/en/uk/london/wards/southwark/E05011111_peckham_rye/)> Accessed 25 July 2023.

Figure 1 – Population in Peckham Ward 2011

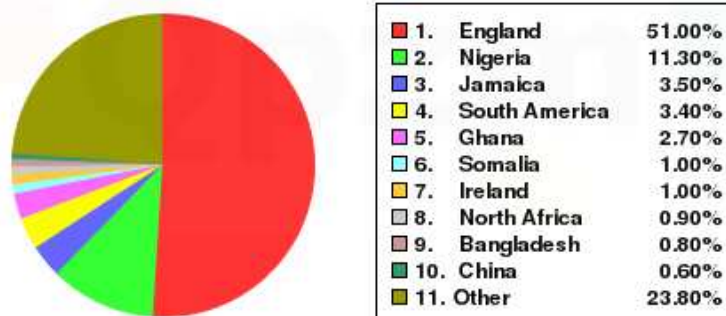


Figure 2 – Religions in Peckham Ward 2011

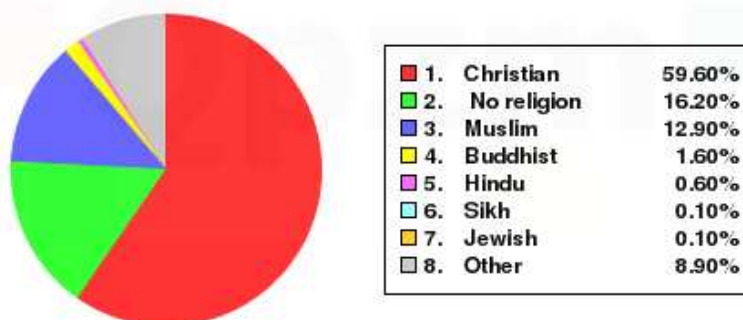
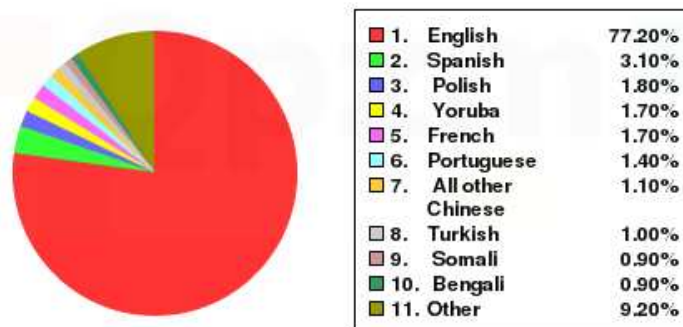


Figure 3 – Languages spoken in Peckham Ward in 2011



Source: Peckham Demographics: Southwark and England, 2011, <[www.peckham.localstats.co.uk/census-demographics/england/london/southwark/peckham](http://www.peckham.localstats.co.uk/census-demographics/england/london/southwark/peckham)> Accessed 22 January 2018.

Figure 4 – Population in Rye Ward in 2011

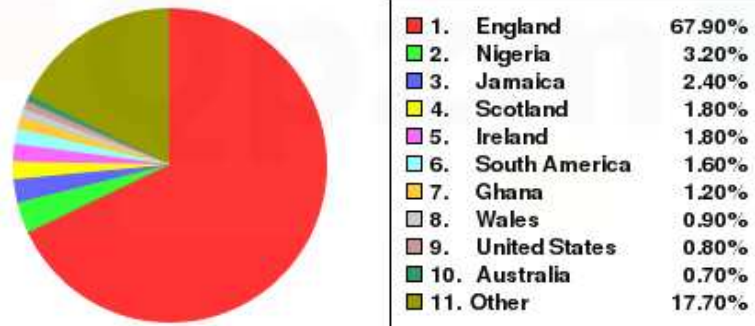


Figure 5 – Languages spoken in Rye Ward in 2011

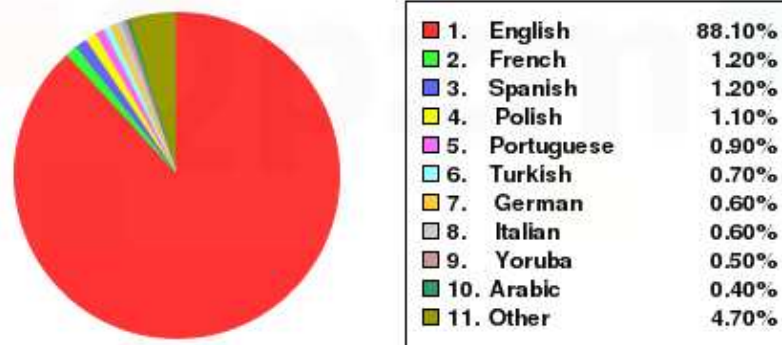
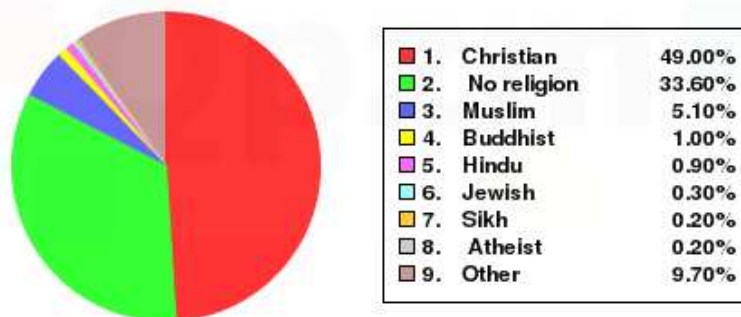


Figure 6 – Religions in Rye Ward in 2011



**Source:** Peckham Rye Demographics: Southwark and England, 2011, <<http://peckham-rye.localstats.co.uk/census-demographics/england/london/southwark/peckham-rye.>> Accessed 29 January 2020.

Even though the data mentioned shows that more than half are British, it is noticeable that more than half of the population comes from different ethnic minorities (Table 1). Only 29% are white compared to 54% in the whole of Southwark and 60% in London. The black ethnic minority alone represents 50% of the population compared to 27% in Southwark and 13% in London.

Table 1 - Proportion of Residents by BME Group			
Ethnic group	Peckham	Southwark	London
<b>White</b>	29%	54%	60%
<b>Mixed</b>	7%	6%	5%
<b>Asian</b>	9%	9%	19%
<b>Black</b>	50%	27%	13%
<b>Other</b>	4%	4%	3%

Proportion of residents by BME group (Census 2011)

Source: *Southwark Ward Profiles*. Southwark Council: London, 2017.

From an ethnic perspective, it is evident that Peckham, as a district, is not a homogenous neighbourhood. Suzanne Hall using an ethnographic approach, described Rye Lane, an area of Peckham, as “super-diverse”. She conducted a face-to-face survey with 105 independent proprietors of local shops based in Rye Lane in 2012. Asking targeted questions, she managed to “provide a record of the array of proprietors’ countries of origin, in order of their prevalence on the street: Pakistan (32%), England (16%), Afghanistan (10%), Nigeria (7%), India (6%), Eritrea (4%), Iraq (4%), Iran (3%), Ireland (3%), Jamaica (3%), Sri Lanka (3%), with Ghana, Kashmir, Kenya, Nepal, Somalia, Tanzania, Uganda, Vietnam, and Yemen collectively comprising 9%.”<sup>102</sup> Rye Lane represents a perfect example of the population of the whole neighbourhood being a very densely populated and multi-ethnic street.

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<sup>102</sup> Suzanne M. Hall, “Super-diverse Street: A ‘Trans-Ethnography’ across Migrant Localities”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 2013, Vol. 38, No. 1, 22-37, pp. 28-29.



### 2.2.2. Income Levels

Peckham has a diverse economic landscape. Historically known for its working-class roots, Peckham has seen a gradual influx of young professionals and artists. While certain areas continue to struggle with poverty and unemployment (particularly in north Peckham),<sup>103</sup> others experiencing gentrification (such as Bellenden Road<sup>104</sup> and Rye Lane<sup>105</sup>), are seeing rising property values and the emerging of upscale shops and restaurants.

These social changes are also perceived through the average income of local households. According to the data provided by the GLA (Figures 7 to 12),<sup>106</sup> the average income of households in Peckham Rye, the Lane, and the Peckham Ward increased drastically for both periods 2001/2002 and 2012/2013, indicating demographic and social changes. Data provided for 2001/02 gives an average household income of £36,280 in Peckham Rye, £31,340 in the Lane and £26,430 in the Peckham Ward, compared to £56,040, £49,140 and £38,900 in each ward respectively for 2012/13. However, no recent data corresponding to the same areas were found.

Of note is the differing average income in each ward even though they form part of the same district. The ward of Peckham is still poorer than Peckham Rye. This inconsistency may be because Peckham Rye is inhabited by a larger white middle-class population, as previously explained.

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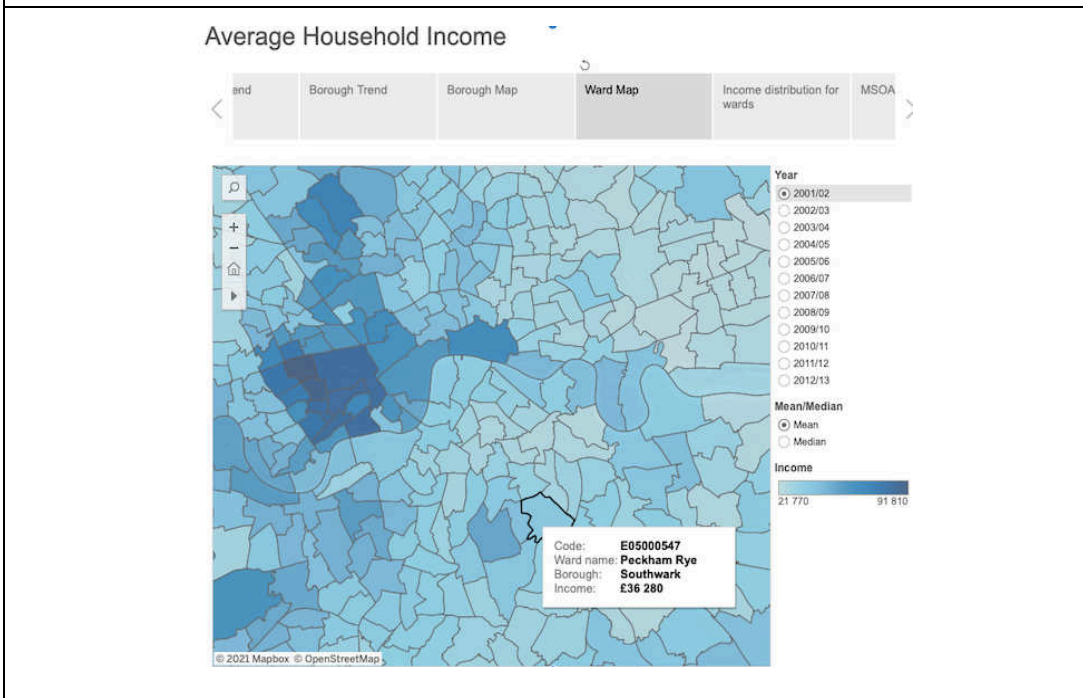
<sup>103</sup> Southwark Council. *Southwark Economic Strategy 2022-2030 – Draft*. Southwark Council, 2020, [https://consultations.southwark.gov.uk/corporate-strategy/economic-strategy-22-30/user\\_uploads/economic-strategy-2022-27-draft-1.pdf](https://consultations.southwark.gov.uk/corporate-strategy/economic-strategy-22-30/user_uploads/economic-strategy-2022-27-draft-1.pdf).> Accessed 2 August 2023.

<sup>104</sup> As previously mentioned, Bellenden Road or Bellenden village underwent regeneration in the late 1990s and early 2000s leading to physical transformations that subsequently resulted in an increase in housing prices. According to Zoopla (official website of the real estate company) a three-bedroom mid terrace that was sold for £230,000 was resold in January 2022 for £1,050,000. This represents an increase of 356.52% in value in 20 years. Zoopla. “252 Bellenden Road, London, SE15 4BY.” *Zoopla*, 2022, <<https://www.zoopla.co.uk/property/uprn/200003391802/>> Accessed on 2 August 2023.

<sup>105</sup> Rye Lane is known for its reputation as a diverse and vibrant area. It is also known for trendy shops, restaurants and cafés that emerged recently, leading to a rise in housing prices in the surrounding areas.

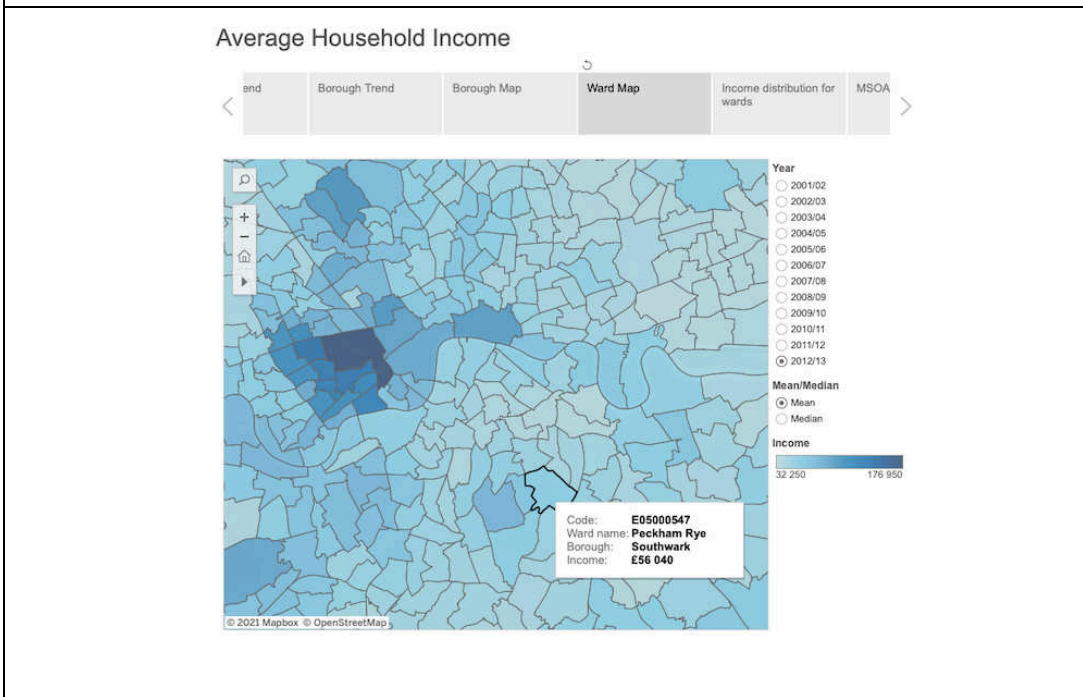
<sup>106</sup> GLA. “GLA Household Income Estimates,” published in 2014. <<https://data.london.gov.uk/blog/gla-household-income-estimates/>> Accessed on 12 February 2021.

Figure 7 - Average Household Income in Peckham Rye in the year 2001/2002



Source: GLA. "GLA Household Income Estimates," published in 2014.  
<https://data.london.gov.uk/blog/gla-household-income-estimates/> Accessed on 12 February 2021.

Figure 8 - Average Household Income in Peckham Rye in the year 2012/2013



Source: GLA. "GLA Household Income Estimates," published in 2014.  
<https://data.london.gov.uk/blog/gla-household-income-estimates/> Accessed on February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

Figure 9 - Average Household Income in The Lane in the year 2001/2002

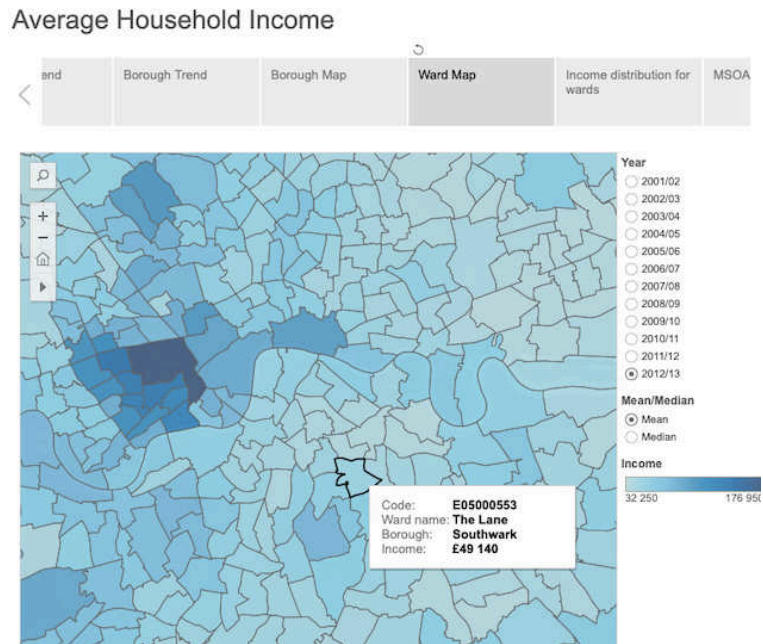
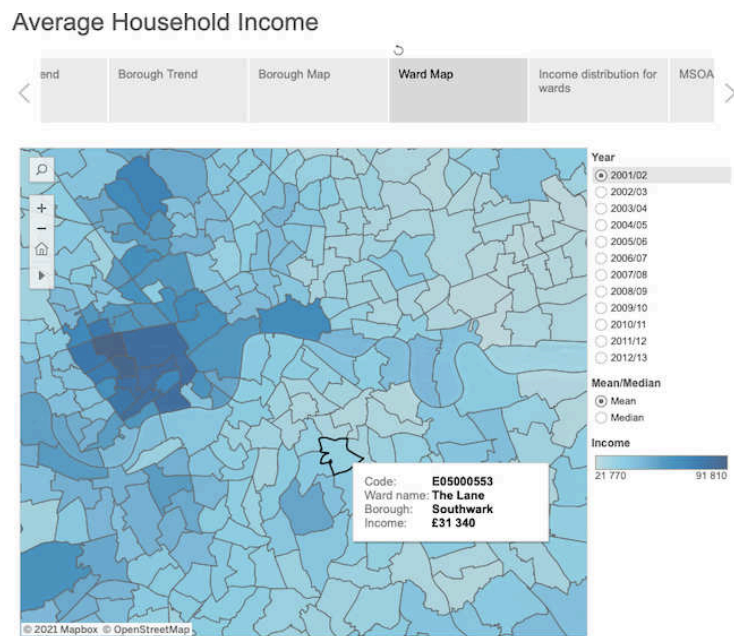
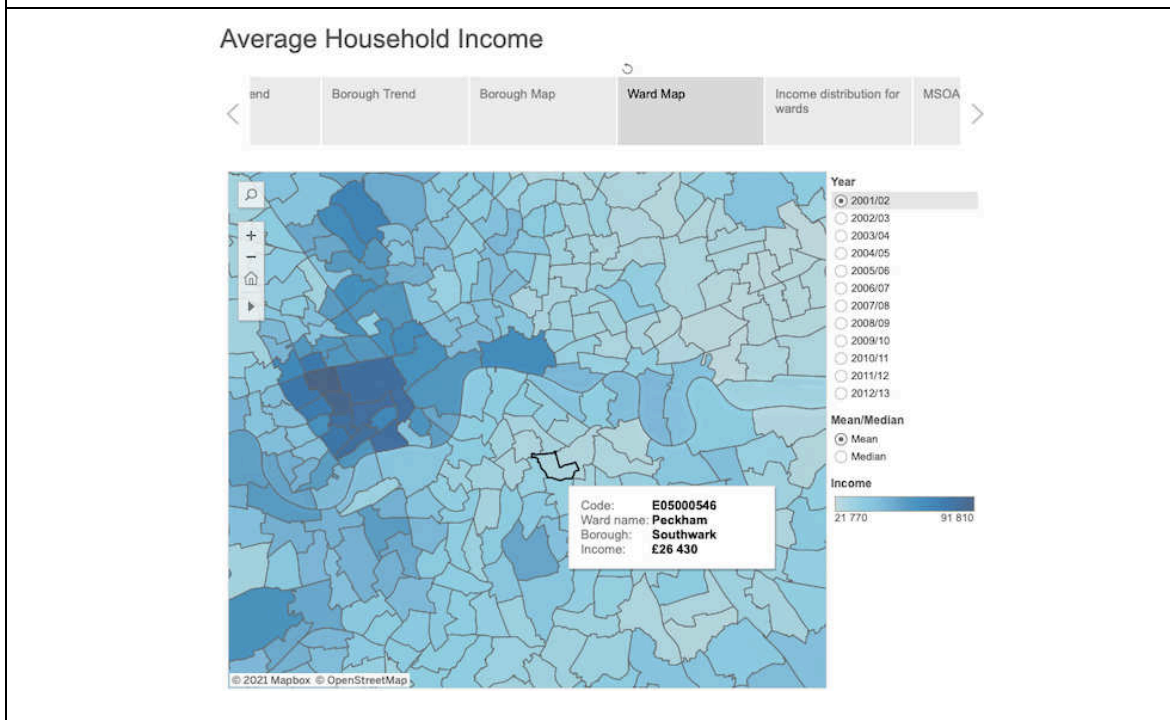


Figure 10 - Average Household Income in the Lane in the year 2012/2013



Source: GLA. "GLA Household Income Estimates," published in 2014.  
 <<https://data.london.gov.uk/blog/gla-household-income-estimates/>> Accessed on 12 February 2021.

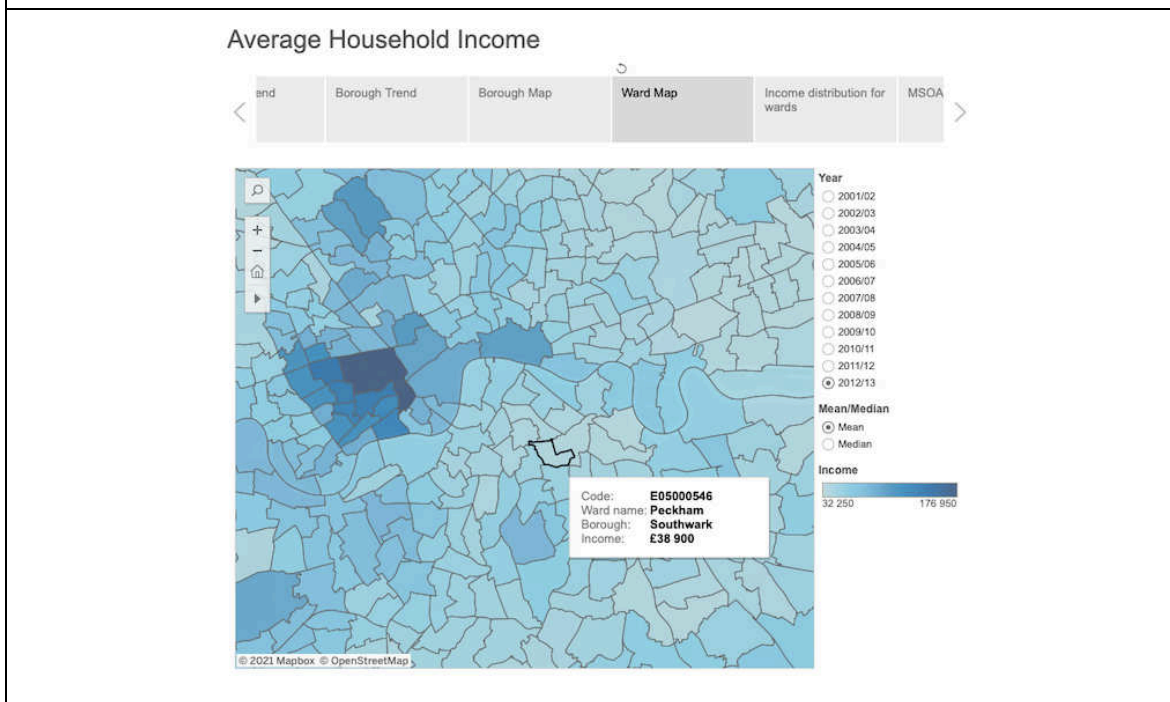
Figure 11 - Average Household Income in Peckham in the year 2001/2002



Source: GLA. "GLA Household Income Estimates," published in 2014.

<https://data.london.gov.uk/blog/gla-household-income-estimates/> Accessed on 12 February 2021

Figure 12 - Average Household Income in Peckham in the year 2012/2013



Source: GLA. "GLA Household Income Estimates," published in 2014.

<https://data.london.gov.uk/blog/gla-household-income-estimates/> Accessed on 12 February 2021.

## **2.3. Physical Landscape and Built Environment**

The availability and quality of housing in a neighbourhood, especially when coupled with elements such as historical heritage and transportation accessibility, can significantly influence the dynamics of gentrification, as these factors often act as magnets for new, often more affluent, residents seeking both cultural richness and convenience. Hence, this sub-section offers a comprehensive examination of Peckham's built environment and physical landscape, focusing on its housing stock and its associated fluctuations in housing prices. It also examines the conservation area within Peckham that highlights the cultural heritage of the area but also represents an attraction to new visitors. Furthermore, an overview of the local educational institutions and religious establishments provides insights into the socio-cultural fabric of the area. Integral to understanding Peckham's urban morphology is its transportation infrastructure, which has implications for accessibility, and therefore, is another attraction to new residents for the neighbourhood.

### **2.3.1. Housing Stock**

As will be seen, the area witnessed radical transformation with the advent of new shops, various urban renovation and restoration projects, and the arrival of middle-class residents. The new residents were initially attracted by the affordability of housing and what the area had to offer. Yet, many of the working-class locals have been priced out and displaced, which had led to social inequality. Housing plays a major role in this process.

According to 2011 statistics (Figure 13), Peckham consisted of 99.5% of unshared dwellings and 0.5 of two or more households shared dwellings. More than 70% of these dwellings were flats and maisonettes, the remainder consisting of whole houses and bungalows that can be detached, semi-detached, or terraced. This data was similar to the entirety of Southwark, with a higher percentage of flats and maisonettes with almost a third of households living in whole houses and bungalows.

Figure 13 - Dwellings, household spaces, and accommodation type in Peckham Ward 2011

Dwellings, household spaces and accommodation type <sup>107</sup>

Household spaces Dwellings

	Peckham Ward (as of 2011)	
	count	%
All dwelling types	5,483	100.0
Unshared dwelling	5,458	99.5
Shared dwelling: Two household spaces	11	0.2
Shared dwelling: Three or more household spaces	14	0.3
All household spaces	5,536	100.0
Household spaces with at least one usual resident	5,479	99.0
Household spaces with no usual residents	57	1.0
Whole house or bungalow: Detached	142	2.6

<sup>107</sup> Also mentioned in: *Peckham Ward 2011, Local Area Report. Nomis, 2011*, [https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/sources/census\\_2011\\_ks/report?compare=E05000546](https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/sources/census_2011_ks/report?compare=E05000546).> Accessed 17 January, 2021.

Whole house or bungalow: Semi-detached	370	6.7
Whole house or bungalow: Terraced (including end-terrace)	998	18.0
Flat, maisonette or apartment: Purpose-built block of flats or tenement	3,662	66.1
Flat, maisonette or apartment: Part of a converted or shared house (including bed-sits)	313	5.7
Flat, maisonette or apartment: In a commercial building	45	0.8
Caravan or other mobile or temporary structure	6	0.1

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**Source:** ONS - 2011 Census (KS401EW)

Property prices have been increasing drastically during recent years. According to the data provided by the Land Registry (Figure 14), house prices in the area have doubled in ten years. In 2009, the average house price was approximately £350K, increasing to approximately £750K by 2019. Apartment prices followed a similar trend, rising from an average of £190K to £360K over the same period. This enormous property price increase is a clear sign of gentrification having taken place, with housing becoming less affordable to a particular social class in tandem with the arrival of the middle and upper-middle classes. The link between gentrification and the increase of house prices is explained by Hamnett as follows:

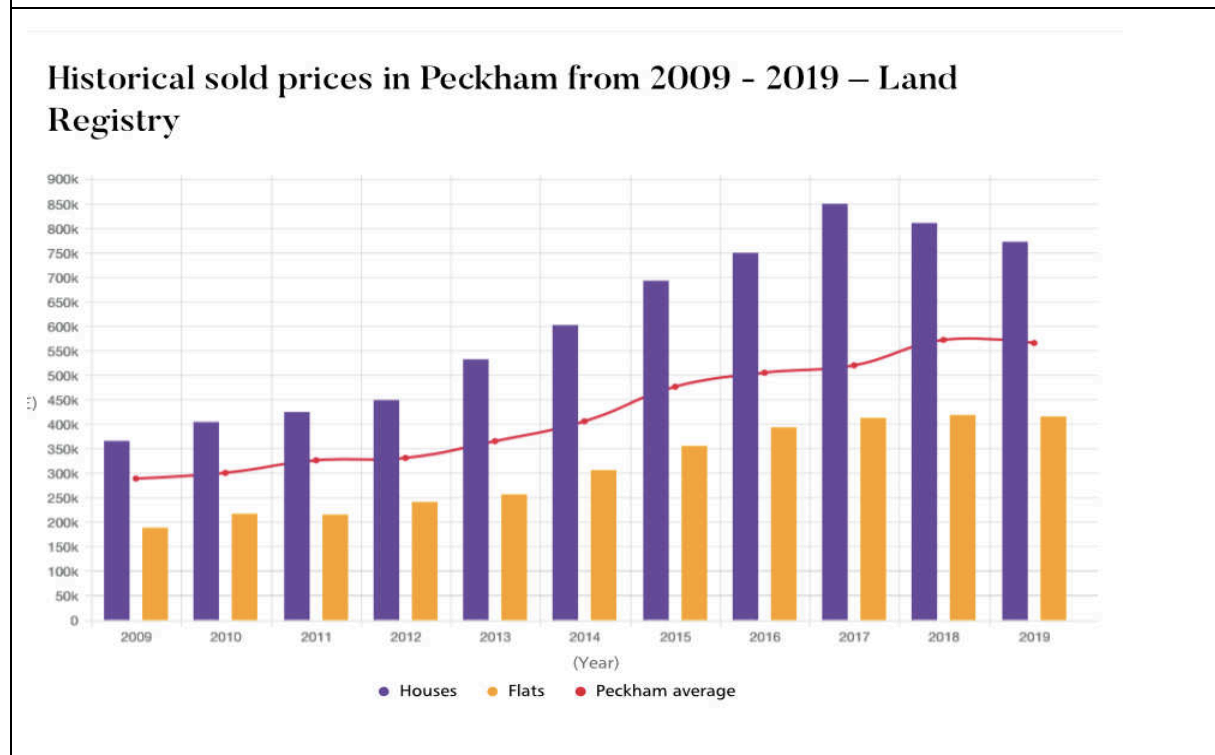
To understand the spatial expansion of gentrification and its links to the rise in house prices, it is useful to take the analogy of a multibowl water fountain. The volume of water at the top represents middle-class housing demand. The water falls into the top bowl but, as prices rise, this is soon filled and the water spills over into the next bowl which then spills over down to the lowest and broadest bowl of the fountain.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Chris Hamnett. "Gentrification and the middle-class remaking of inner London, 1961-2001." *Urban studies*, vol. 40, no. 12, 2003, pp. 2401-2426.

In Peckham, property prices peaked in 2017, with a brief decrease perceptible between 2017 and 2019, which can be explained by the impact of Brexit. Presumably the market had to self-regulate since the sharp increase had not been expected.

Figure 14 - Historical Sold prices in Peckham from 2009- 2019



**Source:** “Peckham House Prices & Property Data.” *KFH*, <[www.kfh.co.uk/south-east-london-and-north-kent/peckham/sold-data](http://www.kfh.co.uk/south-east-london-and-north-kent/peckham/sold-data)> Accessed 17 January 2021.

According to *Right Move*, the largest online real estate site in the UK, a three-bedroom terraced house in Peckham cost on average £750,000 in 2013<sup>109</sup>, rising to £1,100,000 by 2019. Some properties were resold via *Right Move* providing a historical record of sale price. For example, the same four-bedroom detached house was sold in September 2011 for £555,000 and resold in December 2020 for £1,295,000 – the price having more than doubled in fewer than ten years.

<sup>109</sup> “Land Registry Sold Prices.” *House Price History*, <[www.rightmove.co.uk/houseprices/detailMatching.html?prop=95785418&sale=92196564&country=england](http://www.rightmove.co.uk/houseprices/detailMatching.html?prop=95785418&sale=92196564&country=england)> Accessed 19 June 2021. Mentioned as well in Charlotte Bell. “Cultural Practices, Market Disorganization, and Urban Regeneration: Royal Court Theatre Local Peckham and Peckham Space.” *Contemporary Theatre Review*, vol. 24, no. 2, p.196.



According to *Zoopla Property Group*, another British real estate company, all types of residential property in Peckham have increased in value by almost 230% over the preceding 20 years.<sup>110</sup> *Houses Prices*, a website which records sale price and repeat sales in England and Wales, confirms this trend, indicating that a flat in Peckham Rye sold five times over twenty-five years, increased in value as follows: 1996/£39,000; 2000/£100,000; 2008/£250,000; 2011/£325,000; and finally in November 2020 for £600,000.<sup>111</sup>

Prices have been rapidly increasing. One of the earliest interviews conducted during initial research in London in 2016 was with an employee of Peckham Library who moved with her husband from Wales before buying a three-bedroom house 12 years ago:

We were so lucky to buy in this area, after lots of hesitations, because the area had a bad reputation, we literally did not have any choice we needed to buy a house with a large space for us and our two toddlers, but not very far from central London (for her husband's work) if we had waited we wouldn't have paid the price we paid. I mean... the prices did not just double, and at first, we felt we didn't fit in the area, but now it is different, it is much more pleasant, and we like it and we are so happy here.<sup>112</sup>

This person, along with many others, was fortunate to have purchased a dwelling in Peckham in the late 1990s/early 2000s, a period which coincided with the area becoming a spotlight for urban regeneration strategies. For instance, council estates were demolished and announced to be replaced with new housing.

Housing in areas subject to gentrification, whether privately owned or social, plays a crucial role that can both generate conflict and trigger the process of gentrification. Over the last two decades, housing in Peckham has captivated both politicians and investors, leading to territorial changes. This has contributed to altering the demography of the area, leading to a polarised society. The latter will be further developed in the following chapters.

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<sup>110</sup> "House Prices in Peckham Road, London SE15." <https://www.zoopla.co.uk/house-prices/london/peckham-road-se15/?q=Peckham%20Road%2C%20London%20SE15.>> accessed 17 January 2020.

<sup>111</sup> "Latest House Prices Matching: 'Peckham'." *Search Results*, <[www.houseprices.io/?q=Peckham.](http://www.houseprices.io/?q=Peckham.>)> Accessed 17 June 2020.

<sup>112</sup> An employee at the Library. Interview with an employee at Peckham Library. Conducted by Habiba Jelali at the library, 5 August 2019.

### 2.3.2. Conservation Area

Peckham is also known for its conservation area: Peckham Rye Conservation Area. The latter is located in the heart of Peckham's commercial sector and covers three main roads: Peckham High Street, Peckham Hill Street and Rye Lane. According to Southwark Council, "[w]hilst these three roads share the same pattern of development, each is broadly characterised by different phases of the area's commercial and retail growth from the 18th to mid-20th century."<sup>113</sup> The area was designated by Southwark Council as a conservation area on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2011. Ten years later, the council added five more Conservation Areas within the borough and are all located in the Old Kent Road in Peckham (and Walworth situated north of Peckham).<sup>114</sup>

Conservation Areas are areas designated for their historical and architectural values and are protected from changes. In the UK, under the Civic Amenities Act of 1967, Conservation Areas are designated "at the local level, on the resolution of the local planning authority. This makes them unlike other heritage categories, such as listed building, which are identified by central government."<sup>115</sup>

Despite the fact that Conservation Areas are protected from demolition and alterations, they often become focal points for gentrification, as their historical and architectural significance attracts more affluent residents drawn to their charm and character. A previous study by Joe Moran examined the early period of gentrification in London and highlighted a direct correlation between the preservation of urban areas and an increase in property values by the late 1960s.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Southwark Council. Conservation areas: Rye Lane Peckham. *Southwark Council*, 18 July 2023, <<https://www.southwark.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/design-and-conservation/conservation-areas?chapter=32>> Accessed 2 August 2022.

<sup>114</sup> Kit Heren. "Southwark gets five new conservation areas along the Old Kent Road." *Southwark News*, 11 November 2021, <<https://southwarknews.co.uk/area/southwark/southwark-gets-five-new-conservation-areas-along-the-old-kent-road/>> Accessed 2 August 2022.

<sup>115</sup> John Pendlebury. "The conservation of historic areas in the UK: A case study of "Grainger Town", Newcastle upon Tyne." *Cities*, vol. 16, no. 6, 1999, p. 4.

<sup>116</sup> Moran, Joe. "Early cultures of gentrification in London, 1955–1980." *Journal of Urban History*, vol. 34, no. 1, 2007, pp. 101-121.

### 2.3.3. Institutions: Schools and Churches

There are thirteen primary schools and one secondary school in the neighbourhood. Of the primary schools, five are community schools,<sup>117</sup> four are voluntary aided schools<sup>118</sup> with religious character, and five are free and academy converter schools.<sup>119</sup> Regarding religious institutions, there are four churches and chapels<sup>120</sup> in the neighbourhood, and four mosques.<sup>121</sup>

### 2.3.4. Public Spaces and Transportation

The neighbourhood of Peckham offers a variety of public and green spaces. Among them, Peckham Rye Park, located in the south of the neighbourhood, is one of the largest green spaces in the neighbourhood. Peckham Rye Common, adjacent to Peckham Rye Park, adds additional green areas. Together, they make up “113 acres of open recreational grassland, ornamental and water gardens, a lake and woodland.”<sup>122</sup>

Peckham Square located close to Peckham Rye Station, serves as a central meeting point and venue for outdoor events. It features seating areas, public art installations, and its often the site of community gatherings and markets. Additionally, Rye Lane Market, while not a traditional public space, contains 56 different shops and represents an essential part of Peckham.

Regarding transportation, Peckham is well-connected, and very accessible to other parts of London. The two focal points of transportation are Peckham Rye Station, and Queens Road Peckham (Figure 15). Peckham Rye Station is a major railway station situated in Peckham town centre,<sup>123</sup> served by Southern and Thameslink trains, providing direct services to central London, including Victoria, London Bridge, and Blackfriars among other stations. This station,

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<sup>117</sup> Community schools are also called local authority-maintained schools and follow the national curriculum.

<sup>118</sup> Voluntary aided schools are funded by the local authority but supported by representatives from religious groups.

<sup>119</sup> Academy converter schools are run by non-for-profit academy trusts and they are independent from the local authority.

<sup>120</sup> All Saint Church, Rye Lane Chapel, St John Parish Church, and Christ Church.

<sup>121</sup> New Peckham Mosque, BECA Masjid, Peckham High Street Islamic and Cultural centre and Peckham Islamic centre.

<sup>122</sup> The Friends of Peckham Rye Park. “Welcome to Peckham Rye Park.” Peckham Rye Park Website, <<http://www.peckhamryepark.org/#welcome-to-peckham-rye-park>> Accessed 5 August 2023.

<sup>123</sup> Peckham town centre represents the commercial heart of Peckham and composed of three main streets: Rye Lane, Peckham High Street, and Peckham Hill Street.

built in 1865, was refurbished in 2009 by Network Rail.<sup>124</sup> In 2020, Network Railway submitted plans to upgrade and improve the stations.<sup>125</sup> Two years later, renovations were launched and in 2023, the Victorian features of the station were restored. According to *the BBC*, “[t]he restoration has cost around £2.5 m, but it is part of a much wider to regenerate the station and the surrounding area.”<sup>126</sup>

Queens Road Peckham is a station located in the east of the neighbourhood, and operated by Southern and London Overground. It serves several central stations in inner London. Historically, this station opened in 1866 until 1911, after which the East London Line stopped at the Old Kent Road. In 2012, the link was reinstated by London Overground and the station reopened once again.<sup>127</sup>

In addition, Peckham is well-served by local bus routes operated by Transport for London (TfL), as the neighbourhood hosts a bus garage, which is located on Blackpool Road between the two railway stations. The buses connect various neighbourhoods within Peckham and provide access to nearby areas. Peckham is also served by night buses, which operate during the late-night and early-morning hours, providing 24-hour transport operations for residents and visitors.

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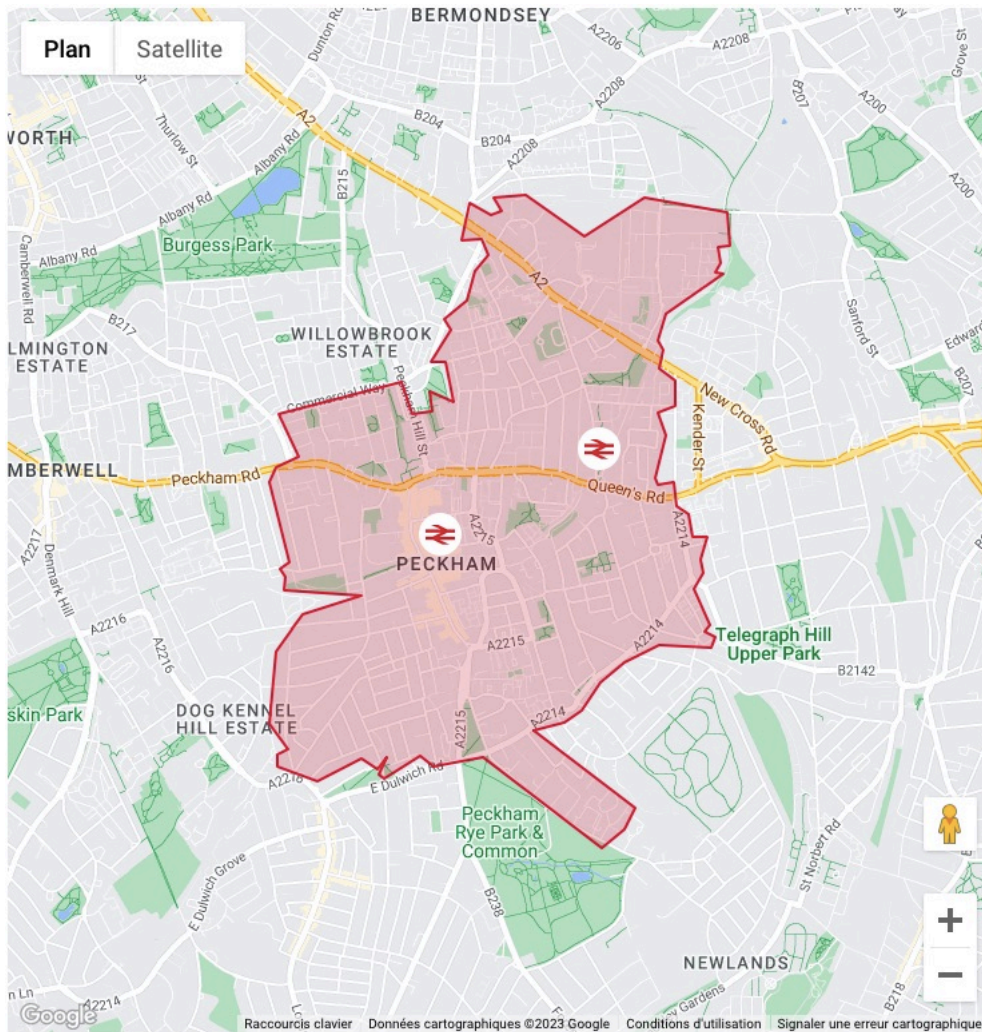
<sup>124</sup> Peckham Vision. “Peckham Rye Station Stages.” Peckham Vision, 19 October 2014, <[https://www.peckhamvision.org/wiki/index.php?title=Peckham\\_Rye\\_Station\\_stages&mobileaction=toggle\\_view\\_desktop](https://www.peckhamvision.org/wiki/index.php?title=Peckham_Rye_Station_stages&mobileaction=toggle_view_desktop)> Accessed 5 August 2023.

<sup>125</sup> Network Rail. “Peckham Rye Station upgrade.” Network Rail, <<https://www.networkrail.co.uk/running-the-railway/our-routes/kent/kent-and-south-east-london-railway-upgrade-plan/peckham-rye-station-redevelopment/>> Accessed 5 August 2023.

<sup>126</sup> Jim Wheble. “Peckham Station Gets Back its Victorian Splendour.” *The BBC*, 24 May 2023, <<https://www.bbc.com/news/av/uk-england-london-65684123>> Accessed 5 August 2023.

<sup>127</sup> No name. “Queens Road Peckham Railway Station.” *UK Transport Wiki*, <[https://uktransport.fandom.com/wiki/Queens\\_Road\\_Peckham\\_railway\\_station](https://uktransport.fandom.com/wiki/Queens_Road_Peckham_railway_station)> Accessed 5 August 2023.

Figure 15 - The two railway stations situated in Peckham: Peckham Rye Station and Queens Road Peckham



Source: "Peckham Transport"

[https://www.kfh.co.uk/south-east-london-and-north-kent/peckham/transport/?\\_its=JTdCJTlydmkJTlyJTNBJTlyNjU4ZWRkZTQtNmY5MC00ODIxLTkwZTktODg0ND AxYTEwYmE3JTlyJTJDJTlyc3RhZGUIMjI0M0EIMjYyYHR%2BMTY5MTMwODg0OH5sYW5kfjJfMjE1MTVfc2VvX2Z iNDE2Yjk4OWZiODEzMzFIYWZmM2IzMzQ0OWQ3NGQ0JTlyJTJDJTlyc2I0ZUIkTlyJTNBMzk1MzclNOQ%3D.>](https://www.kfh.co.uk/south-east-london-and-north-kent/peckham/transport/?_its=JTdCJTlydmkJTlyJTNBJTlyNjU4ZWRkZTQtNmY5MC00ODIxLTkwZTktODg0ND AxYTEwYmE3JTlyJTJDJTlyc3RhZGUIMjI0M0EIMjYyYHR%2BMTY5MTMwODg0OH5sYW5kfjJfMjE1MTVfc2VvX2Z iNDE2Yjk4OWZiODEzMzFIYWZmM2IzMzQ0OWQ3NGQ0JTlyJTJDJTlyc2I0ZUIkTlyJTNBMzk1MzclNOQ%3D.>)  
Accessed 5 August 2023.

## **Conclusion**

Peckham has undergone different phases of physical, urban and social changes. After a period of neglect in the late 1970s until the late 1990s, it started attracting policy makers again, with initiatives put in place, investment in transportation infrastructure and community spaces. As a result, professionals and young families started to become attracted to the cultural vibrancy of the neighbourhood and its convenient location (accessibility to inner areas), this will be further developed in the following chapters. In the last decade, physical changes started to be perceived, leading to a rapid rise in housing prices, and hence the gentrification of the area and the alteration of its socio-economic fabric. Additionally, new trendy restaurants and new cultural hubs began to emerge reflecting new dynamics, as we shall see later. The following part will explain the causes of gentrification in the area at three different levels.

## Part II

# Production Factors – Three Levels of Urban Policy and Physical Consequences

As explained the process of gentrification still remains a topic of much debate and controversy. Several studies have indicated that gentrification is encouraged by urban policies, offered as a solution to economic decline which perpetuates social injustice. Loretta Lees emphasises the direct consequences of urban schemes on the working-class communities who are often displaced from their neighbourhoods and compelled to relocate to less affluent areas. Lees further highlights the crucial role policies play in shaping the dynamics of gentrification.<sup>128</sup>

In order to provide a more comprehensive analysis of the role played by urban policies, in gentrifying neighbourhoods in London, particularly in Peckham, this part of the thesis, is divided into four chapters, and shows how this phenomenon was planned and promoted in London at three different political levels: national, regional (Greater London)<sup>129</sup> and local as well as its physical consequences.

Chapter three examines the role played by national governments since the election of the New Labour government under Tony Blair in 1997 and the continuity of urban policies. It further tackles the urban policies under the coalition government's tenure from 2010 to 2015, followed by an examination of urban policy trends under conservative governments from 2015 to 2022.

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<sup>128</sup> Loretta Lees and Hannah White. "The social cleansing of London council estates: everyday experiences of 'accumulative dispossession'." *Housing Studies*, vol. 35, no. 10, 2020, pp. 1701-1722.

<sup>129</sup> The Greater London Authority is a strategic regional authority. In this thesis, it is considered a regional body. This classification follows the practices and terminology utilised by statisticians, researchers, and the British government.

In Chapter four, the spotlight turns to the Greater London Authority (GLA), its role and its initiatives in regenerating the capital. This chapter highlights how the development of London as a world city has drawn in investment, stimulated economic growth and contributed to the process of gentrification.

In chapter five, the focus shifts to the local level, specifically Southwark Council, and examines its pivotal role in driving urban transformations within the borough. This chapter delves into the specific schemes and initiatives implemented by the council that have contributed to significant changes in the urban landscape. It also explores the notable surge in housing prices in the borough but mainly in Peckham, shedding light in the intricate relationship between local policy decisions and the local real estate market.

Chapter six highlights the physical urban changes in Peckham that participated in improving the public realm. It also explores the political initiatives that have triggered these changes, thereby, highlighting their role in the gentrification of the neighbourhood. Furthermore, the chapter examines the social changes that have accompanied the physical urban transformations, leading later on to a change of the neighbourhood's image.



# Chapter 3

## National Policy – 25 Years of Urban Policies since Labour 1997

By the mid-1990s, the British people had lost faith in the Conservative party which had won four consecutive general elections (with Margaret Thatcher winning three, followed by John Major). In 1997, the Labour Party won the general election with a landslide majority under the youngest Prime Minister of the twentieth century, Tony Blair. Blair represented a new approach to deal with urban decline and the housing crisis. New Labour's manifesto was based on a new "vision". In fact, the leadership of Tony Blair was described by Emmanuelle Avril as one of the strengths of the Labour Party at that time, with his "charisma, energy and conviction."<sup>130</sup> Under Blair, Labour became 'New Labour', showcasing a new approach known as the 'Third Way' in order to modernize the party. It abolished Clause Four, adopted early in 1918 and which advocated for a Marxist approach and common ownership of the means of production, exchange, and distribution, adopting instead a market economy approach.

The policy shift of New Labour, turning away from its previous socialist values, was perceived in its 1997 manifesto, which reflected the move to the centre-left and, promoted a mixed economy and public-private partnerships. The Party promised to focus on education, unemployment, and devolution in addition to environmental and housing issues, committing to solving urban decline and turning around the failed policies of previous Conservative governments. The manifesto read:

The purpose of new Labour is to give Britain a different political choice: the choice between a failed Conservative government, exhausted and divided in everything other than its desire to cling on to power, and a new and revitalised Labour Party that has been resolute in transforming itself into a party of the future.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Emmanuelle Avril. "New Labour et ses Consommateurs : une Marque Victime de son Succès." *L'Harmattan. Consommation et Exclusion en Grande-Bretagne XIXe-XXe siècles*, 2007.

<sup>131</sup> The Labour Party. "New Labour Because Britain Deserves Better." *Labour Party Manifesto 1997*, 1997.

Blair promised a fresh approach based on new reforms for urban regeneration, now known as “urban renaissance,” with the new leader directing the Labour Party’s attention to community involvement in regeneration.

The *New Labour Party* won the general election in 1997 under the premiership of Tony Blair whose new government promised to tackle social inequalities among other issues, as part of its new “Urban Renaissance” discourse.<sup>132</sup> The new government at that time guaranteed long-term solutions for the urban decline inherited from their predecessor and promised a shift in policy.<sup>133</sup> Yet by the time Blair left office in 2007 and Labour lost the general election to the Coalition government headed by David Cameron in 2010, there was a sense that the New Labour government had not fully delivered on their promises. The Coalition government, which consisted of the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats, shifted their policies to decentralisation, localism and austerity measures.

This chapter aims to examine the urban policies that have been implemented over a span of two decades and their effects on both the housing crisis and the gentrification of deprived neighbourhoods like Peckham. The focus is on the national measures taken to address the housing crisis, including initiatives for affordable housing. Yet, these initiatives managed to worsen the process of gentrification in the British capital and cause displacement of the lower-income population.

The chapter is composed of three sub-sections, the first sub-section examines urban policymaking between 1997 and 2010 as it impacted urban areas like Peckham. It, therefore, starts with policies under Tony Blair’s government. It highlights how this government’s agenda, in addressing social and urban issues, focused on social exclusion in the most deprived areas through neighbourhood renewal programmes,<sup>134</sup> and “urban renaissance,” translated as physical and economic regeneration. Then, the second sub-section demonstrates the new shift in strategy under both the Coalition government of 2010 and finally, the third subsection highlight the strategy under the subsequent Conservative governments (2015-2022). It

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<sup>132</sup> Clair Colomb. "Unpacking new labour's 'Urban Renaissance' Agenda: Towards a socially sustainable reurbanization of British cities?" *Planning, practice and research*, vol. 22, no. 1, 2007, p. 4.

<sup>133</sup> Roy Coleman. "Whose right to the city?" *Social justice and criminal justice*, 2007, p. 170.

<sup>134</sup> This was perceived for example through one of the first strategies set up by the New Labour Government which was the publication *Bringing Britain Together: A National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal* which announced the production of new strategies that tackled social exclusion (including; health, education, crime, unemployment and housing).

summarises the social and planning reforms implemented under both governments, concluding that existing policies continued to be perpetuated without implementing any meaningful change.

The second sub-section of this chapter examines the impact and limitations of these policies, and provides a comprehensive analysis of the outcomes and challenges notably concerning the housing crisis and the process of gentrification, with a specific emphasis on the context of London.

In order to understand the link between national policies and initiatives and the process of gentrification, data analysis was needed. The data was collected from different sources, such as government databases. Previous studies were also reviewed in order to gain insight into this complex link between the policies implemented and their outcomes.

### **3.1. Urban Policy under The New Labour Government 1997-2010**

As previously mentioned, studying urban policies implemented by different governments between 1997 and 2022 is important as it aligns with significant urban transformations, especially in London, where various neighbourhoods underwent gentrification. The arrival of Tony Blair to power raised a wave of high expectations after eighteen years of Conservative rule, as explained by Claire Colomb.<sup>135</sup> A shift directions and programmes (in social and urban policies) was expected.

#### ***3.1.1. Labour's Urban Renaissance Agenda***

In 1997, the New Labour Party, under the leadership of Tony Blair, came to power with a focus on addressing several issues such as social inclusion, sustainable development, urban governance, housing, health and welfare, crime prevention, education, and wealth creation, and with a major highlight on urban regeneration or what they called “urban renaissance.” The latter was the New Labour government’s slogan. The expression was used in *Towards an Urban Renaissance*,<sup>136</sup> a report that addressed, and presented solutions to the urban housing crisis, and was published by the *Urban Task Force (UTF)*. The report was set up by Deputy Prime Minister

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<sup>135</sup> Claire Colomb. "Le new labour et le discours de la « Renaissance urbaine » au Royaume-Uni." *Sociétés contemporaines*, vol. 63, no. 3, 2006, pp.15-37.

<sup>136</sup> The Urban Task Force. *Towards an urban renaissance*. Routledge, 1999.

John Prescott (1997-2007) and chaired by the Labour peer and architect, Richard Rogers, who was coordinating it with a group of experts from both the public and private sectors. The report is divided into five parts<sup>137</sup> and eleven distinct sections. It begins by introducing the context of urban challenges and the need for a new approach. It explores the quality of urban life with a focus on housing, transportation, environment, and social inclusion. The report recognises cities as economic centres and examines strategies to foster economic vitality. Highlighting the importance of urban regeneration, the report also offers recommendations for revitalising urban spaces. It, therefore, aimed at identifying the causes of urban decline in England, and provide practical solutions focusing on urban regeneration and on bringing back people to the city. It has been noted that the nomination of the *Urban Task Force* was seen as the first step of the Labour policies of the city.<sup>138</sup> According to Stéphane Sadoux et al., “this report represents the theoretical and prospective introduction of a philosophy of urban policies focused on the physical and social regeneration of the city.”<sup>139</sup>

The former Prime Minister John Prescott explained his choice and why he had asked in 1998 Lord Rogers to head The *Urban Task Force*; he was an expert in the domain; “not only an architect of global reputation but an evangelist of urban renaissance,”<sup>140</sup> and expertise was required to understand the reasons, identify the causes of the urban decline, and provide long-term solutions. The former Prime Minister confirmed as well that the publication of this report represented one step among others, as the Labour government had already taken other measures and strategies; one of these recommendations was a plan for a 60% target for new homes on brownfields, as the New Labour government also focused on developing brownfield sites instead of building on greenfield land, a concept which will be further developed in subsequent sections.

To sum up, the report was a statement that cities in England needed to attract people back to cities in order to stimulate the economy, prevent sprawl and reverse the decline in these areas. According to Rogers, “Since the industrial revolution we have lost ownership of our towns and

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<sup>137</sup> “The Sustainable City,” “Making Towns and Cities Work,” “Making the Most of Our Urban Assets,” “Making the Investment,” and “Sustaining the Renaissance.”

<sup>138</sup> David Fée, et Sylvie Nail. *Vers une Renaissance Anglaise ? Dix ans de Politique Travailliste de la Ville*. Presse Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2018.

<sup>139</sup> Stéphane Sadoux, Gille Novarina, and Charles Ambrosino. "L'Urban Renaissance: la Ville selon Richard Rogers." *Vers une Renaissance Anglaise*, 2008, pp. 19-33.

Original text : « Ce rapport constitue l’amorce théorique et prospective d’une philosophie des politiques urbaines focalisée sur la régénération physique et sociale de la ville. »

<sup>140</sup> The Urban Task Force. *Towards an Urban Renaissance*. Routledge, 2003, p. 4.

cities, allowing them to become spoilt by poor design, economic dispersal and social polarisation.”<sup>141</sup> Therefore, the report sets out a vision that acknowledges the necessity of concentrating new homes in city centres, focusing on architectural aesthetics and the importance of improving public transport and pedestrian and cycling spaces, by facilitating and simplifying local development plans. Regeneration planning policies needed to be more flexible and accessible, and funded by both public and private sectors, hence the need for public-private partnerships, and the encouragement of private investments. This report was issued as a direct response to urban decline, to the deteriorating state of cities, and the housing issues. It represented a form of reassurance and focused on the attractiveness of the urban aspect and on improving the quality of the built environment.

The *UTF* report provided solutions for housing in the UK and paved the way for further initiatives. Yet it was harshly criticised. For instance, a review study of the report highlighted limitations contained in the new measures taken by the *Urban Task Force*, such as neglecting to address social segregation, and how these new policies may facilitate gentrification.<sup>142</sup>

A study<sup>143</sup> by John Punter argues that the types of recommendations provided in such reports represents a clear commitment to entrepreneurial governance and gentrification, where the urban planning schemes promote a market-led approach and partnerships with the private sector may result in unequal capital flow in inner-city neighbourhoods. In 2005 the UTF, chaired by Richard Rogers, published an independent and a follow-up report, *towards a Strong Urban Renaissance*, which explained that the first report made major progress, “[t]his progress is cause for celebration, but not evidence that the job is done. New issues have emerged, and old issues remain, which require renewed attention from Government.” Issues that persisted and were not solved were enduring major social inequalities, limited social housing stock, an increase in housing demand, and limited funding for sustainable and eco-friendly projects.

The *Towards an Urban Renaissance* report was followed by the publication of an *Urban White Paper 2000*, another initiative with the same purpose: to provide a vision and framework for future policies.

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<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, p.viii.

<sup>142</sup> Ljiljana Grubović. “Urban Task Force.” *Spatium*, n. 8, 2002.

<sup>143</sup> John Punter. “Developing Urban Design as Public Policy: Best practice principles for design review and development management.” *Journal of Urban design*, vol. 12, n. 2, 2007, pp. 167-202.

The *Urban White Paper* was published in 2000, a year after the publication of the *UTF* report, as part of the report's recommendation, and almost 25 years after the *White Paper of 1977*, that was introduced by the Labour government of the time. Both White Papers came as a response to urban decline. They tackle some of the same urban problems and social injustices, and mainly suggest similar solutions, with major differences; the *White Paper 2000* invites and welcomes partnerships with the private sector, as a form of modernisation, and focuses mainly on English cities. It also highlights the importance of architectural aesthetics compared to the *White Paper 1977*, which mainly addressed social and economic disadvantages.<sup>144</sup>

Figure 1- A Summary of the new vision of urban living from the Urban White Paper

**A new vision of urban living**

**Our vision is of towns, cities and suburbs which offer a high quality of life and opportunity for all, not just the few.**

**We want to see:**

- ♥ **people shaping the future** of their community, supported by strong and truly representative local leaders;
- ♥ people living in **attractive, well kept towns and cities** which use space and buildings well;
- ♥ good design and planning which makes it practical to live in a **more environmentally sustainable** way, with less noise, pollution and traffic congestion;
- ♥ towns and cities able to **create and share prosperity**, investing to help all their citizens reach their full potential; and

<sup>144</sup> Andrew Tallon. *Urban Regeneration in the UK*. Routledge, 2010, p. 80.

♥ **good quality services** - health, education, housing, transport, finance, shopping, leisure and protection from crime - that meet the needs of people and businesses wherever they are.

This urban renaissance will benefit everyone, making towns and cities vibrant and successful, and protecting the countryside from development pressure.

**Source:** The Urban White Paper: Our Towns and Cities – the Future. ODPM, 2000.

The report is divided into seven chapters, including a foreword by the then Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott, a summary, and recommendations of the *UTF*. The report begins with a summary explaining the challenges faced by the new government, such as social changes, “With people living longer, having fewer children and many more living alone,”<sup>145</sup> hence the growing need for accommodation. Another challenge was to attract people back into major cities and towns. The report focuses on the role of the community and provides a new vision of urban living (figure 1) where “people” are a major part of future changes.

In summary, the report suggests solutions such as funding programmes for certain projects linked to education, housing, crime reduction, and a spending review for the following years. It emphasises the importance of the role cities play in the economy, and as the centre of social cohesion, setting clear goals, such as focusing on sustainable environmentally friendly communities, improving the quality of urban green spaces, providing adequate housing stock, and bringing brownfield sites and empty buildings back into use. It also paves the way for regeneration and renewal strategies that target poor and densely populated areas. The report ends with several commitments from the government, for example, the major goal of improving towns and cities, with 60% of new housing to be located on brownfield land, and an *Urban Policy Unit* to be created ensuring the implementation of these strategies.

The *Urban White Paper 2000* represented a novel attempt to view policy strategically, which, although widely welcomed, was disappointing to members of the *UTF*, whose

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<sup>145</sup> *The Urban White Paper: Our towns and Cities – the Future*. ODPM, 2000.

recommendations were not fully taken into consideration.<sup>146</sup> This initiative was criticised for several reasons, including a long discussion of existing policies, many elements of which had been introduced or announced by the previous Conservative government, meaning there was little divergence from previous policies.<sup>147</sup> It was also been criticised for the simultaneous use of the term “urban sustainability” as a solution, while being conceived of state-led gentrification,<sup>148</sup> a topic which will be developed further.

A key term frequently used in the New Labour agenda, and after the general election of 1997, was indeed “sustainability” or “sustainable communities.” The concept was a key one in the manifesto and was implemented in several plans in the following years. ‘Sustainable communities’ were:

Places where people want to live and work, now and in the future. They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment, and contribute to a high quality of life. They are safe and inclusive, well planned, built and run, and offer equality of opportunity and good services for all.<sup>149</sup>

Creating “sustainability” was a major part of Blair’s agenda. In 2003, the *Sustainable Communities Plan: Sustainable Communities Building for the Future*<sup>150</sup> was launched under the Deputy Prime Minister. It provided a vision of how communities would be developed over the next twenty years. The action plan aimed to provide better living conditions which were, “Safe and inclusive, well planned, built and run and offer equality of opportunities and good services for all,”<sup>151</sup> but most of all affordable. The general focus was on four different areas in south-east England: Ashford in Kent (to the south-east of London), the London-Stansted-Cambridge-Peterborough corridor (to the north-east of London), the MKSM sub-region (including Northamptonshire, also to the north), and the Thames Gateway (east of London).<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Filippo Booth, and al. “British Urban Policy since 1997: Change and Continuity.” *Hommes et Terres du Nord*, vol. 3, n. 1, 2002, p. 40.

<sup>147</sup> Michael Parkinson. “The Urban White Paper: Halfway to Paradise?” *New Economy*, vol. 8, n. 1, 2001, pp. 47-51.

<sup>148</sup> Loretta Lees. “Visions of Urban Renaissance: The Urban Task Force report and the Urban White Paper.” *Urban Renaissance? New Labour, Community and Urban Policy*, 2003, p. 67.

<sup>149</sup> “Living Geography: building sustainable communities.” *UK government web archives*, archived on 7 June 2007,

<<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20070603164609/http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1139866>> Accessed on 23 October 2021.

<sup>150</sup> ODPM. *Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future*. Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. 2003.

<sup>151</sup> Sally McDonald, Naglis MALYS, et Vida MALIENE. “Urban regeneration for sustainable communities: A case study.” *Technological and Economic Development of Economy*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2009, p. 50.

<sup>152</sup> Bob Colenutt. “winners and Losers from Urban Growth in South East England.”, *Whose Urban Renaissance?* Routledge, 2009, p. 62.



The Plan aimed to extend these areas and avoid building new towns in the countryside. “The key message was ‘sustainable communities.’ New housing would not be simply mass-produced, single-tenure housing estates with limited services, but mixed communities that would be socially, economically and environmentally sustainable.”<sup>153</sup>

In London, with the rapidly growing population and the continuous increase in house prices, the action plan mainly tackled housing shortages, planning, and urban renewal. Indeed, the third part of the plan targeted specifically housing supply in London. It outlined, “[w]e will work with local authorities to ensure that the new homes already planned are built in London and the wider South East. Additional new housing will be concentrated in the four growth areas”<sup>154</sup>

The action plan prioritised the provision of decent and affordable housing for key workers, the rehabilitation of existing housing stock, and encouraged home ownership, aiming also to improve public transport and other facilities. The action plan also encouraged the private housing market by, “creating conditions in which private housebuilders will build more homes of the right type in the right places.”<sup>155</sup>

### **3.1.2. Addressing the Social Housing and Deprived Neighbourhoods issues**

Addressing social housing and deprived neighbourhoods was a key focus for the New Labour government and a key plank of its urban policy. It therefore implemented various policies and initiatives aimed at improving social housing conditions and tackling deprivation in specific areas.

One of the first strategies set up by the New Labour Government was the publication of an 84-page report *Bringing Britain Together: A National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal*<sup>156</sup> one year after the general election. It was the third report published by *the Social Exclusion Unit*.

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<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>154</sup> ODPM. *Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future*. Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. 2003, p.30.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, p.30.

<sup>156</sup> Great Britain Social Exclusion Unit, and Great Britain Prime Minister. *Bringing Britain Together: a National Strategy for Neighbourhood Rrenewal*. Great Britain Social Exclusion Unit, 1998.

The latter was launched on 8 December 1997, within a few months after the New Labour came into office, in order to target deprived neighbourhoods suffering from unemployment, high crime, bad living conditions and poor housing.

*The National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal* was a report of eight chapters. It announced the production of new strategies that tackled social exclusion (including; health, education, crime, unemployment and housing). It started with a summary to identify the problem or problems linked to deprived areas. It also criticised previous central and local governments that did not manage to provide long-term solutions. It then promised to implement new reforms and policies in order to combat social exclusion, by providing more jobs opportunities for the youth.

The report led to the setting of *Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP)* and the *Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF)*. The LSPs were set up to coordinate a local strategy, and were a precondition to access public monies; the NRF aimed at financing projects and strategies in the most deprived neighbourhoods, and encouraged private-public partnerships and community involvement.

As part of their agenda, the government launched *The New Deal for Communities (NDC)*, a ten-year programme which provided funding and support to regenerate some of the country's most deprived neighbourhoods, by improving housing, education, employment, etc. According to the evaluation report published in 2010:

Over 10 years the Programme is designed to transform 39 deprived neighbourhoods in England, each accommodating about 9,900 people. The 39 NDC partnerships are implementing local regeneration schemes each funded by on average £50m of Programme spend.<sup>157</sup>

The programme operated through partnerships comprising local authorities, community organisations, and other stakeholders. It was concluded that “[o]n the broad canvas, this is clearly a successful Programme. Partnerships have presided over very real changes to these 39 areas.”<sup>158</sup> Southwark was part of round 1 of the NDC programme.

The NDC provided funding for a range of projects including, housing refurbishment, the improvement of public spaces and infrastructure, and the creation of new facilities with the aim of creating socially mixed communities, in 39 deprived neighbourhoods, and led to the transfer

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<sup>157</sup> Elaine Batty, et al. *The New Deal for Communities Experience: A final Assessment*. Department for communities and Local government, March 2010, p. 5.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

from council housing to housing association tenure. As a consequence, council housing declined.

As observed, New Labour's agenda distinctly prioritised the importance of communities and their role in regeneration and urban renaissance. Involving and focusing on communities was highlighted in Blair's manifesto "[w]e are a broad-based movement for progress and justice. New Labour is the political arm of none other than the British people as a whole. Our values are the same: the equal worth of all, with no one cast aside; fairness and justice within strong *communities*."<sup>159</sup> [emphasis mine]

The Former Prime Minister also announced during the general election victory speech that, "It shall be a government rooted in strong values, the values of justice and progress and community, the values that have guided me all my political life."<sup>160</sup> The Party repeatedly stated that strengthening local communities was a major objective, and would implement policies to address the needs of these communities. The Labour Party also highlighted its commitment to regenerate British cities by focusing on social inclusion and community involvement. An early measure taken soon after winning the general election was launching the *Social Exclusion Unit*, which was set up to tackle community-related issues, as explained above.

The term 'community' was central to Blair's political philosophy. He equated it with "family." "A young country that wants to be a strong country cannot be morally neutral about the family. It is the foundation of any decent society. Behind strong communities, lie strong families."<sup>161</sup> Terms such as 'community', 'local people', 'individuals', and even verbs such as 'engage' were used in different contexts (speeches and conferences) by the New Labour government in order to include individuals in sharing political responsibility, and to give them a common purpose.

The term has been criticised as it refers to an "object of policy" or part of a "policy instrument."<sup>162</sup> It is used as part of a discourse, particularly in urban policy programmes. It was part of the New Labour approach to politics, in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The notion of

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<sup>159</sup> The Labour Party. "New Labour Because Britain Deserves Better." *1997 Labour Party Manifesto* - <[www.labour-party.org.uk/manifestos/1997/1997-labour-manifesto.shtml](http://www.labour-party.org.uk/manifestos/1997/1997-labour-manifesto.shtml)> Accessed on 2 August 2021.

<sup>160</sup> Tony Blair. "General Election Victory Speech 1997." *Speech Archive*, 10 Downing Street, 1997. <<http://www.britishpoliticalspeech.org/speech-archive.htm?speech=222>> Accessed 2 August 2021.

<sup>161</sup> Tony Blair. "Leader's Speech." *Speech Archive*. Brighton 1995, <<http://www.britishpoliticalspeech.org/speech-archive.htm?speech=201>> Accessed on 3 August 2021.

<sup>162</sup> Rob Imrie, and Mike Raco. "Community and the Changing nature of Urban Policy". *Urban Renaissance? New Labour, Community and Urban Policy*, 2003, 6.

‘community’ under Tony Blair, used as a technique and part of the new political approach, was part of the communitarianism approach. It was inspired by the American ideals of communitarianism, where the community plays an important role in political life and was used in discourses in order to justify particular policies. Communitarianism is a philosophy and a social movement, defined as:

[...] often contrasted with classical liberalism, a philosophical position that holds each individual should formulate the good on his or her own. Communitarians examine the ways shared conceptions of the good (values) are formed, transmitted, justified, and enforced. Hence their interest in communities (and moral dialogues within them), historically transmitted values and mores, and the societal units that transmit and enforce values such as the family, schools, and voluntary associations (social clubs, churches, and so forth), which are all parts of communities.<sup>163</sup>

The leader of New Labour believed in the importance of communities and locals becoming involved in ‘policymaking’. This political discourse represented the needs of the people and a response to social fragmentation that had widened during the housing crisis. This political rhetoric aimed at shifting responsibilities and obligations<sup>164</sup> away from governments, which used to be responsible for the citizenry, and making communities more responsible and government less accountable. Some studies show that the New Labour government did not endorse communitarianism, but simply used some of its ideas to revise the Party’s approach to equality.<sup>165</sup> As such, this discourse deploying a notion of ‘community’ has been connected with the “Third Way”, a concept which aimed to attract attention and a touch of novelty and freshness to the Party. ‘Community’ was also deployed opportunistically as the Labour Party needed to modernise in order to maintain political support. It is worth mentioning that this type of discourse has been evident in the political arena since the 1960s, when urban decline was associated with the loss of community.<sup>166</sup> There was therefore a political need to implement policies which would strengthen communities.

Another predominant focus under Blair’s government was ‘urban design.’ As highlighted by Stéphane Sadoux et al, there was a shift from a “property-led” urban regeneration policy in the

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<sup>163</sup> Amitai Etzioni. "Communitarianism." *Encyclopedia of community: From the village to the virtual world*, vol. 1, 2003, p. 224-228.

<sup>164</sup> Jonathan Burnett. “Community, Cohesion and the State.” 2004 Institute of Race Relations Vol. 45, n. 3, 15.

<sup>165</sup> Eunice Goes. “The Third Way and the Politics of Community.” *Manchester*, Manchester University Press, 30 July 2018.

<[https://www.manchesteropenhive.com/configurable/content/9781526137883\\$002f9781526137883.00013.xml?t%3Aac=9781526137883%24002f9781526137883.00013.xml&chapterBody=FullText.>](https://www.manchesteropenhive.com/configurable/content/9781526137883$002f9781526137883.00013.xml?t%3Aac=9781526137883%24002f9781526137883.00013.xml&chapterBody=FullText.>) Accessed on 22 September 2021.

<sup>166</sup> Rob Imrie, and Mike Raco. “Community and the Changing nature of Urban Policy”. *Urban Renaissance? New Labour, Community and Urban Policy*, 2003, p. 9.

1980s to “design-led” urban renaissance.<sup>167</sup> Urban design is defined as the physical features of towns, cities, streets and spaces. It is the process of reshaping the image of a particular area and focuses mainly on the aesthetic of space and its relationship with the community. Under the New Labour government, urban design was recommended by the *UTF* report of 1999 as a major part of urban regeneration, “[s]uccessful urban regeneration is design-led. Promoting sustainable lifestyles and social inclusion, in our towns and cities depends on the design of the physical environment.”<sup>168</sup> It continued to be emphasised in the *White Paper 2000*, and future reforms.

In 1999, two years after the general election, the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), was established and funded by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, and the Department for Communities and Local Government, to become the government’s urban design and architecture advisor. It reviewed national schemes but also provided consultations to planners and private architects. In addition, a Planning Policy Guidance 3: Housing (PPG3)<sup>169</sup> was issued in 2000, and placed a significant emphasis on urban design and the efficient use of land. It discouraged the development of greenfield sites in favour of brownfield and previously developed sites. It also encouraged high-quality design for new housing development. But mainly, PPG3 encouraged local planning authorities to avoid developments of less than 30 dwellings per hectare and to seek higher densities in areas of high demand or good public transport accessibility.

The emphasis by the New Labour government on urban design and the physical image of neighbourhoods was based on the fact that these were key to urban regeneration. During the course of 13 years, New Labour managed to implement several urban schemes that tackled housing and urban spaces. These schemes were recommended by the *Urban Task Force* report in 1999, *Towards an Urban Renaissance*. However, as the housing supply failed to meet demand, the housing market once again failed to meet the needs of the general population. House prices continued to increase rapidly, facilitating a new crisis. These urban schemes

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<sup>167</sup> Stéphane Sadoux, Gille Novarina, and Charles Ambrosino. "L'Urban Renaissance: la ville selon Richard Rogers." *Vers une Renaissance Anglaise*, 2008, pp. 19-33.

<sup>168</sup> The Urban Task Force. *Towards an Urban Renaissance*. Routledge, 2003, p. 22.

<sup>169</sup> DETR. *Planning Policy Guidance, Note 3, Housing*. DETR, 2000.

nevertheless had an effect on the provision of housing in London and the gentrification of the capital as we shall see later.

### 3.2. Urban Policy since the Coalition Government

The Labour government failed to find radical solutions to the housing shortage, leading to a worsening housing crisis inherited from their predecessors. The Conservative Party needed to offer new solutions to the housing shortage and the rapid increase in house prices. According to the Conservative Party's Manifesto 2006, the Party promised to promote "The construction of attractive, affordable and eco-friendly housing through new approaches to planning and building regulations, and by decentralising the provision of energy."<sup>170</sup> From 2005 onwards, under the leadership of David Cameron, the Conservative Party decided it needed to devote more attention to social issues (housing, particularly), in order to attract voters, hence their collaboration with *Policy Exchange*, a right-wing think tank established in 2002. Between 2005 and 2006, the think tank published a series of reports advocating new social reforms, and a new planning system, encouraging local authorities to build more homes.<sup>171</sup>

In 2010, the general election resulted in a hung parliament, and a coalition between the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats Party was formed. This coalition government had promised policies to increase housing supply, encourage homeownership and guarantee housing affordability.<sup>172</sup> The newly formed government declared a shift in planning and urban policies and a few months after the general election, the *Localism Act 2010* was implemented, leading to an end of the regional spatial strategies established in 2004 under the Labour government. Most Labour urban programmes were brought to an end. Local solutions were to replace national plans.

The *Localism Act 2011* was an Act of Parliament implemented in 2011 under the coalition government and introduced by Eric Pickles, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. The Act aims to transfer power from central government to local authorities, but more specifically to local communities and local people.

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<sup>170</sup> Conservative Party. "Built to last: The Aims and Values of the Conservative Party." *Conservative Party*, 2006.

<sup>171</sup> David Fée. "A Tory Revolution? A British Coalition Government and Housing." *Observatoire de la société britannique*, vol. 12, 2012.

<sup>172</sup> DCLG. *Annual Reports and Accounts 2010-11*, 2011.

It deals with Local authorities (governance and the transfer and delegation of certain functions to certain authorities), EU financial sanctions, non-domestic rates, community empowerment and involvement, planning (and fundamental changes of the planning system), and housing (social housing, allocations, and other regulations). The Bill provides for specific housing strategies in London and further explains the future delegation of functions by ministers to the Mayor of London. Its aim is briefly summarised as; “[t]he Localism Act seeks to give effect to the Government's ambitions to decentralise power away from Whitehall and back into the hands of local councils, communities and individuals to act on local priorities.”<sup>173</sup>

In London, for example, and specifically concerning housing and regeneration, according to the Plain English guide to the *Localism Act*, published by the Department of Communities and Local Government:

The Localism Act passes greater powers over housing and regeneration to local democratically elected representatives in London. It empowers the democratically elected Mayor to carry on housing investment activities currently carried out by the Homes and Communities Agency, and the economic development work done by the London Development Agency.<sup>174</sup>

The Act deals with major regulations and issues concerning, for example, the tenancy regime. It grants Local Authorities in England the right to offer different types of tenancy including secure but “flexible tenancies” to new tenants in place of the previously granted “tenancy for life” that was strongly criticised. The aim was to grant Local Authority landlords the advantage of choosing the durability of the tenancy.

The Act, considered an important political tool, represents a clear vision of localism from the coalition government. It granted and shifted central powers to Local Authorities and communities. However, this Act has been criticised for its purpose and for whom it services. Some academics have concluded that the Act operates, “In the favour of local authorities and the detriment of local people,”<sup>175</sup> as it provides Local Authorities with greater powers and flexibility to manage their housing stock. It has also been criticised by the media for lacking ‘real’ decentralisation of powers: “[s]ervices have been devolved to boroughs, yet it is often

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<sup>173</sup> “An Introduction to the Localism Act.” *Local Government Association*, <[www.local.gov.uk/introductionlocalism-act](http://www.local.gov.uk/introductionlocalism-act)> Accessed on 22 September 2021.

<sup>174</sup> DCLG. “A Plain English Guide to the Localism Act.” *Communities and Local Governments*, 2011, p. 6. <[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/5959/189653\\_4.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/5959/189653_4.pdf)> Accessed on 22 September 2021.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 981.

simply a cost-shunting exercise rather than a true devolution of power and fiscal autonomy – that is, the responsibility is devolved but not the money to fulfil it”.<sup>176</sup>

The coalition government considered social housing reforms necessary to tackle social issues, hence the *Localism Act 2011*. Through this Act, the Government managed to devolve some of the powers from the central government to Local Authorities.

This Act was followed by further housing and planning reforms, and funding schemes. The same year the Act was introduced, a report entitled *Laying the Foundation: A Housing Strategy for England* was published. The report begins with a reminder that the English economy and housing market require flexible and affordable housing, and promised funding for building new housing.<sup>177</sup> It was described as a “perfect example” of the coalition approach towards housing.<sup>178</sup>

In the report, the coalition government showed its support for home ownership. *Laying the Foundation: A Housing Strategy* stressed that future policies would encourage home ownership and restore the Right to Buy (social housing) scheme. In 2013, the Government introduced the Home Buy scheme which granted households the right to buy a newly built home subject and pay a minimum deposit of 5% of the purchase price, interest-free for the first five years. It also introduced a new “mortgage guarantee” to enable future buyers to obtain a loan without the need for large deposits, with the Government making £12 billion available as a guarantee for lenders.<sup>179</sup>

Other policies implemented by the Coalition Government to encourage home ownership by providing funds were *The New Homes Bonus*, the *New Build Indemnity* scheme, and the *First Buy Equity Loan* scheme. *The New Homes Bonus* policy provided funds to Local Authorities to encourage developments by granting them funding which matched the Council Tax on new homes for the first six years, or on empty homes that were brought back into use.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Jules Pipes. “Two Years on, What Has the Localism Act Achieved?” *The Guardian*, 2 November 2013, <[www.theguardian.com/local-government-network/2013/nov/02/localism-act-devolution-uk-local-authorities](http://www.theguardian.com/local-government-network/2013/nov/02/localism-act-devolution-uk-local-authorities)> Accessed on 24 September 2021.

<sup>177</sup> Great Britain. *Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England*. Stationary Office, November 2011.

<sup>178</sup> Rebecca Tunstall. “The Coalition’s Record on Housing: Policy, Spending and Outcomes 2010-2015.” The University of York, 2015. <<https://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/dps/case/spcc/wp18.pdf>> Accessed on 24 September 2021.

<sup>179</sup> Rupert Jones. “Budget 2013: Osborne Offers Homebuyers Help to Buy.” *The Guardian*, 20 March 2013, <<https://www.theguardian.com/money/2013/mar/20/budget-2013-osborne-offers-homebuyers-help-to-buy>> Accessed on 25 September 2021.

<sup>180</sup> Rebecca Tunstall. “The Coalition’s Record on Housing: Policy, Spending and Outcomes 2010-2015.” The University of York, 2015, p. 19.



*The New Build Indemnity* scheme, announced in 2011 and led by the Home Builders Federation and Council of Mortgage Lenders, provided “A guarantee for up to 100,000 new mortgages at up to 95% loan to value for new build properties in England”.<sup>181</sup> The scheme aimed at encouraging private housebuilding. *The First Buy Equity Loan* scheme, as part of the *Help to Buy* scheme, provided first-time buyers with an equity loan of up to 20%.

The Coalition Government showed an interest in working on housing and planning from the outset. Housing and planning were discussed in the Coalition agreement, even though references to the development of new houses were fewer compared to references to health, education and schools.<sup>182</sup> Earlier, the Conservative manifesto clearly stated that the Party will focus on, “Housing and green spaces for millions of families. Suburbs are places where a sense of community can flourish, and where people raise children and play an active part in neighbourhood groups.”<sup>183</sup> The Liberal Democrat manifesto had promoted “bringing 250,000 empty homes back into use. People who own these homes will get a grant or a cheap loan to renovate them so that they can be used: grants if the home is for social housing, loans for private use.”<sup>184</sup> The Party had also promised better and more affordable housing. Therefore, post-election, both parties managed to agree to work on housing and planning reforms. However, these reforms were implemented to make social housing more selective and the last resort tenure.<sup>185</sup>

### 3.3. Urban Policy since 2015 to 2022

The period between 2015 and 2022 was marked by significant political turbulence and changes in the UK, dominated by issues such as Brexit, leadership contests, general elections and a pandemic. In 2015, the Conservative Party under the leadership of David Cameron won the elections. Over the following years, alongside the preparations for the Brexit Referendum, the

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<sup>181</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. “New Build Indemnity Scheme.” *Government*, 21 November 2011, <<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-build-indemnity-scheme--2>> Accessed 21 September 2021.

<sup>182</sup> Rebecca Tunstall. “The Coalition’s Record on Housing: Policy, Spending and Outcomes 2010-2015.” The University of York, 2015, 19.

<sup>183</sup> The Conservative Party. *Join the Government of Britain*. The Conservative Manifesto 2010, 2010, <<https://general-election-2010.co.uk/2010-general-election-manifestos/Conservative-Party-Manifesto-2010.pdf>> Accessed on 26 September 2021.

<sup>184</sup> Liberal Democratic Party. *Liberal Democratic Manifesto 2010*. 2010, <<https://www.markpack.org.uk/files/2015/01/Liberal-Democrat-manifesto-2010.pdf>> Accessed on 26 September 2021.

<sup>185</sup> David Fée. “A Tory Revolution? A British Coalition Government and Housing.” *Observatoire de la société Britannique*, vol. 12, 2012.

government introduced several initiatives, some of which specifically tackled housing. Unsurprisingly, the conservative government advocated for homeownership. Therefore, an extension of “the Right to buy to housing associations and build 200,000 new Starter Homes,”<sup>186</sup> was announced in the 2015 Manifesto. As a result, in 2016, the *Housing and Planning Act 2016* was passed. It promoted homeownership by extending the Right to Buy, and promised an increase of housing supply. However, the act faced criticism for privileging the wealthy and exacerbating social inequality. According to UNISON South East, one of the UK’s largest trade Union:

The Act’s main focus is on boosting homeownership at the expense of affordable and social housing, which the majority of people on average incomes need. As a consequence, there will be even fewer social and affordable homes, the housing crisis will worsen and it will become more difficult for people on average incomes to find an affordable home to rent or buy.<sup>187</sup>

In October 2016, the government launched the *home building Fund*, a programme that provides loans to any private sector business, planning to build new homes or develop sites for housing. Its aim was to diversify the market and increase the housing supply. Initially, its budget was £3bn for over five years, but was increased in 2017 to £4.5bn. In 2017, the Conservative government under Theresa May, introduced the *Fixing Our Broken Housing Market*,<sup>188</sup> a housing white paper. The government released this document as a blueprint outlining their strategy and intentions to tackle the perceived shortcomings in the country’s housing market. Divided into four chapters, the document includes measures to build new homes faster, to diversify the housing market, among other measures. This document was followed up by the publication of *New Deal for Social Housing*<sup>189</sup> green paper in 2018. This green paper was a consultation document that set the government’s intentions to reform the social housing sector. Its primary objective was to “ensure social homes provide an essential, well managed service for all those who need it.”<sup>190</sup> The green paper consultations led to the *Social Housing White*

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<sup>186</sup> Conservative Party Manifesto. “Our Manifesto.” *The Conservative Party*, 2015, p. 3.

<sup>187</sup> Unison South East. “Unison Briefing: The Housing and Planning Act 2016.” *UNISON South East*, 23 January. 2017, <<https://southeast.unison.org.uk>> Accessed 17 July 2023.

<sup>188</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. *Fixing Our Broken Housing Market*. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2017.

<sup>189</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. *The New Deal for Social Housing*. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, August 2018.

<sup>190</sup> Consultation Outcome: The New Deal for Social Housing. Gov.UK, 14 August 2018, <<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/a-new-deal-for-social-housing>> Accessible on 12 August 2023.

*Paper*<sup>191</sup> published in 2020, under Boris Johnson. While primarily focused on the rights, responsibilities, and expectations surrounding social housing, the white paper also indirectly deals with issues related to affordable housing. However, it should be clear that the meaning of the term “affordable housing” evolved. Instead of being only associated to “social housing,” it expanded to encompass “intermediate housing,” and other forms of housing that are not private market housing. According to Shelter, “affordable housing” includes “Social rented housing – low rent, secure housing prioritised by need, Affordable Rent housing – higher rent, less secure housing prioritised by need, Shared ownership – housing that you buy part of and rent part of, and Intermediate Rent homes – 80% market rate housing.”<sup>192</sup>

It is also noteworthy that since the tenure of David Cameron, the housing budget has experienced significant reductions, leading to pronounced repercussions for the social housing sector.<sup>193</sup> It is also important to know that the Brexit negotiations and Covid-19 sanitary crisis had an impact on the housing market. The housing market was paralysed during the initial lockdown.

## Conclusion

From 1997 to 2010, there was a renewed national effort under New Labour to address urban issues in the round and concentrate development in cities. However, this was criticised by many observers for fuelling gentrification at the local level. After 2010, successive governments rejected this approach and narrowed national urban policy down to the housing crisis; they sought to expand home ownership further, belatedly addressing the issue of social housing. Urban policy was no longer framed as a national response to national urban problems but as local responses to local issues. In the next chapter, we will turn to the GLA as the choices made at the London level also impacted Peckham.

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<sup>191</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. *The Charter for Social Housing Residents: Social Housing White Paper*. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, November 2020.

<sup>192</sup> John Bibby. “What is ‘Affordable Housing?’” *Shelter*, 10 August 2015, <<https://blog.shelter.org.uk/2015/08/what-is-affordable-housing/>> Accessible on 12 August 2023.

<sup>193</sup> David Fée. “Living together in the UK: when housing becomes an obstacle.” *Observatoire de la société britannique*, vol. 26, 2021, pp. 173-192.

# Chapter 4

## The Greater London Authority: Addressing the Housing Crisis and Making London a World City

In his 1997 manifesto, “Devolution: strengthening the Union,” the leader of the New Labour Party at that time, Tony Blair declared his intentions to devolve powers to Scotland, Wales, and also to London:

Following a referendum to confirm popular demand, there will be a new deal for London, with a strategic authority and a mayor, each directly elected. Both will speak up for the needs of the city and plan its future. They will not duplicate the work of the boroughs, but take responsibility for London-wide issues - economic regeneration, planning, policing, transport and environmental protection.<sup>194</sup>

The importance of a regional government in the 1997 manifesto can be explained by the fact that some members of the London Labour Party used to lead the Greater London Council (GLC) that was abolished in 1986, and therefore thought it was important to re-establish a London wide authority.<sup>195</sup> However, it is also explained by noting that after losing several general elections to the Conservative Party, devolving powers to Scotland, Wales and the regions, had been discussed in the earlier 1992 manifesto under the then Labour leader Neil Kinnock as the Party’s political strategy. This had also been highlighted in earlier years. For example, there was a special focus on London in one of the Labour’s report published in 1994, and entitled *Working Together for London*, that clearly stated their intention to create a directly elected central government, “a body that speaks for all London to carry weight in Whitehall.”<sup>196</sup> The

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<sup>194</sup> Tony Blair. “Devolution: Strengthening the Union.” New Labour Party Manifesto. <<http://www.labour-party.org.uk/manifestos/1997/1997-labour-manifesto.shtml>> Accessed on 5 November 2022.

<sup>195</sup> Duncan Bowie. *Politics, planning and homes in a world city*. Routledge, 2010, pp. 7.

<sup>196</sup> Tony Blair. *Working Together for London*. Labour Party Manifesto 1994. Mentioned as well in Timothy Whitton. « La mairie de Londres (Greater London Authority): une devolution de proximité ». Emmanuel Cherrier, Stéphane Guérard. *La Régionalisation en Europe : regards croisés*, Bruylant, 2014, pp. 215-238.

new government's *1997 Green Paper*<sup>197</sup> stated clearly that an elected mayor was essential to the new form of governance in the capital.

After winning the 1997 elections, the Labour government held referenda and made constitutional reforms to devolve powers to Scotland Wales and London. For Scotland, a referendum was held in September 1997 that led to the passing of *The Scotland Act 1998* that established the Scottish Parliament in 1999. For Wales, *The Government of Wales Act 1998* established the Welsh Assembly. For the English capital, the Greater London Devolution referendum of 7 May 1998 saw 75% of voters being in favour of a central government with an elected mayor and assembly, despite a low turnout of around 33%,<sup>198</sup> leading to the passing of *The Greater London Authority Act 1999*. This act led to a London-wide government, *The Greater London Authority* (GLA) with separated powers: An Executive (Mayor) and a Legislative (Greater London Assembly)<sup>199</sup> and established the country's first directly elected mayor. Inspired by the American system, the GLA emerged to replace the London-wide authorities that previously existed: the Greater London Council (GLC) that was abolished in 1986 under the conservative government led by Margaret Thatcher, and the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA)<sup>200</sup> that was abolished in 1990 as part of the Education Reform Act 1988. The newly instituted GLA had the sole role of planning. This is explained "by the Labour government desire to separate strategy and services, planners and providers, in order to avoid repeating the mistakes of previous administrations that were often criticised for the confusion of their structures and responsibilities."<sup>201</sup> The GLA, therefore, had wider responsibilities than the previous bodies, leading, therefore, to significant changes to the local government system.

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<sup>197</sup> Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) *New Leadership for London*, the Stationary Office, London, 1997. Mentioned as well in Tony Travers. "Decentralization London-style: the GLA and London governance." *Regional Studies*, vol. 36, no. 7, 2002, pp. 780.

<sup>198</sup> "Overwhelming vote for Mayor." *BBC News*, Friday 8<sup>th</sup> May 1998.

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/special\\_report/1998/london\\_referendum/89327.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/special_report/1998/london_referendum/89327.stm) > Accessed on 5 November 2022.

<sup>199</sup> David Sweeting. "How strong is the Mayor of London?" *Policy & Politics* vol. 31, no. 4, 2003, pp. 465-478.

<sup>200</sup> The ILEA was a London wide authority that was responsible for the education of children and young people in London. It was created in 1965 as part of the London government act 1963, which organised local government in London. It was abolished in 1990 passport of the education form act 1988. This act introduced significant changes to the education system in England and Wales including the abolition of the ILEA and the creation of new system of Local Education Authorities (LEAs).

<sup>201</sup> David Fée. « La nouvelle Autorité du Grand Londres et la crise de logement. » Suzi Halimi. *Les Institutions Politique au Royaume-Uni*, Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris, 2006. « Cette limite s'explique par la volonté du gouvernement travailliste de séparer stratégie et services, planificateurs et fournisseurs, afin de ne pas répéter les erreurs des administrations précédentes souvent critiquées pour la confusion de leurs structures et de leurs responsabilités. »

The creation of the GLA was a significant step in the decentralization and modernization of the UK's political and administrative structures. The GLA has been playing a crucial role in strategic planning and has been evolving since its formation. It has also been instrumental in addressing some of London's major challenges, such as transport, and economic development, and has made significant progress in many areas including improving air quality and promoting cycling infrastructure. Yet, it is debatable whether its housing policies have been similarly progressive.

This chapter is divided into three sub-sections. The first section explains the structure and responsibilities of the GLA as a newly created administration. The second section illustrates how the three elected mayors since 2000 had differing agendas while sharing a similar vision of maintaining the English capital as a world city. This section highlights as well how the development of London as a world city has attracted investment, stimulated economic growth, and contributed to the process of gentrification, the perfect example is the impact of the Olympics Games 2012 project. The third section focuses on strategies regarding housing and the impact of these strategies on the London housing crisis and gentrification.

A literature review, based on legal documents and reports but also on previous research, has been conducted in order to examine the role, responsibilities and evolution of the GLA. This was essential to gather and analyse information from a variety of sources, such as government reports and previous academic works that were examined in order to provide a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the topic, and to provide a historical context. A literature review was also useful to examine the various policies and programmes that were implemented over the course of the GLA.

#### **4.1. Structure and Responsibilities of the GLA**

The Greater London Authority (GLA), colloquially known as City Hall is composed of the Mayor of London and the 25 members of the Assembly, all housed inside the City Hall building on the south side of the Thames, close to Tower Bridge. The Mayor is elected by a 'supplementary vote'<sup>202</sup> arrangement and the members of the assembly by the 'alternative vote'

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<sup>202</sup> The supplementary vote (SV) is an electoral system used to elect a single winner, in which the voter ranks the candidates in order of preference.

system<sup>203</sup> – a form of proportional representation. Elections take place simultaneously every four years.

Compared to the *Scottish Parliament* and the *Welsh Assembly*, the GLA is less powerful even though it has a wider range of responsibilities compared to the GLC which was abolished in 1986. The GLA is responsible for Transport for London (TfL), the London Development Agency (LDA), the Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA), and the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA). Ultimately, however, the GLA was created to improve co-ordination between local authorities (32 London boroughs) in Greater London.

#### 4.1.1. The Mayor of London

Defined as a power figure by the Prime Minister Tony Blair,<sup>204</sup> the Mayor of London is an elected candidate with specific responsibilities. According to the *Greater London Authority Act, 1999*, the act that sets out the terms and conditions of services (powers and functions) of both the Mayor and Assembly members, the new executive leader is required to “be responsible for developing the GLA’s strategies for transport, planning and the environment in London and will have a range of powers to implement them.”<sup>205</sup> The act also provides the Mayor with the power to directly appoint two political advisors and up to ten staff members. The Mayor can also appoint the Chief Officer of the Transport for London, and the Chief Executive of the London Development Agency. The Mayor’s responsibilities have been extended over time. For example, the Greater London Authority Act 2007, gave more responsibilities to the Mayor. The new Act extended his strategic planning powers from the Government Office for London to include further duties related to energy, health and climate change. In 2011, the Metropolitan Police was replaced by the Mayor’s office, and in 2012, the London Development agency (LDA) was abolished and its responsibilities were transferred to the GLA. The LDA was a London-wide agency that existed between 2000 and 2012, and was abolished under Boris

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<sup>203</sup> The Alternative Vote (AV) is an electoral system in which a voter puts a number by each candidate, with a one for their favourite, two for their second favourite and so on. If more than half the voters have the same favourite candidate, that person wins the elections. If no candidate wins the majority, the least favourite candidate will be eliminated and the votes will be redistributed to the voter’s second favourite candidate. This process is repeated until one candidate has half of the votes and becomes the winner.

<sup>204</sup> Nick Assinder. “Overwhelming vote for Mayor.” *BBC News*, Friday 8 May 1998.  
<[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/special\\_report/1998/london\\_referendum/89327.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/special_report/1998/london_referendum/89327.stm)> Accessed on 5 November 2022.

<sup>205</sup> Department of the Environment. “Explanatory Notes to Greater London Authority Act 1999.” *Explanatory Notes*, Queen's Printer of Acts of Parliament, Transport and the Regions.  
<<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1999/29/notes>> Accessed on 5 November 2022.

Johnson by the Localism Act. Its role was to promote economic development and regeneration in London, by working with businesses, community groups and other organizations to create jobs, attract investment, and improve the quality of life for Londoners. The LDA was responsible for delivering the Mayor of London's economic development strategy, and had a wide range of powers and functions, including the ability to invest in business and infrastructure projects, and to provide funding and support for community and cultural projects. The Mayor also has the responsibility to develop a Spatial development Strategy (SDS). The latter provides a spatial framework for all the Mayor's strategies and policies.

Another duty of the Mayor is to set the budget for the GLA as a whole. However, the assembly can negotiate and vote to overturn the Mayor's budget if the assembly can produce a two-thirds majority to an alternative one. As previously mentioned, since the creation of the GLA, the elected Mayor has been given several clear main functions such as economic development, fire and emergency planning, strategic planning (including housing, and waste management), deliverance of policy related to transport, and policing and crimes.

For housing, the Mayor plays an essential role in shaping housing policy and addressing housing issues within the city. For instance, as mentioned previously, the Mayor is responsible for developing and implementing a strategic planning document that sets out the long-term vision for housing and development. The Mayor sets targets for affordable housing provision. However, these powers were extended in 2004, after the *Planning Purchase Act 2004* which established the London Plan as a statutory plan development plan status with impact on planning decisions across the capital. In 2007, the *Greater London Authority Act 2007* strengthened the powers of the Mayor in various areas including, including housing. It "gave the Mayor (and no longer the GLA) the duty to publish a housing strategy recommending the amount, type and location of new homes and setting out his investment priorities."<sup>206</sup> In 2016, the *Housing and Planning Act 2016* provided the Mayor additional powers, particularly with regards to intervening in certain planning applications and promoting housing delivery.

By working with local authorities, housing associations and developers and proving funding, the Mayor facilitates the delivery of housing projects. He or she develops housing strategies and policies to address housing challenges such as homelessness, overcrowding, and housing quality. These policies often focus on promoting social inclusion, sustainable development, and

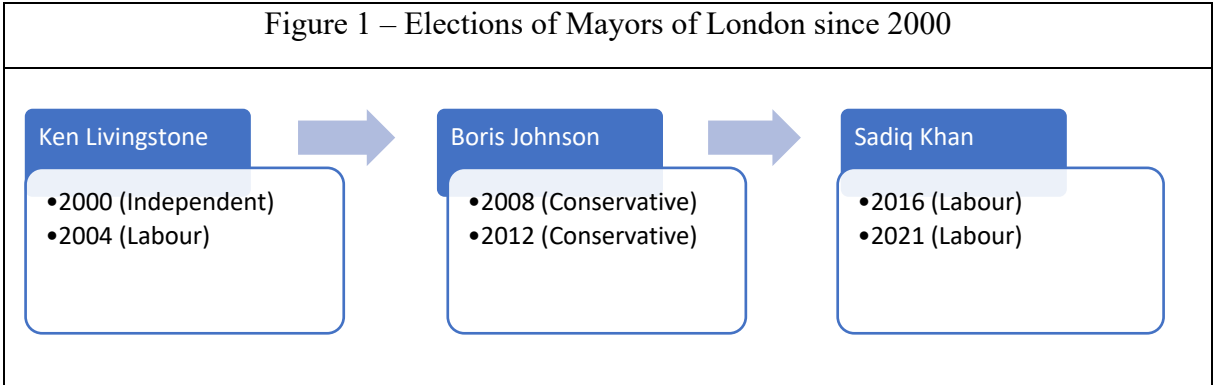
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<sup>206</sup> David Fée. "Housing Policies in London, 2000–2016: Policies for a Progressive World City?" *The Rise of Progressive Cities East and West*, 2019, p. 84.



improving housing conditions for the residents of the capital. In addition, “[t]hrough the London Plan and Housing Strategy, the Mayor sets out where homes should be built and what level of affordable housing is required.”<sup>207</sup>

Since the first election of 2000, there have only been three mayors (figure 1): Ken Livingstone (elected in 2000 and 2004), Boris Johnson (2008 and 2012) and Sadiq Khan 2016 and 2021.



**4.1.2. The Assembly and its Role**

As mentioned previously, the Assembly is composed of 25 elected members, eleven members represent the whole capital and fourteen members are elected by constituencies.<sup>208</sup> One of the major roles of the Assembly is to hold the Mayor and their advisors publicly accountable. This is done mainly during Mayor’s Question Time,<sup>209</sup> when members of the Assembly organise public meetings with the Mayor and ask questions regarding, for example, the strategies the Mayor is working on. The Assembly can, therefore, scrutinise the Mayor’s strategies and plans without, however, being able to amend or reject them.<sup>210</sup> They also provide recommendations and make proposals to the Mayor and government organisations. In addition, they are consulted

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<sup>207</sup> Sadiq Khan. What are the Mayor’s Powers? Saqid for London, 2021. <[https://sadiq.london/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Mayors\\_Powers.pdf](https://sadiq.london/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Mayors_Powers.pdf)> Accessed 17 June 2023.

<sup>208</sup> Mayor of London. “About the London Assembly.” *Mayor of London*, <<https://www.london.gov.uk/who-we-are/what-london-assembly-does/about-london-assembly>> Accessed on 5 November 2022.

<sup>209</sup> Mayor’s Question Time consists of ten official and public meetings per year to question the Mayor over a range of matters including policing, transport and fire service.

<sup>210</sup> Mayor of London. “About the London Assembly.” *Mayor of London*, <<https://www.london.gov.uk/who-we-are/what-london-assembly-does/about-london-assembly>> Accessed on 5 November 2022.

by the Mayor regarding statutory strategies and the GLA’s budget. The latter can be amended if two-thirds of the members agree.

Members of the Assembly can work on and investigate essential issues of different topics such as education, housing, health, and economic matters. It is worth noting that the Assembly and the Mayor do not have the same roles. Based on a “checks and balances” system, the Mayor has an executive role and the Assembly plays the role of counter power.

Since 2000, no party has had the majority on the Assembly (Table 1). Since the first elections, the Assembly has been comprised of different political parties, but as in Parliament the Conservative and Labour parties are the two political parties with the most seats.

Table 1 – Party membership on London Assembly						
Political Party	2000	2004	2008	2012	2016	2021
Conservative Party	9	9	11	9	8	9
Labour Party	9	7	8	12	12	11
Liberal Democrat	4	5	3	2	1	2
Green	3	2	2	2	2	3
UKIP	0	2	0	0	2	0
British National Party	0		1	0	0	0

**Source:** Data collected from London Elects. Election Results <<https://www.londonelects.org.uk/im-voter/election-results>>

**4.2. London as a World City**

It is worth noting that since the GLA was founded, there has been a special focus on promoting London as a global city. As mentioned previously, different projects were implemented under different mayors. Some of these projects focused on transport, the environment, crime and

housing. Representing two different political parties, the mayors had different agendas for the capital while sharing a vision of London as a ‘global’ or ‘world’ city, with these visions clearly established in an official strategic planning document. It can be argued that this common agenda had an impact on the gentrification of the capital. First, a brief understanding of the notion of ‘Global City’ is required.

According to *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, a ‘global city’ refers to “an urban centre that enjoys significant competitive advantages and that serves as a hub within a globalised economic system.”<sup>211</sup> The concept of a global city, also known as a ‘world city’ has been widely studied and defined by scholars. For example, highlighting the economic aspect, Knox defines world cities as “[...] centres of international corporate headquarters, of their business services, of international finance, of transitional institutions, and of telecommunications and information processing.”<sup>212</sup> Another definition given by S. Sassen, a sociologist and economist, defines global cities as:

[...] the key sites where the leading, most advanced producer services are concentrated, the sites where the control and command functions are located that coordinate the activities of finance, advanced producer services, and other sectors, and the sites of major political and cultural institutions.<sup>213</sup>

Sassen further argues that global cities are not only centres of economic activity but also of cultural and political power and participate in shaping the global economy.

It is important to note that the concept of a ‘global city’ is dynamic and constantly evolving and changing depending on the context. Friedmann explains that these cities “differ among themselves according to not only the mode of their integration with the global economy, but also their own historical past, national policies, and cultural influences. The economic parable however is likely to be decisive for all attempts at explanation”<sup>214</sup> What is common to these definitions is the attractiveness of the city in terms of the services that can be offered to the global economy. In the case of London, the mayors, via their mandates, implemented several schemes in order to brand and preserve the capital as a world city.

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<sup>211</sup> “Global City.” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/global-city>> Accessed on 13 December 2021

<sup>212</sup> Paul L. Knox. “World cities in a world-system.” World cities in a world-system, In Knox Paul L. and Taylor Peter J. (Ed.) *Cambridge University Press*, 1995, pp. 3.

<sup>213</sup> Saskia Sassen. *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*. Princeton University Press, 1991.

<sup>214</sup> John Friedmann. *The World City Hypothesis. The City in Global Context*, 2002, pp. 69.

It is also important to highlight that the development of London as a world city and the process of gentrification are interconnected phenomena that have influenced each other over time. London status as a global city has attracted significant investment, resulting in urban transformation and gentrification in many areas. As Butler suggest, “London’s gentrification, and its distinctiveness, is largely driven by its cosmopolitanism as a global centre for services, culture and knowledge.”<sup>215</sup> Understanding, therefore, the relationship between London’s global city status and gentrification underscores the complex dynamics at play, as the city’s cosmopolitanism and economic attractiveness contribute to both its global appeal and the challenges of social inequality and displacement faced by its diverse communities.

#### **4.2.1. Initiatives Implemented since 2000 under Three Mayoralties**

The first elected Mayor of London was Ken Livingstone. In 2000, Livingstone won the election as an independent candidate. Livingstone was also the last leader of the GLC before its abolition in 1986 when he was a member of the Labour Party. K. Livingstone’s election as Mayor created tension within the Labour Party which wanted a new leader to hold this position. Livingstone defied his political party and introduced his candidacy as an independent.<sup>216</sup>

Even though the turnout of the referendum to elect an Executive leader and Assembly was weak, the candidacy of Livingstone and his charismatic personality attracted media and popular attention. After winning the first election of Mayor of London, Livingstone constituted his team of advisors to form the Mayor’s office that remained in office for eight years owing to him having won two consecutive elections.

During these eight years, Livingstone and his team focused on several projects including transport, health, education, crime and housing, to improve living conditions in the capital. Today, he is mainly remembered for his special focus on public transport and for his Congestion Charge scheme that was the centrepiece of his mayoralty. As part of traffic congestion management strategy, vehicles have been charged since entering the Congestion Charge zone in central London at certain times in order to reduce traffic congestion. Viewed as socially

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<sup>215</sup> Tim Butler. "Gentrification in London—Modes of middle-class establishment in a Global City." *Die Besonderheit des Städtischen: Entwicklungslinien der Stadt*, 2011, pp. 265-284.

<sup>216</sup> Timothy Whitton. “The familiar faces of political renewal at City Hall.” *Observatoire de la société britannique*, vol. 12, 2012, pp. 97-113.

unacceptable, and politically suicidal (if economically desirable),<sup>217</sup> the scheme was very successful. Livingstone was considered as a successful Mayor,<sup>218</sup> despite being criticised for not having achieved the 50% affordable housing target announced in his agenda, while the need for social housing increased under his mandate.<sup>219</sup> These points will be further developed in the following sections.

Livingstone was succeeded by Boris Johnson who was described as being less experienced in terms of governing compared to his predecessor.<sup>220</sup> Johnson was a Conservative candidate who won the next two mayoral elections of 2008 and 2012. During his mayoralty, some strategy changes were perceived, as the Mayor gained more powers regarding housing. This is illustrated by *The Localism Act 2011*, which transferred certain planning and housing powers and functions to the local level as explained earlier. Its purpose was to ensure that housing decisions were made locally, giving more responsibilities and rights to communities and individuals.

In 2016, Johnson decided to withdraw his candidacy for a third term, choosing instead to concentrate on his position as Member of Parliament (MP), even though he was very popular and considered a successful Mayor by Londoners. According to a poll launched by the international research data and analytics group *YouGov* in 2016, 52% of Londoners believed that Johnson did a good job as the Mayor of London.<sup>221</sup>

Johnson was succeeded by Sadiq Khan who was elected twice consecutively in 2016 and 2021. Khan, previously a human rights lawyer, is a British politician and a member of the Labour Party, who was elected as Mayor of London in May 2016, and re-elected in 2021. He was previously an MP between 2005 and 2016, and a shadow Minister for London in 2013. Khan is a very popular Mayor. In 2018, he was named one of the 100 most influential people by *The Times*.<sup>222</sup> He is known for introducing the “hopper” fare on public transport, which allows passengers to pay one bus fare regardless of how many buses they travel on within a one-hour

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<sup>217</sup> Peter Mackie. “The London congestion charge: A tentative economic appraisal. A comment on the paper by Prud'homme and Bocajero.” *Transport Policy*, vol. 12, no. 3, 2005, pp. 288-290.

<sup>218</sup> Tony Travers. “The Greater London Authority, 2000 to 2008.” London School of Economics, pp. 7.

<sup>219</sup> London Tenants Federation. *The Affordable Housing Con.* LTF, 2012.

<sup>220</sup> Benjamin Worthy et al. “Rebels leading London: The Mayoralties of Ken and Boris Johnson Compared.” *British Politics*, vol. 14, 2018, pp. 17.

<sup>221</sup> Will Dahlgreen. “Boris Johnson: the public verdict.” *Yougov*, May 2016.

<<https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/articles-reports/2016/05/05/mayor-boris-public-verdict>> Accessed on 10 December 2022.

<sup>222</sup> Micheal R. Bloomberg. “Sadiq Khan: most influential people 2018.” *The Time*, 2018.

<<https://time.com/collection/most-influential-people-2018/5217530/sadiq-khan/>> Accessed on 5 November 2022.

period. Under his first mandate, he predominantly focused on environmental issues, introducing the London Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) in 2019, a scheme which imposes a daily fee on polluting vehicles in order to protect the environment. Regarding housing, according to the *Evening Standard*,<sup>223</sup> “[t]he proportion of affordable homes in new developments is also higher, at 37 per cent, than under Boris Johnson’s rule.” This will be expanded further on in the following sections.

#### **4.2.1.1. Urban Policy under Ken Livingstone**

The first Mayor of London, Livingstone, was known for his clear vision. This vision was reflected in his policies and initiatives, which aimed to position London as a global leader in areas such as economic development, cultural development, and environmental sustainability. He had progressive policies implemented under his leadership, especially regarding transportation fares and gender equality.<sup>224</sup> As established under the London Act 1999, he focused on the environment and regeneration. It has been noted that these ideas represent a continuity with the ones he held when he was the leader of the GLC in the 1980s.<sup>225</sup>

Livingstone’s vision officially took shape through the *London Plan 2004*.<sup>226</sup> This plan was the first Spatial Development Strategy of the Greater London Authority, published in February 2004. The plan set out the strategic planning framework for the city and comprised six chapters. Chapter 1 tackled London’s global position, glorified its past, and displayed a vision to maintain the capital as a world city. Chapter 2 covered the broad development strategy and addresses all the objectives of the London Plan, focusing on the significant growth and the improvement of the capital’s diverse heritage. Chapters 3 and 4 concentrated on thematic policies (including housing policies, economic context, transport) and cross-cutting policies (related to natural resources and design). Chapter 5 discussed London’s sub-regions and their strategic importance. Finally, Chapter 6 covered the process of implementing the London Plan and delivering the vision.

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<sup>223</sup> Martin Bentham. “Five Years of Sadiq Khan: Your Cut-out-and-Keep Guide.” *Evening Standard*, 6 May 2021, <<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/mayor/sadiq-khan-london-mayor-five-years-guide-mayoral-election-super-thursday-b933357.html>> Accessed on 5 November 2022.

<sup>224</sup> Ben Worthy and Mark Bennister. “Rebels as Local Leaders? The Mayoralties of Ken Livingstone and Boris Johnson Compared.” University of London, 12 April 2017, pp. 7.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>226</sup> The Mayor of London. *The London Plan 2004*. The Greater London Authority, 2004

The strategic plan was produced in three stages. Stage one was the publication of the first strategic planning document published in May 2001, *Towards the London Plan*, that set out a consultation vision and a preparation guide for the draft London Plan. Stage two consisted of the publication of the draft *London Plan* in June 2002, followed by a statutory three-month consultation period. Finally stage three consisted of the publication of the first strategic *London Plan 2004*. The plan was a representation of Livingstone's vision and started by highlighting the global position and functions of the capital:

My vision, which guides all my strategies, is to develop London as an exemplary, sustainable world city, based on three interwoven themes:

- Strong, diverse long-term economic growth
- Social inclusivity to give all Londoners the opportunity to share in London's future success
- Fundamental improvements in London's environment and use of resources.

This vision was further developed in the second spatial development strategy, the 2008 London Plan. The plan represents a continuity and vision of "growth, equity and sustainable development."<sup>227</sup> However, compared to the previous one, this Act highlights some changes and more emphasis on particular issues. For example, the 2008 version had a stronger emphasis on climate change and aimed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 60% by 2025, and 80% per cent by 2050. On the topic of transport, the plan introduced a more ambitious target for reducing car usage and aims to increase the number of journeys made by walking, cycling, and public transport. The plan also revised the special development strategy from the previous version, with more emphasis on the role of town centres and creating more vibrant and sustainable neighbourhoods. In addition, there was a greater emphasis on affordable housing with a new target to build 50% of new homes as affordable housing, a theme that will be developed further in the following sub-section.

These changes can be explained by both *Greater London Authority Acts* of 2004 and 2007, particularly the latter that made changes to the powers and structures of the GLA. As explained before, the act provided the Mayor of London with more powers to coordinate and manage the policies of Greater London including the infrastructure, land, waste and recycling. The act also granted the Mayor the power to establish London Infrastructure Delivery Board (responsible

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<sup>227</sup> The Mayor of London. *The London Plan 2008*. The Greater London Authority, 2008.

for coordinating infrastructure across Greater London), the London Land Commission (responsible for identifying public land for development), and the London Waste and Recycling Board (responsible for managing waste and recycling policies in Greater London). The Act also provides more powers to the London Assembly to investigate and report on the Mayor's management of the GLA.

Livingstone's plans are clearly written to bolster the British capital's position in the UK, and also globally, as a sustainable world city. The *London Plan 2004* offers "a personal, centralised and strategic vision for London's future."<sup>228</sup> Therefore, the Labour Mayor, during his tenure, made it a priority to make and maintain London a global city through several initiatives.

In an interview with Ken Livingstone conducted by the geographer and researcher Doreen Massey in 2007,<sup>229</sup> Livingstone made this reply when asked what he meant when he referred to London as a global city:

Well, it's quite clear that London has caught up as an equal with New York. [...] In terms of finance and business services, but also in terms of how it is perceived by the rest of the world - lots happening here, more young people choosing to come here than will go to New York and so on. And the other big dramatic change is that the black and Asian population has doubled since the GLC days. Thirty-five per cent of the workforce were born abroad, and 80 per cent of all the extra people coming into employment in the next ten years will be black or Asian or other ethnic minority, and so you have created a city which might very well still be the capital of Britain, but is actually genuinely a global city.

In the interview Livingstone compares London to New York suggesting that the British capital has the necessary attributes to being a world city. He addresses the diversity and multicultural dimension of the city at a social level, while also highlighting the city's financial position, and how as Mayor he has been encouraging financial and business services to thrive as part of this image. He stresses how to attract investment and businesses to the city, and has created a favourable environment for these areas to thrive.

The interview also emphasised climate change and environmental sustainability. Livingstone aimed to make London a world leader in environmental sustainability. During his tenure, he introduced a number of policies and initiatives such as the London Climate Action Plan,<sup>230</sup> to

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<sup>228</sup> Nancy Holman. "The Changing Nature of the London Plan." *The London school of economics and political science*, 2010, pp. 28.

<sup>229</sup> Doreen Massey. "The World we're in: An Interview with Ken Livingstone." *Lawrence and Wishart Summer*, 2007. <<https://www.proquest.com/docview/211221475?pq-origsite=gscholar&fromopenview=true>> Accessed on 3 January, 2023.

<sup>230</sup> Mayor of London. *Action Today to Protect Tomorrow: The Mayor's Climate Change Action Plan*. The Greater London Authority, 2007. <<http://www.energyforlondon.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/CCAP-2007.pdf>> Accessed on 3 January 2023.



reduce the city's carbon footprint and improve air quality. The plan sets out a number of actions to be taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase resilience to the impact of climate change. These included increasing energy efficiency in buildings, promoting the use of electric vehicles, and increasing the use of renewable energy sources. The plan also included actions to adapt to the impact of climate change, such as improving flood protection and increasing green space in the city. The plan's ultimate goal was to make London a zero-carbon city by 2050. Unfortunately, while these policies may initially appear to have a positive impact on the capital, they make areas more desirable to the higher-income population, thereby increasing property values. They, therefore, can also contribute to gentrification by inadvertently resulting in the loss of affordable housing and subsequent the displacement of low-income residents, particularly when the creation of green spaces is prioritised. A previous study has shown:

The relationship between climate change and gentrification is complex and multifaceted, but it is clear that the two are deeply intertwined. Climate change is exacerbating existing inequalities and vulnerabilities in urban areas, and green gentrification is one manifestation of the process.<sup>231</sup>

In other words, the increasing popularity of green spaces and sustainable living practices in urban areas can lead to gentrification, where wealthier residents, in search of green locations, move in and drive up property values, making it difficult for lower-income residents to afford to live in the area.

Livingstone also worked to promote sustainable transportation. In fact, transport is the area where Livingstone excelled most. He managed to implement several policies to improve the city's public transport such as the introduction of the Oyster card in 2003, a contactless smart card payment system that can be pre-loaded with credit and used to pay for fares on London's public transport system rather than purchasing individual tickets. He also introduced the Congestion Charge in 2003, which is a fee for vehicles entering central London during peak hours, in an effort to reduce traffic congestion and air pollution. The charge was initially met with opposition, but it was widely credited with reducing traffic and improving air quality in the city. According to Leape:

[...] the London congestion charge has been both a practical success in reducing congestion and a popular success. Traffic delays inside the zone have decreased by around 30 percent, with a reduction of a 15 percent in traffic circulation within the zone and 18 percent in traffic entering the zone during charging

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<sup>231</sup> Blok, Anders. "Urban green gentrification in an unequal world of climate change." *Urban Studies*, vol. 57, no. 14, 2020, pp. 2803-2816.

hours. Journey time reliability has improved by an average of 30 percent. Political opposition to the scheme has been minimal and popular support is now widespread.<sup>232</sup>

In fact, the congestion charge initiative helped him to win the elections of 2004 as labour member even though the Labour government was not well regarded after their involvement in the war in Iraq.<sup>233</sup>

In 2008, Livingstone lost the mayoral elections to his opponent Boris Johnson, a Conservative candidate. Winning by a narrow margin, the election was significant as it marked the first time in eight years that the city had a Mayor from a different political party, setting the stage for a new direction for the city under Johnson's leadership.

#### **4.2.1.2. Under Boris Johnson**

Described as “less visionary and more headline grabbing,”<sup>234</sup> Johnson had a different agenda when compared to his predecessor, Ken Livingstone. Yet, he shared a similar vision of the English capital as a global city. Some academics have highlighted a continuity of shared or inherited policies, such as the ‘Boris Bikes’ - – a cycle hire scheme initiated by Livingstone, and the political benefits of the 2012 London Olympics project that was launched under Livingstone.<sup>235</sup> This will be developed in the following subsection.

Under his tenure, Johnson published his London Plan 2011,<sup>236</sup> comprising eight chapters. The general approach of the plan showed similarities with the previous plan. In fact, as indicated in *the Greater London Authority Act 1999*, both plans focused on promoting sustainable development in London, including policies to reduce carbon emissions, improve air quality, and protect natural resources. Both plans included policies to promote economic growth and development, including support of small and medium-sized businesses, and the development of a knowledge-based economy. They also supported the development of affordable housing and the provision of housing for specific groups such as key workers, older people, and families. This will be further developed in the following sections. In addition, they both prioritised the

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<sup>232</sup> Jonathan Leape. "The London congestion charge." *Journal of economic perspectives* 20.4, 2006, pp. 157-176.

<sup>233</sup> Timothy Whitton. "Leadership in London: from Government to governance." *Observation de la société britannique*, 2018, pp. 6.

<sup>234</sup> Ben Worthy and Mark Bennister. "Rebels as Local Leaders? The Mayoralities of Ken Livingstone and Boris Johnson Compared." University of London, 12 April, 2017, pp. 5.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6.

<sup>236</sup> The Mayor of London. *The London Plan 2011*. The Greater London Authority, 2011.

improvement of transportation infrastructure and the promotion of cycling and walking. What makes the 2011 version different is that it included new policies and updates to reflect changes in London's population and economy.

Johnson also worked on London retaining its world city status. Just like his predecessor he focused on climate change, and improving transportation. He was also criticised for “building homes for the super-rich.”<sup>237</sup> This criticism was fuelled by the significant disparity in average private rents, which were twice as high in London compared to the national average,<sup>238</sup> leading to the displacement of the less affluent residents, and therefore the gentrification of the capital, but also by the fact that B. Johnson decided to drop the 50% affordable housing target in 2011. This will be further developed in the following sections.

Contributing to making the capital more accessible, Johnson introduced new schemes to extend the London Overground rail service, which included the addition of new stations and increased the frequency of trains. Its aim was to improve connectivity between different parts of the city and make it easier for people to travel around the city. Yet, during his tenure, with no known reason “he has withdrawn some transport schemes that would have increased accessibility to poorer parts of the capital such as Peckham and Barking.”<sup>239</sup>

In March 2015, Johnson announced the launching of the world's first Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ), a plan which charges a daily fee for driving the most polluted vehicles within the ULEZ area.<sup>240</sup> The ULEZ standards are stricter than the existing London-wide Congestion Charge standards. The scheme will provide grants to help taxi drivers cover the cost to upgrade to a greener vehicle. The scheme was scheduled to be introduced on 7 September 2020, and was introduced the year before, under the mayoralty of Sadiq Khan.

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<sup>237</sup> David Lammy. “Boris Johnson Is Building Homes for the Super-Rich Rather than The families who need them”, <[www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/boris-johnson-is-building-homes-for-the-superrich-rather-than-the-families-who-need-them-9781685.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/boris-johnson-is-building-homes-for-the-superrich-rather-than-the-families-who-need-them-9781685.html). Accessed 19 June 2023.> Accessed on 17 June 2023.

<sup>238</sup> Greater London Authority. Housing in London: The Evidence Base for the London Housing Strategy. December 2011, <<http://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Housing%20in%20London%20Dec11.pdf>.> Accessed on 17 June 2023.

<sup>239</sup> Nancy Holman and Andrew Thornley. “The reversal of strategic planning in London: the Boris effect with a focus on sustainability.” *Observatoire de la société britannique*, 2011, pp. 145-159.

<sup>240</sup> “Mayor Confirms World's First Ultra Low Emission Zone.” *London City Hall*, 30 October 2015, <<https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/ultra-low-emission-zone>.> Accessed on 3 January 2023.

#### 4.2.1.3. *Under Sadiq Khan*

With a new vision and renewed commitment to addressing the challenges facing London, Sadiq Khan took the helm as the city's new Mayor after winning the mayoral election in 2016. His vision was seen in his 2016 manifesto "a Manifesto For all Londoners." The latter had a focus on several key issues including improved transport, tackling air pollution, improving public spaces, supporting small businesses, and tackling poverty and inequality among others.

Just like his two predecessors, he aims to uphold London's status as a global city, but with an added emphasis on making it more environmentally friendly. In May 2018, he published London Environment Strategy,<sup>241</sup> which sets ambitious vision for London's environment in 2050 and targets to improve air quality and increase green spaces. It tackles issues such as the climate change. Khan, therefore, emphasized improving the city's transportation system and tackling air pollution. He implemented the T-charge in October 2017 an additional charge for high-polluting vehicles in central London.<sup>242</sup> In 2019, the T-charge was replaced by Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ). He also focused on supporting economic growth, job creation, and attracting investment. He established the London Economic Action Partnership (LEAP) to encourage economic development and promote London as a global city.<sup>243</sup>

#### 4.2.2. **The Olympics 2012 and their Impact on the Capital**

The Olympics Games of 2012 were a major event in the capital and Johnson's key role in the successful bid for, and delivery of the event, solidified their significance. Under his leadership, several major infrastructure projects were undertaken to prepare the city for the Games. This included the construction of the Olympic Park, which was built on a previously contaminated site,<sup>244</sup> as well as improvements to public transport and road networks. The site was located at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Parc in Stratford, East London, overlapping four boroughs. The

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<sup>241</sup> Mayor of London. *London Environment Strategy*. GLA, May 2018.

<sup>242</sup> "Mayor's New £10 't-Charge' Starts Today in Central London." London City Hall, 23 October 2017, <[www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/mayors-new-10-t-charge-starts-in-central-london](http://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/mayors-new-10-t-charge-starts-in-central-london)>. Accessed on 17 June 2023.

<sup>243</sup> "Sadiq Launches Economic Development Strategy and New AI Scheme." London City Hall, 29 November 2018, [www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/sadiq-launches-economic-development-strategy](http://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/sadiq-launches-economic-development-strategy).> Accessed on 17 June 2023.

<sup>244</sup> Shanta Barley. "Toxic Waste Clean-up on Olympic Site Cost Taxpayers £12.7m." *The Guardian*, 12 November 2010, <<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2010/nov/12/toxic-waste-clean-up-olympic>>. Accessed on 3 January 2023.

government invested precisely £10.8 bn<sup>245</sup> in the regeneration of east London in the run-up to the games, and had to create a dedicated agency London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) in October 2005. The LOCOG was responsible for overseeing the planning, the development and the organisation of the event.

At a global level, through the Olympics, the Mayor not only promoted tourism, he also promoted international investment. The event attracted millions of visitors and investors from all over the world, boosting the city's economy and tourism. According to Johnson:

Those games were great for the city. Since the closing ceremony last September, we have seen billions of pounds of international investment arrive in London – from the Olympic Park, to the docks, to Battersea, to Croydon and beyond. When you add up the benefits of the jobs, growth, infrastructure, the boost to east London and the positive glow it has given to the brand of London and the UK – that £9.3 bn looks like of the most sensible and pragmatic investments in the history of the British public spending.<sup>246</sup>

However, the Olympic games 2012, and the projects linked to it have faced criticism and were said to be directly linked to gentrification. A recent study<sup>247</sup> by Cécile Doustaly and Geneviève Zembri-Mary examined the role of heritagisation in managing the uncertainties and risks of major events such as the Olympic Games in London and highlighted different types of risks (environmental, archaeological, political and social). For instance, the study highlighted the social risks before and after the event, and indicated that for London:

The social risk appeared in three stages. Before the Games, conflicts focused on the quality of depollution and the Olympic Park area which was not as empty as presented (1,000 often deprived inhabitants and professionals). During the building of Olympic infrastructures and the event, tensions crystallized around keeping bid promises for local inhabitants regarding job creations, retail activity and affordable housing – a national bone of contention as cheaper social housing was being cut by Conservative policies. In this regards, the Olympic village fairs better than the five neighbourhoods developed in a second phase. Last, the speculative luxury towers built in the Eastern margin of the park create a striking visual, cultural et socioeconomic divide with surrounding heritage buildings and social housing (Carpenter's Estate), and feed gentrification.<sup>248</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> Simon Rogers, and Garry Blight. "London 2012: What's the Real Price of the Olympic Games? Visualised." *The Guardian*, 26 July 2012, <<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/datablog/interactive/2012/jul/26/london-2012-price-olympic-games-visualised>> Accessed on May 7 2023.

<sup>246</sup> Mayor of London. *The Greatest City on Earth: Ambition for London by Boris Johnson*. The Greater London Authority, June 2013, pp. 4.

<sup>247</sup> Cécile Doustaly, and Geneviève Zembri-Mary. "The role of heritagization in managing uncertainties linked to major events and mega urban projects: Comparing the Olympic Games in London (2012) and Athens (2004)." *Hosting the Olympic Games*. Routledge, 2019, pp. 93-126.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111.

Another study by Paul Watt has shown that the regeneration programmes of social housing in the area where the Olympics were held, had led to the displacement of low-income residents. Watt stated that “Olympic-related gentrification and displacement processes associated with rising private housing costs have already been identified including by the host borough councils, themselves.”<sup>249</sup> The study has shown two forms of displacement, direct and indirect.<sup>250</sup> Indirect displacement was perceived on young people who failed to obtain social housing in the area, or who had only temporary housing, leading to their displacement elsewhere and their reliance on the private sector. Direct displacement was perceived regarding the redevelopment of the Carpenters Estate, located in Stratford, Newham, adjacent to the Olympic Park, where some of its residents were evicted as the council announced that it lacked sufficient funds to refurbish and therefore some blocks needed to be demolished.<sup>251</sup> Another study has shown that “Newham Council went to various lengths to make the occupiers leave, including divide-and-rule tactics between those in flats and other residents on the estate; destroying water pipes into the building; and delivering an eviction notice by stealth.”<sup>252</sup>

The development of the Olympic Park led to increased demand for housing and commercial property in the surrounding areas, driving up prices and pushing out long-term residents.<sup>253</sup> The surge in demand, coupled with the expected influx of visitors and business, resulted in a rise of property prices, which led to an increasing difficulty for individuals and families with lower incomes to afford housing in these areas. The media exposure influenced by the event led to massive attraction of tourists but also investors to the capital, further fuelling London’s housing market.

The influence of the Olympics extended beyond the direct impacts on housing affordability and gentrification. As mentioned previously, the Greater London Authority, recognising the need for urban policies, took measures to target not only the east of the capital but also the most deprived areas such as the borough of Southwark (Peckham included). The Olympics prompted an overall drive for urban renewal and development across London. As regeneration initiatives

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<sup>249</sup> Paul Watt. "It's not for us' Regeneration, the 2012 Olympics and the gentrification of East London." *City*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2013, pp. 99-118.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>252</sup> Tom Gillespie, Kate Hardy, and Paul Watt. "Austerity urbanism and Olympic counter-legacies: Gendering, defending and expanding the urban commons in East London." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, vol. 36, no. 5, 2018, p. 820.

<sup>253</sup> Michael B Duignan. "London's local Olympic legacy: Small business displacement, 'clone town' effect and the production of 'urban landscapes'." *Journal of place management and development*, 2019, vol. 12, no. 2, p. 142-163.

spread from the Olympic areas to other parts in the capital, housing prices began to rise, attracting a more affluent demographic.

The 2012 Olympics were important in maintaining London as a world city, helping to showcase the city on a global stage and boost its reputation as a major international hub for tourism, business, and culture. The games brought significant economic benefits to the city, including the creation of jobs and the regeneration, yet they led to the gentrification of some deprived areas, as seen above. The 2012 Olympics represented an opportunity to further solidify the British capital as a world city, and it helped to prove that B. Johnson was a successful Mayor.

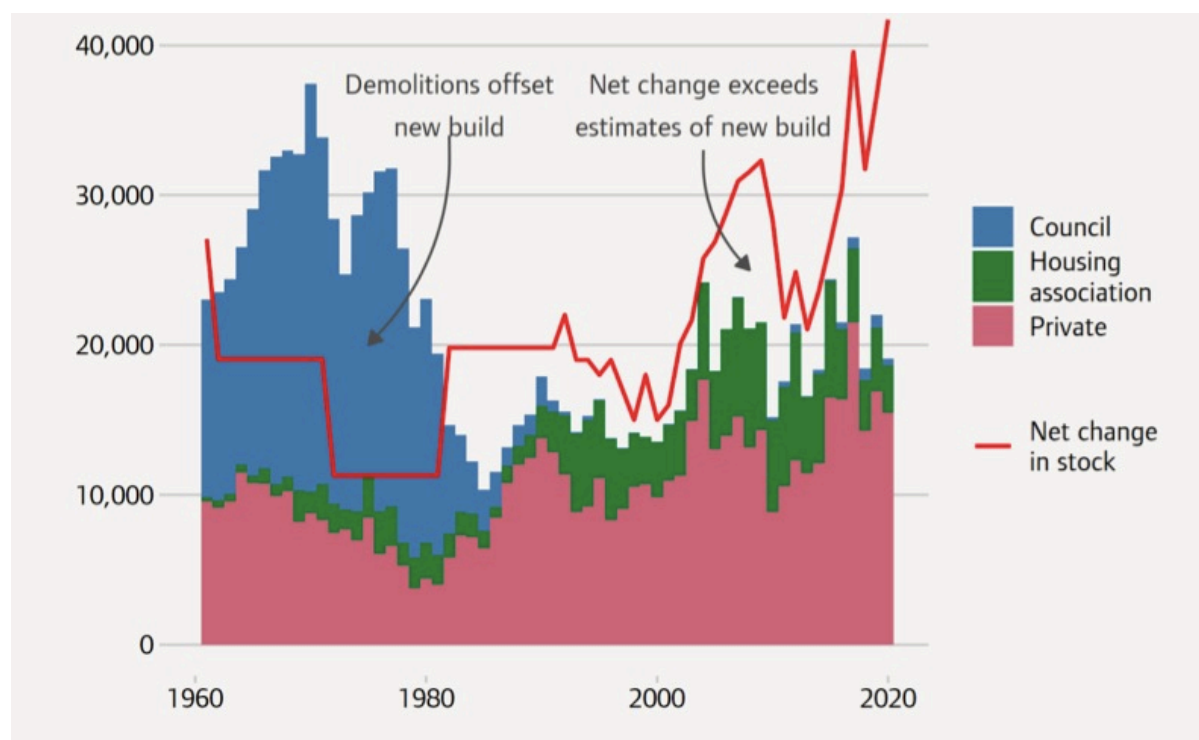
### **4.3. The Greater London Authority and Housing**

As mentioned earlier, housing prices in London have been continuously increasing due to a strong demand and limited supply. Even though house prices vary depending on location and demand, some neighborhoods, and even entire boroughs, in the capital are restricted to the wealthier classes. The lack of social housing is making their situation worse, as perceived in Figure 2. The number of newly built social housing was significantly limited in comparison to the newly constructed private sector housing. Therefore, there was, and still remains, a need to solve the housing shortage. When the GLA was formed, 200,000 households were on council waiting lists while the local authority housing stock had been drastically reduced since 1980.<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> Duncan Bowie. *Politics, planning and homes in a world city*. Routledge, 2010, pp. 30-31.

Figure 2 – Government estimates of new build completions and net change in London’s housing stock, 1960 to 2020.



Source: Greater London Authority. Housing in London 2021: The Evidence Base for the London Housing Strategy, October 2021, p. 17.

Deeply affected by the housing crisis in the late 1980s and early 1990s, London needed new reforms to solve the housing shortage and housing affordability. As mentioned in the previous chapter, at a national level, privatisation of the council housing stock under the Conservative government, and under New Labour, have worsened the crisis. For example, the ‘right to buy’ scheme allowed some council tenants to purchase their homes, but this measure drastically reduced the amount of available social housing which was never replaced after being sold, making it necessary to build new social/affordable housing. With the emergence of the GLA, there was a particular focus on housing as perceived by different mayoralities.

Each Mayor announced his housing objectives through his plans. As mentioned previously, the Mayor is responsible for strategic planning in London, as part of his duties, and needs to produce a Spatial Development Plan called the *London Plan*. As previously mentioned, the housing and planning powers of the Mayor of London were extended since 2004 thanks to *the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004* and *The Greater London Authority Act 2007*.



The latter imposed the publication of a housing strategy to tackle housing issues, which is a serious issue in the capital. However, the aims and achievements of each Mayor were different.

#### 4.3.1. Housing under Livingstone

Ken Livingstone had a clear vision for the British capital when he was elected Mayor of London in 2000. Even though affordable housing was obvious in the Livingstone agenda, and housing strategies were announced in both strategic plans (2004-2008), as mentioned previously, the Mayor at that time had limited powers regarding housing until 2007 when the Greater London Authority Act 2007 was passed by parliament. The Act granted further powers and responsibilities to the Mayor; “[it] increased the powers of housing, planning, skills, waste management and in the appointments of individuals to the functional bodies”<sup>255</sup>

The first housing strategies were announced in the *London Plan 2004* by the GLA, and under the mayoralty of Livingstone. The plan indicated that:

London will contribute to the adjective of sustainable development by seeking to absorb the growth pressures that it generates. This plan accepts, as a minimum, RPG provision guideline for 23,000 new homes in London every year up to 2006 and the responsibility to meet the city’s housing needs beyond that time. The Mayor will seek to raise provision to meet the need for 30,000 homes every year for policies aiming to increase density and identify additional sites through a new housing capacity study.<sup>256</sup>

The London plan provided a section of fifteen pages dedicated to housing. It started with assessing the housing needs of the capital, a promise to monitor future housing provision in order to adapt the housing needs but also to monitor the delivery of additional housing, and ended by addressing the boroughs, requiring them to set their own overall target as the housing needs vary from borough to borough, and to negotiate and seek the maximum reasonable amount of affordable housing regarding individual private residential and mixed use schemes. The Plan also set an affordable housing target stating that:

The major’s strategic target for affordable housing provision that 50 per cent of provision should be affordable and, within that, the London wide objective of 70 per cent social housing and 30 per cent intermediate provision, and the promotion of mixed and balanced communities.<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> Tony Travers. “The Greater London Authority, 2000 to 2008.” London School of Economics, 2008, pp. 6.

<sup>256</sup> The Mayor of London. *The London Plan 2004*. The Greater London Authority. 2004, pp. 18-19.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 64.

In addition, the Plan provided a list of 28 opportunity areas<sup>258</sup> that were identified as having the potential for significant development and regeneration, and were chosen based on a number of criteria, such as their location, accessibility, and potential for economic growth. “typically, each can accommodate at least 5,000 jobs or 2,500 homes or a mix of the two, together with appropriate provision of other uses such as local shops, leisure facilities and schools.”<sup>259</sup> These areas, located in different boroughs (Southwark included) were, therefore, intended to be the focus of new development and investment, and were expected to accommodate a significant proportion of London’s population growth.

The second statutory spatial development strategy of 2008 contained modifications regarding housing in the 2004 Plan. The 2008 version set a new target for housing provision. It set a target of 42,000 new homes per annum, which was a lower target compared to the previous Plan that announced 66,000 new homes per annum (Figure 3). It also placed an emphasis on the provision of affordable housing, through the use of planning obligations and the introduction of an “intermediate housing” category to support the development of homes for sale or rent at prices below market rates.

Under his tenure between 2000 and 2008, Livingstone implemented a number of housing initiatives. As required by the law, he published *the London Housing Strategy*, which set out a range of measures to increase the supply of affordable housing in the capital. These included the London Housing Bank, which provided financing for affordable housing projects, and the London Affordable Housing Programme, which supported the development of new affordable homes in the city. Livingstone also introduced the London Renters Scheme, which provided financial assistance to help low-income families and individuals afford rent in the private sector. He also implemented the London Living Rent Scheme, which “is a type of intermediate affordable housing for middle-income Londoners who want to build up savings to buy a home.”<sup>260</sup> However, he was criticised for not doing enough to address the shortage of affordable

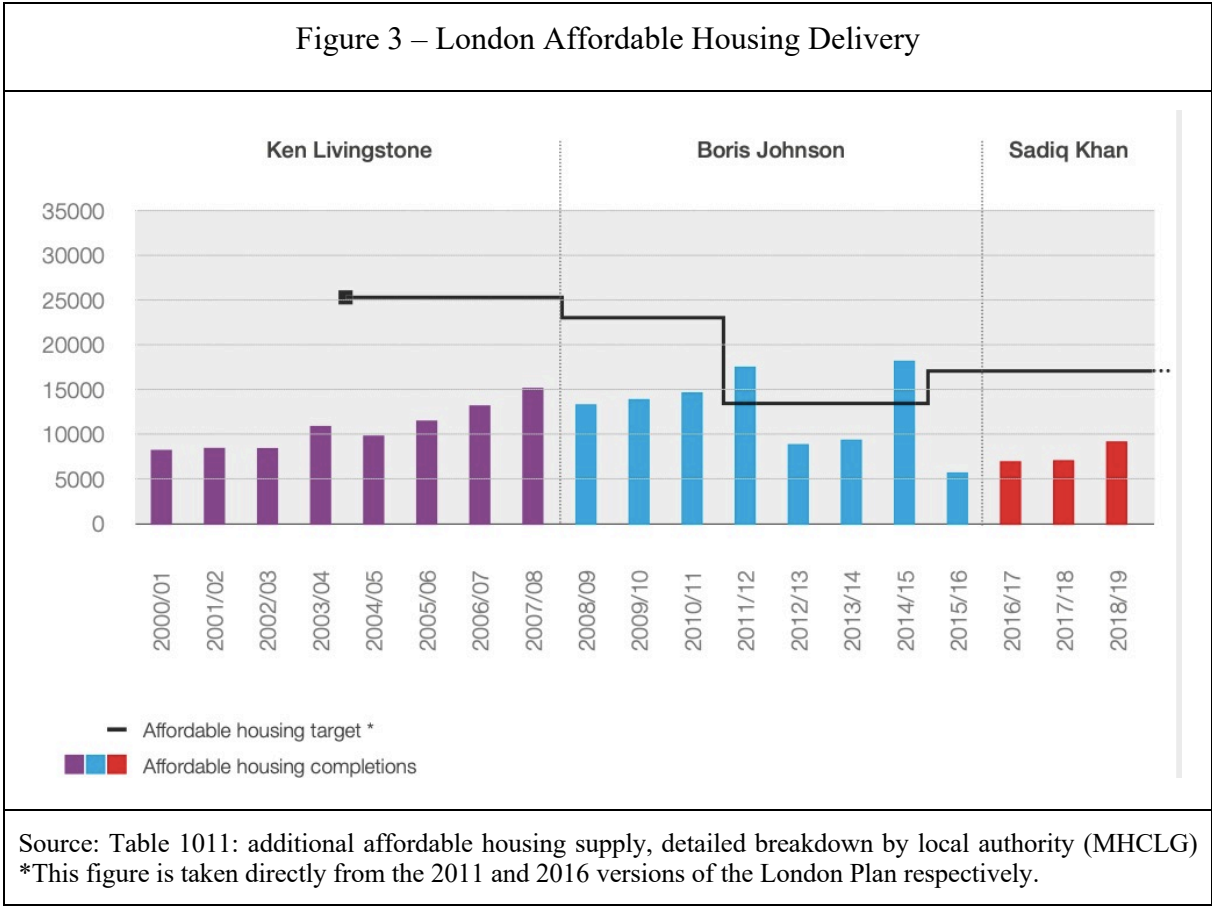
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<sup>258</sup> The identifies areas: Barking Reach, Belvedere/Erith, Bishopsgate, Cricklewood Brent Cross, Croydon Town Centre, London Riverside, Deptford Creek/ Greenwich Riverside, Elephant and Castle, Greenwich Peninsula, Hayes, Heathrow, Ilford, Isle of Dogs, King’s Cross, London Bridge, Lower Lee Valley, Paddington, Park Royal, Royal Docks, Stratford, Thamesmead, Tottenham Hale, Upper Lee Valley, Vauxhall, Waterloo, Wembley, Whitechapel, Aldgate and White City.

<sup>259</sup> The Mayor of London. *The London Plan 2004*. The Greater London Authority. 2004, pp. 43.

<sup>260</sup> “London Living Rent.” *London City Hall*, 22 Dec. 2022, <[www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/housing-and-land/improving-private-rented-sector/london-living-rent](http://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/housing-and-land/improving-private-rented-sector/london-living-rent)> Accessed on 7 May 2023.

housing in London, with many residents spending a large proportion of their income on rent or mortgage payments.



This can be explained by the fact that his powers were limited until 2007 regarding housing, and some boroughs, particularly Conservative boroughs, did not co-operate with the GLA.<sup>261</sup> An academic article examining the London Plans of 2004 and 2008 shows that Livingstone’s vision was limited by the non-cooperation of London Boroughs and demonstrates how in the 2008 version the Mayor addressed the boroughs and used more than “300 instructive phrases to the boroughs, saying they ‘should’, ‘will’ or ‘must’, giving central directions on everything from urban regeneration, two housing supply targets, to parking standards and the provision of

<sup>261</sup> Ross Lydall. “Mayor attacks councils for ‘lack of affordable housing’.” 12 November 2007, <<https://www.standard.co.uk/hp/front/mayor-attacks-councils-for-lack-of-affordable-housing-6618202.html>.> Accessed on 3 January 2023.

combined heat and power hook-ups in new development.”<sup>262</sup> This led to some tensions between the Mayor and some boroughs.

#### 4.3.2. Under Boris Johnson

In his 2008 Manifesto,<sup>263</sup> Boris Johnson announced that he would focus on housing by “drop[ping] the Mayor's current target of 50 per cent of all new homes in London to be affordable and build 50,000 more new homes instead.” The new target set at least 13,200 affordable homes per year (60% social rent and 40% intermediate rent or sale).<sup>264</sup> As explained in the previous chapter, the term “affordable homes” evolved and ceased to be synonymous with “social housing.” For instance, according to the London Plan 2011, it included social rented housing (rented homes owned and managed by local authorities), intermediate housing (prices above social housing and below market prices) and market housing (“private housing for rent or sale where the price is set in the open market”<sup>265</sup>). B. Johnson further announced that he “[w]ould release GLA-owned land and £130 million from the Regional Housing Pot to launch a new First Steps Housing Scheme, [and] invest £60 million from the Regional Housing Pot to renovate the capital's 84,205 empty properties.”

Under his leadership, B. Johnson published two spatial development strategies; the *London Plan 2011*, and the *London Plan 2016*. Both plans dedicated a section to housing and new housing provision, including affordable housing. The *London Plan 2011* set a target for the delivery of 42,000 new homes per year, and announced new changes in the total number of affordable housing compared to his predecessor, as previously mentioned. It also included provisions for regeneration of brownfield sites and the conversion of underutilised buildings into housing. The 2016 version updated the housing targets to a minimum of 66,000 new homes per year, and at least 50% “affordable” housing (social rented, intermediate housing, and market housing). It also set a target for the delivery of 90,000 new affordable homes per year by 2020. Moreover, it included provisions for the protection and enhancement of existing neighbourhoods, and for the provision of a mix of housing types.

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<sup>262</sup> Nancy Holman. “The Changing Nature of the London Plan.” The London school of economics and political science, 2010, pp. 28-29.

<sup>263</sup> “Boris Johnson’s winning Manifesto.” The Evening Standard, 1 Mai 2008, <<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/mayor/boris-johnson-s-winning-manifesto-6615230.html>> Accessed on 3 January 2023

<sup>264</sup> The Mayor of London. *The London Plan 2011*. The Greater London Authority, 2011.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

Even though this target seemed achievable compared to Livingstone's (Figure 2), B. Johnson was criticized as the definition he gave for affordable housing was vague and included less social housing, thereby exaggerating the number.<sup>266</sup> A report published by London Tenants Federation,<sup>267</sup> entitled *The Affordable Housing Con*,<sup>268</sup> was a response to the housing plans announced by the GLA. The report studies several London Plans (2004, 2007, and 2011) and denounces the failure to deliver the required social housing and the over-production of market price homes, despite the strategies and announcement of the GLA, hence, labelling the Plan an "affordable housing con." The report corrected the definition of affordable housing given by the government in their Planning Policy Statement 3 published in 2011, as "[...] high quality housing for people who are unable to access or afford market housing [...]. The government defines affordable housing as including social-rented and intermediate housing,"<sup>269</sup> and provided a new definition, "[...] affordable housing can only be defined as such 'when a working household is able to meet the cost of its rent without claiming housing benefit.'"

The report carried out a detailed analysis of affordable and social housing delivery over a period of time from 2007 to 2010 by comparing it to the number announced by the Mayor. For example, it shows that between 2007 and 2010 "[...] only 15,083 social-rented homes were delivered—meeting only 21% of the evidenced need identified in the GLA 2008 study. 14,806 intermediate homes were delivered, for which there was little or no evidence of need and 50,272 market homes were delivered, some 165% of the assessed need."<sup>270</sup>

The report further argued that the target number announced by the Mayor (and other politicians) did not really reflect the actual number of people in need of affordable housing, as he based the figures on the number of households and individuals registered on council housing waiting lists. "Yet, because of lack of supply people are discouraged from registering on housing waiting lists so those lists tend to underestimate need."<sup>271</sup> Moreover, the new target number of homes

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<sup>266</sup> Judith Evans. "Can Mayor Sadiq Khan tackle London's affordable housing crisis?" 4 October 2016. <<https://www.ft.com/content/93c90dc2-76b5-11e6-bf48-b372cdb1043a>> Accessed on 5 January 2023.

<sup>267</sup> The London Tenants Federation is a grassroots organization that represents the interests of social housing tenants in London. It was officially founded in 2002 with the goal of providing a voice for social housing tenants and advocating for their rights. The London Tenants Federation operates at a local level, with a network of tenant groups across London, and also works at a regional and national level to influence housing policy.

<sup>268</sup> London Tenants Federation. *The Affordable Housing Con*. London Tenants Federation, 2012.

<<https://acash.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/theaffordablehousingconf.pdf>> Accessed on 5 January 2023.

<sup>269</sup> *Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing*. The Department for Communities and Local Government, June 2011, mentioned as well in London Tenants Federation. *The Affordable Housing Con*. London Tenants Federation, 2012, p. x.

<sup>270</sup> London Tenants Federation. *The Affordable Housing Con*. London Tenants Federation, 2012, pp. 5.

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12.

given by the GLA represented only the new-build homes and did not take into consideration the homes removed from supply, for example housing which had been demolished, and how the new supply can fill the replacement of the previous supply.

Under his tenure, Johnson managed to implement a few policies in order to increase the supply of housing stocks, but also encouraged privatisation. For instance, he implemented the “First Step” programme which is part of a £135m programme introduced in 2009 to help first-time buyers purchase a home. The programme provided a range of financial assistance to eligible buyers, including shared equity loans and deposit assistance. The programme was criticised as “premature” and for using “taxpayers’ money” to help Londoners buy their first home after it emerged that the scheme was announced before receiving the green light from the government.<sup>272</sup>

### 4.3.3. Under Sadiq Khan

Unlike his predecessor, Sadiq Khan announced a significant focus on housing and addressing the housing crisis. In fact, his 2016 manifesto began by announcing the first point in his priority list, which is to “[t]ackle the housing crisis, building thousands more homes for Londoners each year, setting an ambitious target of 50 per cent of new homes being genuinely affordable, and getting a better deal for renters.”<sup>273</sup> This point was followed by eight points which included promises of improved public transport and promising to freeze transport fares for four years, and making London safer by increasing the number of police officers on the streets, and investing in education to improve schools. The manifesto was seen as fresh and progressive,<sup>274</sup> and it played a significant role in Khan’s victory in the mayoral election.

As Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan has focused on several key areas to address various challenges. As mentioned, Khan has prioritized addressing the housing crisis, aiming to increase affordable housing provision, and improve living conditions. He has set ambitious

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<sup>272</sup> Helene Mulholland. “Boris Johnson criticised for ‘premature’ launch of affordable housing scheme.” *The Guardian*. March 3 2009. <<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2009/mar/03/boris-johnson-affordable-housing>> Accessed on 5 January 2023.

<sup>273</sup> Sadiq Khan. “A Manifesto for All Londoners.” March 2016.

<sup>274</sup> “An analysis of ‘Sadiq Khan for London – a Manifesto for all Londoners.’” *London Communications Agency*. 16 May 2016. <<https://www.londoncommunications.co.uk/insights/blog/analysis-sadiq-khan-london-manifesto-londoners/>> Accessed on 3 January 2023.

plans to deliver 90,000 of affordable housing.<sup>275</sup> Additionally, he has recognized the potential impact of foreign investment on London's housing market and its implication on affordability and access to housing. To gain better understanding of these dynamics, Khan has asked the London School of Economics (LSE) to investigate the impact of foreign investment by posing specific questions: "how many new homes are sold to buyers based overseas, how many of these homes are kept empty, and how dependent are developers on foreign buyers."<sup>276</sup> The report aimed to provide valuable insights into the effects of international investment in the city's real estate. This demonstrates Khan's awareness and proactive approach to addressing the potential challenges associated with foreign investment and its impact on London's housing Market.

After winning the Mayoral election in November 2016, Sadiq Khan, published *Homes for Londoners: Affordable Homes Programme 2016-2021 Funding guidance*,<sup>277</sup> a 36-page report announcing a new funding programme intended to increase the availability of affordable housing in London, with the goal of building 90,000 new affordable homes by 2021. The program secured £3.15bn, and included a range of initiatives and funding mechanisms to support the development of new affordable homes in the city, including the London Affordable Rent program (LAR), the London Living Rent program (LLR), and the London Shared Ownership.

Both initiatives are two distinct housing initiatives in London aimed at addressing different aspects of affordability. LAR is an initiative which aims to increase the availability of affordable rental housing in London. Under the program, the GLA provides funding to developers to build new homes that are available to rent at prices that are considered affordable for low- to moderate-income households in the city. "Once let, London Affordable Rent homes will be subject to rent-setting guidance issued by the Social Housing Regulator and will be subject to the annual one per cent rent reductions up to 2020."<sup>278</sup> It is also designed to provide

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<sup>275</sup> "Mayor Sets out Ambitious Plans to Deliver 90,000 Affordable Homes." *London City Hall*, 29 November 2016, [www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/mayor-sets-out-plans-to-deliver-90000-homes](http://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/mayor-sets-out-plans-to-deliver-90000-homes). <<https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/mayor-sets-out-plans-to-deliver-90000-homes>.> Accessed 17 June 2023.

<sup>276</sup> LSE London Housing Blog. "The Mayor of London Has Asked LSE London to Investigate the Impact of Foreign Investment on London's Housing Market." *LSE Research Online*, 8 December 2016, <<http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/83365/>.> Accessed 17 June 2023.

<sup>277</sup> Mayor of London. *Homes for Londoners: Affordable Homes Programme 2016-2021*, London City Hall, <<https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/homesforlondoners-affordablehomesprogrammefundingguidance.pdf>.> Accessed 20 June 2023.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

a range of housing options for people who may not be able to afford to rent a home at market rates. The LLR is “a type of intermediate affordable housing for middle-income Londoners who want to build up savings to buy a home.”<sup>279</sup> The money paid for rent can go towards a deposit to buy a home later. London Shared Ownership is designed to make home ownership more affordable for people who are unable to afford to buy a home outright. Under the program, people can purchase a share of a property, typically between 25% and 75%, and pay rent on the remaining share. It aims to facilitate home-ownership by allowing people to get onto the property ladder and become home owners, as the cost of buying a smaller share of a property is generally lower than the cost of purchasing a property outright.

*The Homes for Londoners: Affordable Homes Programme 2016-2021* was intended to address the ongoing shortage of affordable housing in London and to help make housing more accessible and affordable for people who may not be able to afford to rent or buy a home at market rates.

In 2021, a new London Plan was published, presenting a vision for a city that balances its rapid development needs with sustainability and inclusivity. The plan emphasises the principle of “Good Growth,” the strategy which prioritises socially and inclusive growth that is environmentally sustainable. In addition, the plan addresses London’s housing crisis by targeting the creation of more homes with a strong focus on genuine affordability, as it acknowledges “the lack of supply of the homes that Londoners need has played a significant role in London’s housing crisis.”<sup>280</sup> The plan also announces that:

London needs 66,000 new homes each year, for at least twenty years, and evidence suggests that 43,000 of them should be genuinely affordable if the needs of Londoners are to be met. This supports the Mayor’s strategic target of 50 per cent of all new homes being genuinely affordable, which is based on viability evidence.<sup>281</sup>

According to a recent article published by *the Guardian*, S. Khan is proud to soon announce that London has exceeded its housebuilding target by constructing nearly 120,000 affordable homes since 2015, yet expresses concerns over rising rents.<sup>282</sup> The article further mentions that “[a]ccording to the Office for National Statistics, private rental prices in the capital increased

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<sup>279</sup> “London Living Rent.” London City Hall, 22 December 2022, <[www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/housing-and-land/improving-private-rented-sector/london-living-rent](http://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/housing-and-land/improving-private-rented-sector/london-living-rent)> Accessed 19 June 2023.

<sup>280</sup> Mayor of London. *London Plan 2021*. Greater London Authority, 2021.

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>282</sup> Daniel Boffey. “Sadiq Khan Hails Surpassing of Affordable housing target in London.” *The Guardian*, 15 May 2023, <<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/may/15/sadiq-khan-hails-surpassing-of-affordable-housing-target-in-london>> Accessed 22 August 2023.



by 4.6% in the 12 months to February 2023, up from an increase of 4.3% in the 12 months to January. It was the strongest annual percentage change since January 2013.”<sup>283</sup> In fact, housing prices continuing to skyrocket in the capital, is still an issue that needs to be solved.

## Conclusion

The British capital has undergone major institutional changes. After the abolishment of the GLC, London had no metropolitan government for many years. Once the GLA was founded, it participated in further development. However, as the GLA was a newly established administration (2000), there were some initial challenges. For example, for the first two years under Livingstone, the Mayor and the Assembly faced difficulties in working within the terms of the GLA Act.<sup>284</sup> Its power was also limited, until it gained more responsibilities over the course of time. There were also mixed opinions regarding the institution. Some considered its emergence a success: “In fact, it has been a success by any standards. London has regained its self-government and, to a significant extent, civic self-esteem.”<sup>285</sup> Others criticised the fact that it had a weak assembly as it played only the role of scrutineer and could not create legislations.<sup>286</sup>

Regarding the Mayors, over the years, despite the fact that K. Livingstone, B. Johnson, and S. Khan belonged to different political parties, they had fairly similar agendas (except in housing); they achieved significant success during their tenures as Mayors of London. At an international level, both Ken Livingstone and Boris Johnson, who served as Mayor of London from 2000 to 2008 and from 2008 to 2016 respectively, played important roles in maintaining the global position of the English capital through a number of policies that promoted London as a sustainable world city.

However, both mayors faced criticism for their approach to housing and affordability during their tenure, focusing as they did on other policies, and so neglected housing. However, it is important to remember that they were restrained by legal framework. Regarding Sadiq Khan, he showed awareness to the housing issues, and managed to achieve his target.

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<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>284</sup> Tony Travers. "Decentralization London-style: the GLA and London governance." *Regional Studies*, vol. 36, no. 7, 2002, pp. 785.

<sup>285</sup> Tony Travers. "The Greater London Authority, 2000 to 2008." *London School of Economics*, pp. 13.

<sup>286</sup> Benjamin Worthy, et al. "Rebels Leading London: The Mayoralties of Ken Livingstone and Boris Johnson Compared." Birkbeck Institutional Research Online, pp.5.

Because none of these mayors addressed gentrification in their London Plan, a pervasive issue in the British capital, the housing crisis remains unsolved. The high cost of living and housing in London has remained a significant problem over the last three decades, and continues to be an issue in London today. As previously mentioned, the GLA has limited powers particularly regarding housing, and, at a local level, local borough councils have gained more responsibilities. As this case study is concerned with Peckham, located within the London Borough of Southwark, the following chapter will focus on urban policies and regeneration programmes implemented by Southwark Council, which led to a worsening of the process of gentrification.



# **Chapter 5**

## **The Urban Policy of the Borough of Southwark:**

### **Facing the Housing Crisis and Shaping Gentrification**

The London Borough of Southwark, also called Southwark, located on the south bank of the River Thames, directly across from the City of London and the West End, has recently become a hot spot in the capital. Over the last two decades, the borough has undergone radical urban changes, influenced by the policies and strategies devised and implemented by its councillors. The area became known for its newly built houses and redeveloped urban spaces. Transport lines were extended in the area making the borough easily accessible. Like the rest of London, Southwark had been facing a housing crisis. In order to solve housing problems, Southwark Council ('SC') has been working on plans and schemes. However, these schemes failed to provide the required housing, but managed to improve the borough's image, unfortunately leading to gentrified neighbourhoods.

This chapter focuses on the role Southwark Council played in addressing the housing crisis and how it shaped today's districts, together with its involvement in the process of gentrification. It examines how the Council's regeneration schemes, despite advocating for community and social inclusion, favoured wealthier classes and were, therefore, pro-gentrification. They have created tension between social classes and led to the displacement of the working class to areas far from the centre of the capital.

This chapter adopts a multiple case study approach to allow deeper insight into the different regeneration schemes implemented by the London Borough of Southwark, and their impact on neighbourhoods and communities. The approach chosen involves specific cases using multiple research methods such as participant observation and document analysis (among others) in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the complex link between policies and projects

implemented and the process of gentrification. It is based on John Gerring's methodology: "A case study may be understood as intensive study of single case where the purpose of that study is – at least in part – to shed light on a larger class of cases (a population). A case study research may incorporate several cases, that is, multiple case studies."<sup>287</sup> He further explains that this approach is essential to gain comprehensive and nuanced understanding into the subject of study. The research findings were also drawn from several primary sources, including government reports, and secondary sources such as reviews of earlier studies, in order to have a broad overview of the urban and housing policies implemented in the Borough since 1997.

This chapter is, therefore, divided into different sections and subsections. The first section explains the structure and functioning of the London boroughs and the role played by each member (mayor and councillors). The second section specifically reviews the London Borough of Southwark ('LBS'), by examining its political history, structure, wards and districts, while also highlighting its diversity through its population and housing structures. The third section examines the different policies which encouraged private investment and were implemented in deprived areas ("key revitalisation areas"), and deployed by the Council to improve the physical structure by aesthetically enhancing the neighbourhood, and altering economic factors by means of working with private investors. The fourth and final part examines how these policies have worsened the housing crisis and shaped gentrified neighbourhoods.

### **5.1. The Borough: Structure and Role**

After the abolition of the GLC, local boroughs (or borough councils) were given their own responsibilities and local services to provide. In order to understand what a 'borough' is, it is essential to understand the structure of the local government. In England, local government operates either under a one-tier system (a unitary system) or a two-tier system (county and district councils). There are five types of local authorities: county councils, district councils, unitary authorities, metropolitan districts and London Boroughs.

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<sup>287</sup> John Gerring. *Case study research: Principles and practices*. Cambridge university press, 2006, p. 20.

### 5.1.1. The Structure of a Borough Council

A borough council is a metropolitan district, an administrative part of local government. According to the Local Government Authority's website, "**district councils** (sometimes called borough or city councils) are smaller and provide local services such as refuse collection, environmental health, and leisure facilities."<sup>288</sup> In London it is therefore a local authority that provides day-to-day services in the capital. In 1965, 32 new borough councils and the City of London were formed following the *1963 London Government Act* to replace the previous 28 metropolitan boroughs (figure 1). Twelve boroughs, Camden, Greenwich, Hackney, Hammersmith and Fulham, Islington, Kensington and Chelsea, Lambeth, Lewisham, Southwark, Tower Hamlets, and Wandsworth and Westminster, form Inner London. The remaining twenty boroughs form Outer London. *The London Government Act* allowed the establishment of these boroughs as administrative areas. The Act was implemented under the Conservative Government (1951-1963) and the boroughs were formed under the Labour government led by Harold Wilson (1964-1966). Since then, there has only been a minor modification concerning the boundaries.

Each borough council has its own local affairs to deal with. As mentioned in the previous chapter, in 2000, *the Greater London Authority* ('GLA'), comprising of the Mayor of London and the Assembly, was established with oversight for areas such as transport, policing, planning, environment, fire and emergency services. Yet, the GLA has limited responsibilities and the borough councils are in charge of housing and education (among other responsibilities). This can be explained by the fact that when the Greater London Council ('GLC') was abolished in 1986, certain responsibilities were devolved to the borough councils which were not transferred back when the GLC was subsequently replaced by the GLA. The boroughs are divided into wards. Since May 2022, the 32 London boroughs have been divided into 679 wards. These wards are electoral areas that are represented by one to three councillors. During local elections, held every four years depending on the local council, local residents vote for a representative of their ward, and sometimes also for who leads the council.

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<sup>288</sup> Local Government Association. "How Is Local Government Organised?" *Local Government Association*, <[www.local.gov.uk/our-support/councillor-and-officer-development/councillor-hub/introduction-local-government/how#:~:text=District%20councils%20\(sometimes%20called%20borough,environmental%20health%2C%20and%20leisure%20facilities.>](http://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/councillor-and-officer-development/councillor-hub/introduction-local-government/how#:~:text=District%20councils%20(sometimes%20called%20borough,environmental%20health%2C%20and%20leisure%20facilities.>) Accessed 11 July 2022.

Figure 1- London Boroughs and Districts map



Source: London Map 360, “Map of London 32 Boroughs & neighbourhoods”, *London Map 360*, 2021.

Councillors are considered the medium between the locals and the council. They are in charge of various tasks such as planning, monitoring, and developing council business. They work to create better services by improving the living conditions in an area. Furthermore, they participate in decision-making, and review and develop policies and strategies.

A council is run by a leader and cabinet executive. The leader, as the chairman of the cabinet, is the councillor who heads the largest political party represented in the council. He or she appoints the members of the cabinet (senior councillors) and deputy leader. The leader assigns portfolios to individual cabinet members. Together with the cabinet, they ensure strategic management and policy development.

### 5.1.2. The Borough's Role

**Table 1** – A guide to local authority responsibility for major services in London

	London	
	London Boroughs	GLA
Education	✓	
Highways	✓	✓
Transport planning	✓	✓
Passenger transport		✓
Social Care	✓	
Housing	✓	
Libraries	✓	
Leisure and Recreation	✓	
Environmental Health	✓	
Waste collection	✓	
Waste disposal	✓	
Planning applications	✓	
Strategic planning	✓	✓
Local taxation collection	✓	

Source: Local Government Group. "Local Government Structure Overview." *Local Government Association Analysis and Research* October, 2010. <<https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/local-government-structur-634.pdf>> Accessed on 28 July 2022.



In London, most local government functions are carried out by the London borough councils (Table 1). They are responsible for education, highways, transport planning, social services, housing, libraries, and leisure and recreation.<sup>289</sup> Borough councils are also responsible for strategic planning, collecting waste and local taxation. Some tasks are contributed to by both the London boroughs and the GLA, while other wider tasks and responsibilities concerning police, fire, strategic planning and transport fall within the remit of the GLA. As explained in the previous chapter, even though locally the boroughs bear responsibility for their area, the GLA is responsible for providing London-wide services, pursuant to the *Greater London Authority Act 1999*.

## **5.2. The London Borough of Southwark**

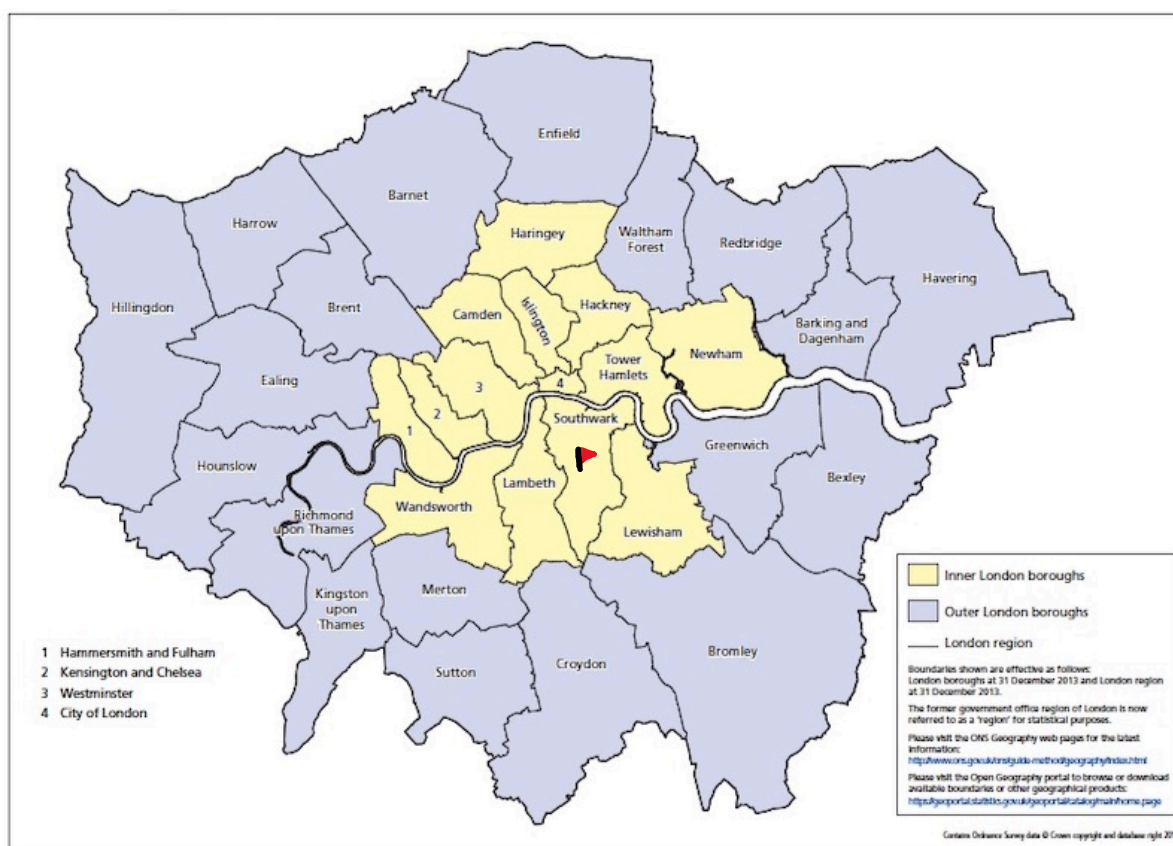
As explained before, the London Borough of Southwark (LBS), also called Southwark, is located in south London, in the middle of Greater London (Figure 2). It is connected to the City of London by several bridges across the River Thames. It is surrounded by the London Boroughs of Tower Hamlets, Lambeth and Lewisham. It hosts many tourist sites and attractions such as Tower Bridge, Shakespeare's Globe, the Imperial War Museum London, and Tate Modern. The borough is run by Southwark London Borough Council.

Previously notorious for its bad reputation, the borough is now one of the most desirable in London. It is known for its diversity, with almost half of its population consisting of ethnic minorities.

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<sup>289</sup> *Local Government Structure Overview*. Local Government Association Analysis and Research, October 2013. <[www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/local-government-structur-634.pdf](http://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/local-government-structur-634.pdf)> Accessed 12 July 2022.

**Figure 2 - The London Borough of Southwark within Inner London and Greater London**



Source: ONS Geography GIS & Mapping Unit, 2015. [flag mine]

### 5.2.1. A brief history of the London Borough of Southwark

Southwark’s history can be traced back to AD43 when the first bridge across the Thames was built by the Romans. The Borough is considered to be one of the oldest parts of London. It was called “south work” under the Saxons, hence its modern name,<sup>290</sup> and from the sixteenth century it began to be known simply as “The Borough.” In the nineteenth century, Southwark’s population grew rapidly, consisting mainly of poor working-class people. It was also known for being home to some of the worst slums in London.

<sup>290</sup> Tim Lambert. “A History of Southwark.” *Local Histories*, 7 April 2022, <<https://localhistories.org/a-history-of-southwark/>> Accessed on 20 July 2022.

Figure 3 – Results of local elections since 1998

In the 2022 elections 63 seats in Southwark were contested.

Labour: 52 seats

Liberal Democrat: 11 seats

Overall borough turnout: 34%

***Previous election results:***

2018 **Labour:** 49 seats **Liberal Democrat:** 14 seats

Overall borough turnout: 33.6%

2014 Labour: 48 seats Conservative: 2 seats Liberal Democrat: 13 seats

Overall borough turnout: not known

2010 Labour: 35 seats Conservative: 3 seats Liberal Democrat: 25 seats

Overall borough turnout: 57.8%

2006 Labour: 28 seats Conservative: 6 seats Liberal Democrat: 28 seats Green: 1 seat

Overall borough turnout: not available

2002 Labour: 28 seats Conservative: 5 seats Liberal Democrat: 30 seats

Overall borough turnout: 26.2%

1998 Labour: 33 seats Conservative: 4 seats Liberal Democrat: 27 seats

Overall borough turnout: 32.9%

**Source:** "Southwark 2022." *London Councils*, <<https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/who-runs-london/london-local-elections/2022-london-election-results/southwark-2022>. > Accessed on 20 July 2022.

The LBS was formed in 1965 through the amalgamation of the Metropolitan Borough of Southwark, the Metropolitan Borough of Camberwell and the Metropolitan Borough of Bermondsey. It is appreciated for its proximity to the City of London and the services that it offers. Today the borough represents a mixed picture of “prosperity”, as it undergoes massive regeneration programmes, while still being perceived as unsafe because of its deprived areas

and neighbourhoods. Most recently (according to crime data available from 2021), Southwark was listed amongst the top 10 most dangerous boroughs in London.<sup>291</sup>

At a political level, the LBS is known as a Labour borough. Since the local elections of 1998, the Labour Party has won the majority of seats (Figure 3). In the most recent elections in 2022, Labour won 52 seats against eleven seats to Liberal Democrats, while the Conservative Party did not win any seats during these two elections.

In May 2014, Sunil Chopra<sup>292</sup> was elected as the first mayor of Indian origin in the borough, and was re-elected in 2022.<sup>293</sup> The Mayor plays a non-political role, focusing more on ceremonial social engagements, and hosting and presiding over civic ceremonial events over the course of the year.<sup>294</sup>

Southwark Council is made up of 23 electoral wards represented by 63 councillors in total (two to three councillors are elected per ward). It is made up of five departments: The Chief Executive's Department, Finance and Governance, Environment and Leisure, Children's and Adults' Services, and Housing and Modernisation. The current leader of the council is Cllr. Kieron Williams, a Labour candidate who won the elections in both May 2014 and 2018 in the Camberwell Green ward, becoming the leader of the council in September 2020.

### 5.2.2. Population and Ethnic Diversity

Southwark has been growing rapidly over the last two decades. In fact, according to *Southwark Plan 2019-2036*, a local authority plan published in 2019, "Southwark is growing much faster than the national average and has the second highest growth in South East London behind Greenwich."<sup>295</sup> Southwark is also well known for its diversity. As per the 2011 census (Table 2), the borough consists of 45% ethnic minorities compared to 40% in London and 14.5% in

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<sup>291</sup> Crime Rate "Southwark Crime and Safety Statistics." *Public Crime Rates in Your Area*, 4 August 2022, <<https://crimerate.co.uk/london/southwark>> Accessed on 20 July 2022.

<sup>292</sup> Sunil Chopra is a businessman of Indian origin (born and brought up in Delhi) who has lived for more than four decades in London, and was elected twice as the Mayor of the London Borough of Southwark. He launched a retail business and is known for the co-founding of Southwark Hindu Centre that promotes Indian culture.

<sup>293</sup> "UK: Indian-Origin Sunil Chopra Elected as Mayor of London Borough of Southwark." *Republic World*, 23 May 2022, <<https://www.republicworld.com/world-news/uk-news/uk-indian-origin-sunil-chopra-elected-as-mayor-of-london-borough-of-southwark-articleshow.html>> Accessed on 20 July 2022.

<sup>294</sup> "The Mayor of Southwark." *Southwark Council*. <<https://www.southwark.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/councillors-and-mps/the-mayor-of-southwark?chapter=3>> Accessed on 20 July 2022.

<sup>295</sup> Southwark Council. *The Southwark Plan 2019-2036* (for Adoption 2022). Southwark Council, 2019, p. 30.

England.<sup>296</sup> Over 120 languages are spoken in Southwark’s schools, and besides English the most widely spoken languages include Spanish, Chinese, French and Arabic.<sup>297</sup>

Table 2 - Race and Ethnicity in Southwark, London and England

2011 Census	Southwark	London	England
All residents	288,283	8,173,941	53,012,456
White British, Irish and Other residents	54.3%	59.8%	85.5%
Black Africans and Other black minorities	30.1%	15.6%	4.5%
Arabs, and Pakistani other Asian minorities	15.6%	24.6%	10%
Total minorities	45.7%	40.2%	14.5%

**Source:** “Public Sector Equality Duty.” *Southwark Council*, <<https://www.southwark.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/equality-and-diversity/public-sector-equality-duty?chapter=8>> Accessed on 24 July 2022.

A study by geographer Oliver O’Brien of University College London’s Consumer Data Research Centre, examined the concentration of different ethnic minority groups in London and produced a map<sup>298</sup> showing where different ethnic groups have settled in the capital.<sup>299</sup> In Southwark, for example, a large Nigerian community is settled largely in Peckham, but also in Camberwell. A Filipino community can be found in Bermondsey. The map shows a high concentration of Asian communities in Bankside, Walworth (both Bangladeshi and Chinese

<sup>296</sup> “Public Sector Equality Duty.” *Southwark Council*. <<https://www.southwark.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/equality-and-diversity/public-sector-equality-duty>> Accessed on 24 July 2022.

<sup>297</sup> London Council. *Interesting Things about London’s Boroughs*. London Council. June 2018.

<sup>298</sup> The map covers the whole UK but confirms that London is the most diverse city in the UK. Street by street, the map shows where more than 8% of residents were born abroad.

<sup>299</sup> Feargus O’Sullivan. “Mapping Where Immigrants Settle in London, Street by Street.” *Bloomberg*, 23<sup>rd</sup> May, 2016. <<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-05-23/a-new-map-charts-london-s-ethnic-diversity-street-by-street>> the map is accessed through the following website.<<https://julie.geog.ucl.ac.uk/~ollie/maps.cdrc.ac.uk/#/metrics/countryofbirth/default/BTTTTFFT/13/-0.0888/51.4910/>> Accessed on 24<sup>th</sup> June, 2022.

communities) and Rotherhithe (Chinese). The map also shows a Black African community at the northern part of the borough, among other trends.

The Borough is known for having in excess of 250 African churches, also known as ‘White Garment Churches,’ which represent the greatest concentration outside the African continent.<sup>300</sup> Several churches are located in Peckham, which is known for its large West African community, as previously mentioned.

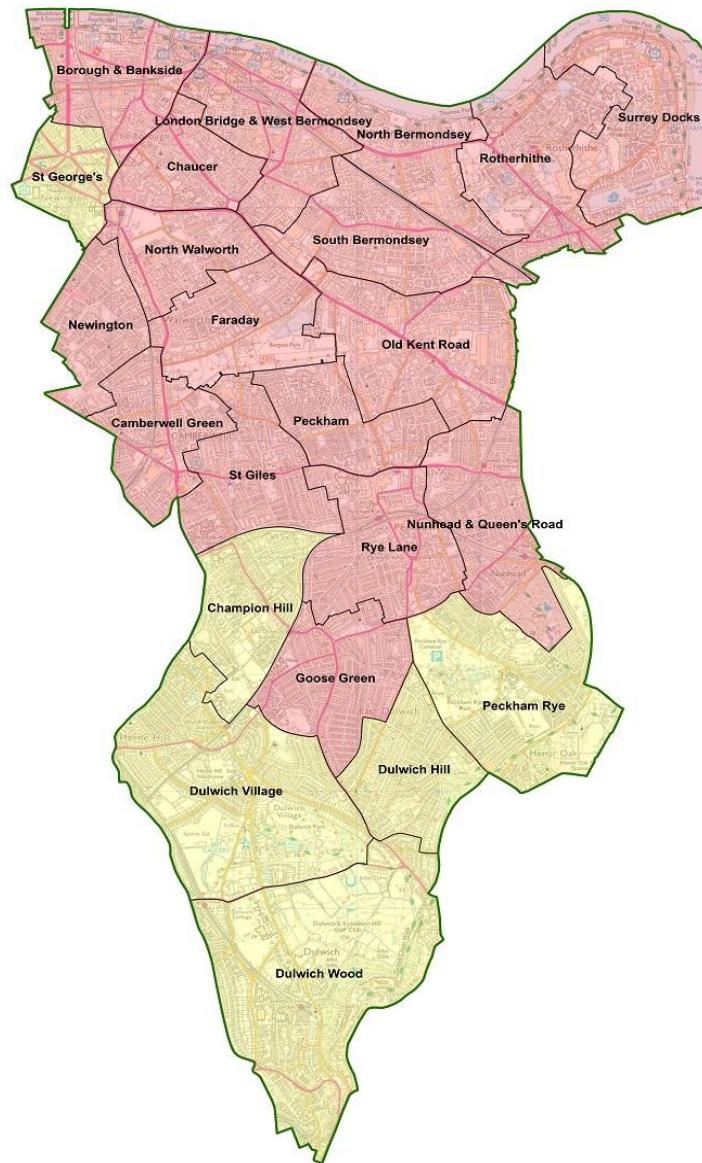
### **5.2.3. Wards and Districts**

The London Borough of Southwark is divided into 22 districts: Bankside, Bermondsey, Borough (or Southwark), Camberwell, Crystal Palace, Denmark Hill, Deptford, Dulwich, Dulwich Village, East Dulwich, Elephant and Castle, Herne Hill, Honor Oak (partly in the Borough of Lewisham), Kennington, Newington, Nunhead, Peckham, Peckham Rye, Rotherhithe, Surrey Quays, Walworth and West Dulwich. Since 2018, it has been divided into 23 wards (Figure 4) where six wards are represented by two councillors and the remainder are represented by three councillors.

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<sup>300</sup> Kemi Alemoru. “Amid rising gentrification, London’s African churches thrive”, *Time*, 19 April 2019. <<https://time.com/longform/african-churches-christianity-london>> Accessed on 24<sup>th</sup> June, 2022.

Figure 4 - A map of Southwark's ward boundary changes which came into effect on 3 May 2018. The wards in yellow will be represented by two councillors and the pink wards by three.



**Source:** Admin. "Southwark's Council Wards to Change from May Local Election." *Southwark News*, 21st February, 2018. <[www.southwarknews.co.uk/news/council-wards-southwark-will-change-may-local-election/](http://www.southwarknews.co.uk/news/council-wards-southwark-will-change-may-local-election/)> Accessed 25 July 2021. Originally taken from Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

#### 5.2.4. Households and Housing in Southwark

According to the 2001 census, households in the borough consisted of 31% owner occupiers, 42% council tenants, 11% other social tenants and 13.5% private sector tenants.<sup>301</sup> In 2011, owner-occupier households represented 31% of households, while properties rented from the council represented 31% (a sharp decrease in ten years), other socially rented housing stood at 13%, and privately rented homes at 24% (table 3).<sup>302</sup> These figures indicate that the private housing sector is rapidly expanding in the borough's housing market.

Table 3 - Overview of Tenure by Number of Households and as Percentage of all Households

Housing tenure	2001	2001	2011	2011
Owned	33,235	31.4	37,783	31.4
Local authority rented	44,795	42.3	37,628	31.2
Other social rented	11,844	11.2	15,016	12.5
Private rented	14,323	13.5	28,493	23.7
Living rent free	1,609	1.5	1,502	1.2
Total households	105,806	100	120,422	100

**Source:** Census 2001 and 2011, shared on Southwark Council. *Southwark Key Housing Stats 2020*. September 2020, p.13.

According to the 2011 Census, it is estimated that there are more than 120,000 households (an increase of approximately 14% since the 2001 census), a figure which is estimated to continue to rise.<sup>303</sup> The census shows that the largest household group was single-occupancy households, followed by couples with children, then lone-parent households, with shared adult households in fourth place.

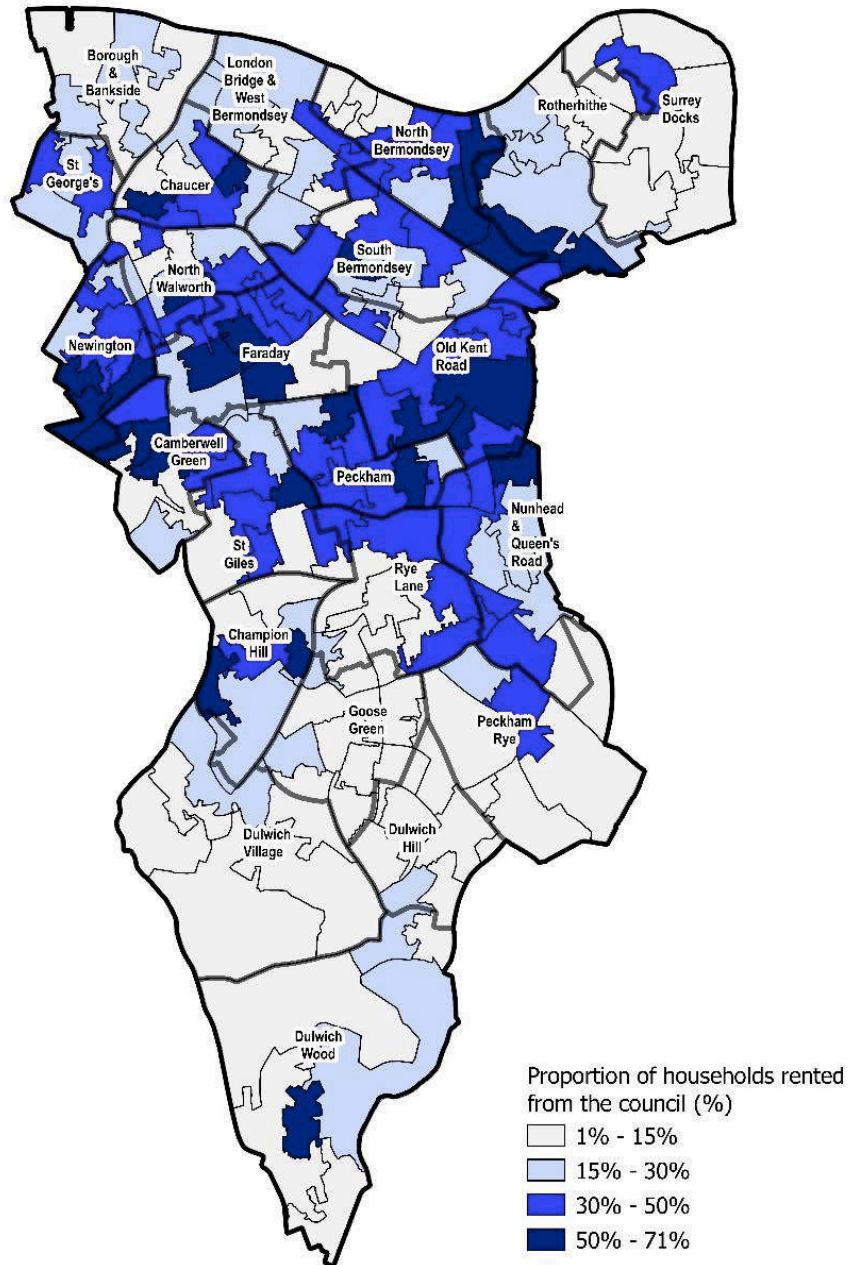
<sup>301</sup> Southwark Council. *Southwark Key Housing Stats 2020*. September 2020. Mentioned as well in Thomas Backlog. "Southwark House Prices: How Have Southwark House Prices Changed?" *Hastings International*, <<https://www.hastingsinternational.com/content/news/247-southwark-house-prices#Southwark%20House%20Prices%202001>> Accessed on 24 July 2022.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.



**Figure 5 – Proportions of homes rented from the council**



**Source:** Housing, England and Wales: Census 2021. Office for National Statistics, 2023.

The 2021 Census indicated that 27% of the households in the borough are socially-rented council properties, 13% are other social tenants, 28% are private tenants, and 20% are owned

with a mortgage or loan.<sup>304</sup> Yet, “[c]ompared to London and England, Southwark continues to have substantially lower proportions of households that are owned either outright, or with a mortgage or loan.”<sup>305</sup> The Census also revealed that the proportions of homes rented from the council are not equally distributed in the borough, but concentrated in certain areas in the centre of the borough (Figure 5).

The London Borough of Southwark is known for having the largest stock of social housing in England, with a figure of 31.2% in 2011.<sup>306</sup> However, social housing in the borough is decreasing; Figure 6 illustrates that the social housing stock dropped from more than 60,000 units in 1981 to fewer than 40,000 in 2010, and continued to decrease by 4% in 2021.<sup>307</sup> This is explained by the “Right to Buy” scheme, first launched under the Thatcher government (expanded on in Chapter 1), together with the regeneration schemes that have led to the demolition of social housing estates and the replacement of social housing in favour of private housing (this will be further developed in the following sub-section). Therefore, in contrast to the reduction in council housing, the private housing market has been thriving (Figure 5), growing from fewer than 30,000 private rental units, to more than 70,000 homes in 2010, reaching in excess of 80,000 privately rented homes by 2019.

The borough has recently become known for new-build housing provided by private developers such as *LendLease*, the Australian multinational construction, property and investment group, *Hyde Property Group*, a UK diversified property group, and *Tiger Developments*, a UK commercial property developer and investor, among many others. These private investors, by partnering with the council and funding projects, have been replacing housing in some areas that were previously social housing, or developing markets in deprived areas. There has been, therefore, an increase in the number of private sector housing units. For example, the following pie chart (Figure 7) shows that between 2012-13 and 2015-16, there was no newly-built social housing, while only 5% of new-builds were ‘affordable’ rentals, with 12% shared ownership and 83% offered at market rate. It is worth noting that ‘affordable’ housing does not equate to

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<sup>304</sup> Southwark Council. *Census 2021 Results: Housing*. Southwark Public Health Division Children and Adults services, February 2023.

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>306</sup> Knight Frank. “Housing Stock in Southwark.” *Knight Frank*, <<https://www.knightfrank.co.uk/residential/age-of-housing-stock-in-london/southwark>> Accessed on 24 July 2022.

<sup>307</sup> “How Life Has Changed in Southwark: Census 2021.” *Office for National Statistics: Census 2021*, <[www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E09000028/](http://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E09000028/)> Accessed 12 June 2023.

social housing: the price is not the same and can be “set at up to 80% of the local market rent,”<sup>308</sup> and is therefore not universally affordable. ‘Market rate’ housing is housing proposed by real estate developers, while ‘shared ownership’ refers to buyers who own a share of the freehold/leasehold, while paying rent for the remainder.

The reduction in social housing and the increase of private sector housing has contributed to the rapid increase of housing prices in the borough as explained in chapter 2. A report published by *Hastings International*, an independent estate agent with offices throughout central London, reveals that in the first decade of the twenty-first century house prices have doubled from a borough average of around £155,000 in 2001, to £305,000 in 2011, overall. More specifically, the average price of terraced houses rose from around £198,000 in 2001 to £423,000 in 2011, with semi-detached properties rising from £500,000 to £992,000 over the same period. By January 2021, house prices had sharply increased by 77% compared to the previous decade.<sup>309</sup>

The report, which was written for potential investors in the Southwark housing market, shows the evolution of the housing market, with sharp increases in property prices being attractive to investors. It announced that “Southwark has long been a property hot spot in the capital. Recent years have proven it to be among the best locations to invest in London for strong returns in capital appreciation.”<sup>310</sup> The report refers to recent urban changes, including privatisation and transport accessibility, which have made the borough more attractive to the middle- and upper-middle classes, together with private investors. The borough, however, became less affordable to the working classes, thereby accentuating the housing crisis.

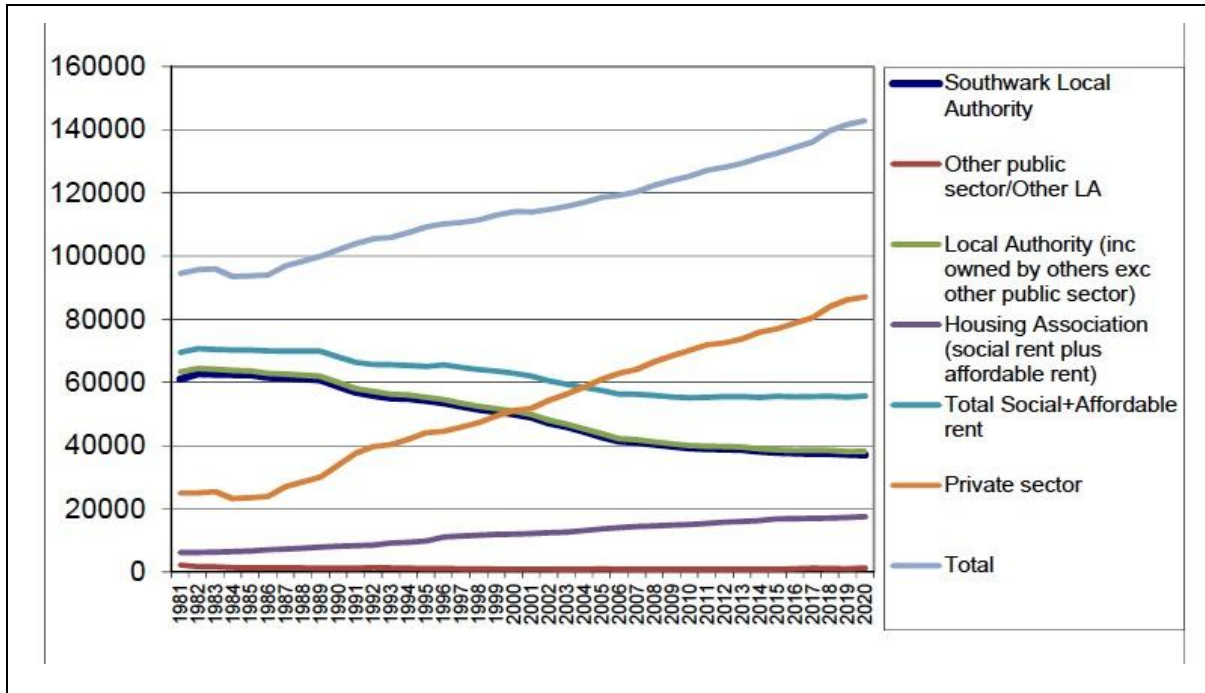
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<sup>308</sup> Colin Wiles. “Affordable Housing Does Not Mean What You Think It Means.” *The Guardian*, 3 February 2014. <<https://www.theguardian.com/housing-network/2014/feb/03/affordable-housing-meaning-rent-social-housing>> Accessed on 24 July 2022.

<sup>309</sup> Thomas Backlog. “Southwark House Prices: How Have Southwark House Prices Changed?” *Hastings International*, <<https://www.hastingsinternational.com/content/news/247-southwark-house-prices#Southwark%20House%20Prices%202001>> Accessed on 24 July 2022.

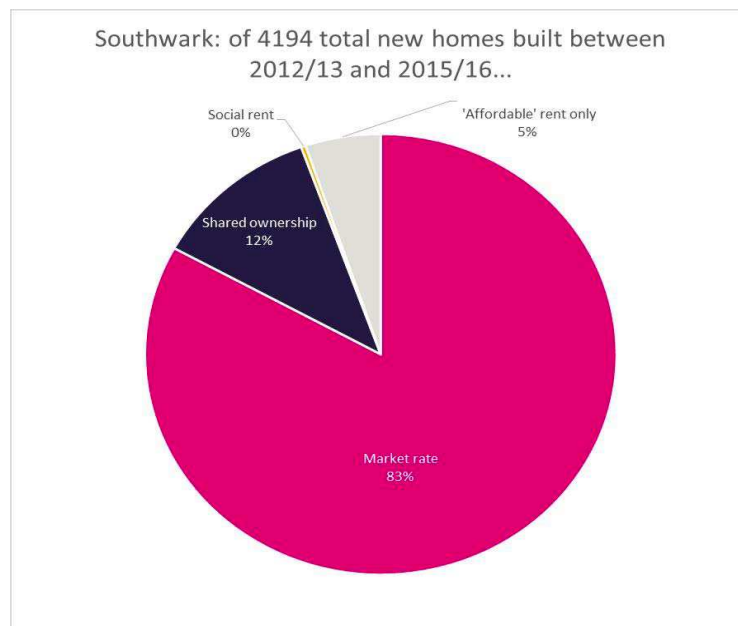
<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

Figure 6 – Housing stock in Southwark between 1981 - 2020



Source: HIP Returns, HSSAs, ELASH and LAHS 1981-2020 - Southwark Council. *Southwark Key Housing Stats 2020*. Southwark Council, September 2020.

Figure 7 - Breakdown of new homes built in Southwark between 2012/13 and 2015/16



Source: Child Poverty Action Group. *Child poverty in Southwark: A briefing for London's Councillors*. Autumn 2018. Taken from Trust for London, London Poverty Profile, 2017.

As seen above and in chapter 2, over the last two decades Southwark has undergone rapid changes, making it attractive to internationally-known developers and investors. According to *Central Housing Group*,<sup>311</sup> “[b]ased on the current average house price and rental yield at postcode level, SE17, which covers parts of Lewisham, Southwark and Lambeth, is one of the best buy-to-let options in the current market.”<sup>312</sup> By-To-Let mortgages are a form of investment that were launched in the 1990s in the UK, to help and encourage investments in housing for rental purposes, and which are still being used today. It helps landlords to invest in housing by buying a property to rent out to tenants. Borough-wide residential property prices are therefore increasing sharply, exacerbating the housing crisis. A recent study conducted by Robertson has shown that the combination of privatisation of social housing and the growth of mortgages has further intensified the demand for housing and subsequently driven up prices, exacerbating the housing crisis.<sup>313</sup> Robertson further explains that, “The origins of the crisis lie in the 1980s privatisation of social housing and liberalization of mortgage markets the former dramatically reduce the availability of affordable housing and pushed more and more people into the owner occupied and private rented sector.”<sup>314</sup>

### **5.3. Southwark’s Housing Policy**

Over the last two decades, the London Borough of Southwark, instead of providing solutions to the lack of housing and solving the housing crisis, has been focusing on housing privatisation and investment, and has continued to reduce council housing while marginalising working class residents, leading to their displacement, and participating in gentrifying the borough.

After the Second World War, Southwark Council, along with other London borough councils, built social housing to provide stable homes for the working class. Over recent decades, however, housing estates have been marginalised and neglected, creating low quality housing with poor living conditions leading to poorer, deprived areas. The council, responsible for finding solutions, instead targeted these areas for regeneration, failed to improve the housing

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<sup>311</sup> Central Housing Group is a bureau that offers landlords guaranteed rental services and London local authorities seeking social housing better options in the private sector for their tenants.

<sup>312</sup> Deniz Ozgen. “London’s BTL Hotspots with the Biggest SDLT Saving and Strongest Rental Yields Revealed.” *Central Housing Group*, 31<sup>st</sup> July, 2020. <<https://centralhousinggroup.com/londons-btl-hotspots-with-the-biggest-sdl-t-saving-and-strongest-rental-yields-revealed/>> Accessed on 24 July 2022.

<sup>313</sup> Mary Robertson. “The great British housing crisis.” *Capital & class*, vol. 41 no.2, 2017, pp. 195-215.

<sup>314</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

estates, demolishing many. At the same time, insufficient replacement affordable housing was built.

In 2002, Southwark was the first local authority in London to publish a *Unitary Development Plan: The Southwark Plan* after the Mayor's *London Plan*.<sup>315</sup> A second draft was published two years later. *The Southwark Plan* outlines strategies and policies encouraging private-public partnerships in order to improve the urban environment for residents, businesses and visitors.

According to Cllr Catherine Bowman, executive member for regeneration:

It will govern the standard of all new homes in the borough, the kind of leisure and shopping facilities that people will be able to enjoy, and the way they will travel around. It will ensure the protection of open space, the quality of our urban environment and the type of employment opportunities that will be encouraged. I would urge anyone who cares about the future of Southwark to take a look at the second draft and comment on the issues that concern them most.<sup>316</sup>

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the plan also designated “Opportunity Areas,” areas that can accommodate important levels of growth (higher buildings) to provide the required housing and commercial development: “Typically [these areas] can accommodate at least 5,000 jobs or 2,500 new homes or a combination of the two.”<sup>317</sup> They included Elephant and Castle, and London Bridge, and focused on estate regeneration.

Over the years, other plans were published, the most recent one was published in 2019, and entitled *The Southwark Plan 2019-2036*, and was adopted in 2022, focused mainly on housing and announced:

This new development must provide housing of all tenures for all age groups to integrate with existing communities and improve places for existing residents and businesses particularly in the areas around where the new development is being built. The local facilities, transport network, network of open spaces and infrastructure will support the fast pace of change in the Action and Opportunity Areas such as Aylesbury, Bankside, Borough, London Bridge, Elephant and Castle, Old Kent Road and Peckham.<sup>318</sup>

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<sup>315</sup> London SE1 website Team. “Southwark Publishes Ten Year Development Plan for Borough.” *London SE1*, 11 May 2004. <<https://www.london-se1.co.uk/news/view/983>> Accessed on 24 July, 2022.

<sup>316</sup> Cited in London SE1 website Team. “Southwark Publishes Ten Year Development Plan for Borough.” *London SE1*, 11 May 2004, <<https://www.london-se1.co.uk/news/view/983>> Accessed on 24 July 2022.

<sup>317</sup> Southwark Council. Elephant and Castle Supplementary Planning Document. Southwark Council, March 2012.

<sup>318</sup> Southwark Council. *The Southwark Plan 2019-2036* (for Adoption 2022). Southwark Council, 2019, p. 30.

Despite these ambitious plans and development strategies, the practical impact on housing accessibility and affordability remains a subject of concern and debate.

### 5.3.1. Southwark's Largest Estate Regeneration Schemes

Back to the regeneration schemes implemented by the local authority, one of the largest regeneration schemes was the Elephant and Castle Regeneration Scheme. The latter was identified as an Opportunity Area and announced in the *2002 Draft Southwark Plan*. Historically, the area was damaged during the Second World War, requiring reconstruction during the post-war period. In 1965, the Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre was opened to the public, and became the first covered shopping centre in Europe. Less than a decade later, one of the largest housing estates in Europe, the Heygate Estate, was completed, providing more than 1,200 social homes (1,033 council-owned and 179 leaseholds). However, after three decades of neglect, the Heygate Estate was described as a slum which was to be demolished.<sup>319</sup>

After designating the area an OA, Southwark Council published a development framework in 2004. The scheme was strongly opposed by locals and it took longer than expected to empty the estate. In 2010, the council signed the development agreement with the Australian multinational investment company, Lendlease. In September 2013, demolition of the Heygate Estate commenced. Two years later, the first 235 private homes were completed and sold to new residents, and in 2017, more than 800 homes were completed and the first phase of the park opened to the public.<sup>320</sup>

The area also included the Aylesbury Estate, located in Walworth, which contained more than 2,500 dwellings. Built between 1967 and 1977, it was considered as:

[O]ne of the most ambitious post-war housing developments built by any London borough, designed as a mesh of Jespersen panel system-built tower blocks and low rise flats with elevated concrete walkways — “walkways in the sky” — that would link a number of estates between Elephant and Castle and Peckham.<sup>321</sup>

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<sup>319</sup> Loretta Lees, and Mara Ferreri. "Resisting gentrification on its final frontiers: Learning from the Heygate Estate in London (1974–2013)." *Cities*, vol. 57, 2016, pp. 14-24.

<sup>320</sup> Lendlease. Elephant Park Regeneration Factsheet. Lendlease, 2017.

<sup>321</sup> Loretta Lees. "New Labour's 'New Urban Renewal': Aylesbury Estate." *Antipode*, vol. 46, no. 4, 2014, pp. 923.

In 2005, the London Borough of Southwark provided a new planning framework, the Aylesbury Action Area Plan ('AAAP'), and decided to demolish the entire estate and rebuild it instead of rehabilitating it. Four years later, demolition commenced. Partnering with Genesis Notting Hill, a large housing association in London and south-east of England, the AAAP is a long-term project and will take at least twenty years to complete in several phases. In the planning application documents, the housing association confirmed that social housing will be replaced by "target/affordable" rent, and shows a net loss of 931 socially-rented homes.<sup>322</sup> As with the Heygate Estate, the regeneration scheme of the Aylesbury Estate received criticism, and also resistance, from residents.

Another major scheme was the Bermondsey Spa Regeneration Scheme, located in Grange ward and in areas of an OA. Officially launched in 2002, it was announced two years earlier through the publication of the Regenerating Bermondsey Spa Masterplan Draft.<sup>323</sup> It was described as a residential-led, mixed-use development. It took 14 years, and three development phases, for the scheme to be completed. It was funded by Southwark Council but also by Hyde Housing Association, and the Notting Hill Housing Group. According to the masterplan, the scheme aimed first to enhance the aesthetics of parks, streets and buildings in the area, to provide quality homes, shops and offices, to shape an integration picture with other regeneration initiatives, and to encourage community development by promoting balanced communities.<sup>324</sup>

The scheme was ambitious but failed to provide social housing. The Regeneration Bermondsey Report<sup>325</sup> published to review the scheme, concluded that while achieving improvements in the quality of the local environment and public spaces, it failed to replace the demolished council housing, with affordable housing not even having been proposed, thereby displacing residents. Several valuable amenities were also lost, including a bakery, a butcher, two pubs and a repair shop, making the scheme responsible for local unemployment.<sup>326</sup>

In Peckham, several schemes were implemented. The major scheme was *The North Peckham Estate Regeneration* plan, also called *Southwark's Five Estates Peckham Masterplan*. It was named the 'five estates' owing to plans to "regenerate" five council housing estates in the north part of the district: Peckham North Estate, Willowbrook Estate, Sumner Estate, Camden Estate,

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<sup>322</sup> 35% Campaign. "Aylesbury Estate." *35% Campaign*. <<https://www.35percent.org/aylesbury-estate/>> Accessed on 24 July 2022.

<sup>323</sup> Drivers Jonas, and Campbell Reith Hill. *Regenerating Bermondsey Masterplan Draft*. May, 2000.

<sup>324</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>325</sup> Jannat Alkhanizi, et al. *Regeneration Bermondsey Spa Report*. ENV53014 Development Project. 2016, p. 10.

<sup>326</sup> *Ibid.*



and Gloucester Estate. The project was referred to as one of “the country’s most sweeping regeneration projects,”<sup>327</sup> leading as it did to the demolition of 1,400 council homes and the relocation of many residents from the north of the area.<sup>328</sup>

The programme was funded by the government’s Single Regeneration Budget (a programme running from the mid-1990s until the early 2000s) which funded local regeneration projects. Generally speaking, urban regeneration projects are implemented in order to solve urban issues such as improvements to housing, infrastructures, and other changes to the physical environment, while also addressing socio-economic problems such as unemployment, education and health services. In Peckham, the project predominantly aimed to improve housing by limiting density and making the area safer. Instead what was achieved was radical transformation of the physical landscape but this had a negative impact on the residents.

The project mainly targeted the North Peckham Estate. Constructed in the mid-1960s and habitable by the early 1970s, the North Peckham Estate was the largest council housing estate in the area and was located adjacent to Blakes Road close to Peckham Hill street. It consisted of almost 1,500 homes within 65 five-storey blocks (two types) and included parking facilities.<sup>329</sup> The North Peckham Estate was one of the most deprived estates in London and became a centre of gang activity and vandalism thus attracting scrutiny and thoroughly examined for regeneration purposes. By early 2000, the estate had been completely demolished.

In 1998, as part of *Southwark’s Five Estates Peckham Masterplan*, the Willowbrook Estate was also partly demolished. This estate was constructed in the early 1960s and located between Peckham Hill Street and Willowbrook Road, adjacent to the North Peckham Estate. In 2000, the Sumner Estate, one of the oldest estates in the area, was demolished, followed by the Camden Estate in 2002, which had been partially built in the 1950s and completed in the 1970s.

Finally, the Gloucester Estate, providing more than 1,200 homes within 29 blocks, constructed in the 1970s and located between Cator Street and St George’s Way, was partly demolished in

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<sup>327</sup> Municipal Dreams. “The Five Estates, Peckham, Part I: ‘Planning Is for People.’” *Municipal Dreams*, 1 November 2019, <[www.municipaldreams.wordpress.com/2016/10/11/the-five-estates-peckham-part-one/](http://www.municipaldreams.wordpress.com/2016/10/11/the-five-estates-peckham-part-one/)> Accessed 17 January 2020.

<sup>328</sup> 35% Campaign. “Southwark’s Great Estates.” *35% Campaign*, <[www.35percent.org/great-estates/](http://www.35percent.org/great-estates/)> Accessed 17 January 2020.

<sup>329</sup> Municipal Dreams. “The Five Estates, Peckham, Part I: ‘Planning Is for People.’” *Municipal Dreams*, 1 November 2019, <[www.municipaldreams.wordpress.com/2016/10/11/the-five-estates-peckham-part-one/](http://www.municipaldreams.wordpress.com/2016/10/11/the-five-estates-peckham-part-one/)> Accessed 17 January 2020.

2002, with a portion of the estate being regenerated to include a new play area, and remains part of the current housing stock in the area.

According to a social anthropology Ph.D. thesis submitted by Luna Glucksberg in 2013, attempting to solve the density problem by reducing the council housing stock created another problem: a conflict between local communities, a conflict between those who accepted the Council's decision and those who resisted its plans.<sup>330</sup> Glucksberg's thorough study of this urban project included interviews with two local labour councillors who were elected during the implementation of Southwark's Five Estate regeneration program. The first local councillor was white and lived in Peckham (not on one of the five estates). He believed that the programme was the best decision the Council could have made, making the area "much more pleasant." The other local councillor was black, lived on one of the five estates, and believed that the project did not represent nor include the different communities, arguing that the estates were portrayed negatively to secure funding, adding that despite the Council facing resistance from the residents, it engaged in court proceedings to push through its plans for demolition, he was quoted as saying:

It wasn't as if the area was a sink estate, although when you read the big document, you'd imagine this area was sort of beyond repair, sinking, you know there were some social problems, but you know maybe in some respect some bits of that document blow your head off, even though there were figures and analysis, yes, there were some problems, there were problems with crime, low-level crime, educational achievements [...], I am from the area, and I've got a friend who succeeded and left the area, went to university, so it wasn't as if the area was falling to pieces, really, really bad and dire, it was just that maybe certain components of the housing was (sic) in despair, and had to encourage some behaviour in terms of concentrating population and in terms of concentrating certain problem families, with some kind of issues. [...]<sup>331</sup>

It is interesting to note the different perspectives of local councillors towards the same project during the same period, and how their viewpoint is influenced by whether they lived on the estate or not, and the community they are a part of.

As mentioned earlier, some of the motivation behind the project was to decrease crime rates and to secure the area while also making it less densely populated. The Council tried to solve these problems, after years of neglect, by demolition, leading to the displacement of hundreds

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<sup>330</sup> Luna Glucksberg. "Wasting the Inner-City: Waste, Value and Anthropology of the Estates". *Goldsmiths College*, January 2013.

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.

of families. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to contact residents who were relocated almost 20 years ago, although during a second field study visit to Peckham in 2017, an interview was conducted with the proprietor of a small off-license, close to where the North Peckham Estate used to stand. He confirmed that “the estate was very vibrant, there used to be people of different origins mainly of African origins, everyone knew everyone... till one day, I stopped meeting these people. Now, I see new faces daily, new people come and go ...”<sup>332</sup>

As mentioned in the introduction, the first official urban regeneration plans that can be linked to the gentrification process in Peckham can be traced back to 1998 with the North Peckham Estate Regeneration plan, under the New Labour regeneration programmes of that time,<sup>333</sup> where many residents (particularly from the working class) had to leave their homes. This programme led to the demolition of a significant portion of the council housing stock in the area, while also leading to new urban housing plans and projects dictating the demolition and rebuilding of housing blocks.

### **5.3.2. From “Degeneration” to “Regeneration”: A Critique of Southwark’s Plans**

Research has established that before regeneration “degeneration” is necessary, for example, through disinvestment from local authorities and/or “enhanced neglect”, a term that means that problems specific to the area will be solved by “allowing the neighbourhood to get worse and worse until it was no longer viable and had to be pulled down.”<sup>334</sup> In the case of social housing, it was first left to deteriorate, then dispossessed of its valued facilities, creating poor living conditions, sometimes leading to an increase in the crime rate owing to social and economic problems, resulting in what are called “slums” and “sink estates.”

With reference to the Aylesbury Estate in Southwark, one particular study,<sup>335</sup> using semi-structured interviews with a selection of residents, scrutinised the reasons behind the demolition

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<sup>332</sup> Anonymous. Interview with the owner of an off-license. Conducted by Habiba Jelali at his shop located in Peckham, 29 July 2017.

<sup>333</sup> Programmes that were launched under the New Labour Government led by Tony Blair, with a shift in urban policies.

<sup>334</sup> Paul Watt. *Estate Regeneration and its Discontents: Public Housing, Place and inequality in London*. Policy Press. 2021, p.263.

<sup>335</sup> Polly McKinlay. “Regeneration through the Demolition of Social Housing: A Case Study of the Aylesbury Estate.” *London School of Economics*, May 2012.

of the estate, and showed the impact it had on residents. Concerning the physical infrastructure, the research showed that residents believed that, “the lack of maintenance on the Aylesbury Estate is a key concern, with one claiming that ‘the council just built it and walked away.’”<sup>336</sup> Highlighting the lack of investment from the council, these residents also believed that the estate was purposely neglected to “make people fed up and turn in favour of demolition.”<sup>337</sup> Some residents commented that their flats were comfortable and well-maintained internally. Therefore, poor conditions and factors such as crime were used as part of a political discourse to justify demolition. Another factor was the lack of funding for refurbishment. For example, in 2005, Southwark Council declared that it lacked sufficient funds to refurbish the estate which needed private development and demolition.

In 2015, a professor of architecture, Jane Rendell, publicly denounced Southwark Council for exaggerating the refurbishment costs of the Aylesbury Estate, for choosing demolition rather than refurbishment, and for neglecting the residents, primarily in favour of the monetary value of the land. Examining the Conisbee Report published in 2005 and commissioned by the Council, she concludes that the estate was only in need of repair, and demolition was based on reasons other than the estate’s infrastructure. She claimed that some prices were inflated, residents had not been properly informed of the position, and that others were difficult to track down:

[she has] been unable to access information of any cost benefit analysis undertaken to determine the financial basis for the decision. It also appears that a key numerical table on p. 10 of the Conisbee Report is missing from the bundles of information sent to Leaseholders by Southwark.”<sup>338</sup>

Described by the media as the “estate from hell”,<sup>339</sup> the Aylesbury Estate is not an isolated example in the borough. Other council housing estates also suffered marginalisation and degeneration before regeneration took place. The Heygate Estate represents another good example of how estates suffered from the withdrawal of political and financial support. In 1998, the *Southwark Housing Stock Condition Survey*,<sup>340</sup> presented by engineering firm Allott &

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<sup>336</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>338</sup> Jane Rendell. “Summary of Witness Statement of Jane Rendell.” 1 May 2015, pp. 4-5. <<http://crappistmartin.github.io/images/SummaryProfRendell.pdf>> Accessed on 21 July 2022.

<sup>339</sup> Jonathan Glancey. “The Sinking Feeling on ‘Estate from Hell.’” *The Guardian*, 22 September 2005, <<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2005/sep/22/communities.uknews1>> Accessed on 21 July 2022.

<sup>340</sup> Allott and Lomax Consulting. *Heygate Estate Option Appraisal Study*. London Borough of Southwark, 1998.

Lomax Consulting, recommended that the estate should be refurbished and redeveloped instead of demolished, but these recommendations were not taken into consideration. What is interesting is that these estates suffered from stigmatisation: a negative reputation for poor living conditions and a high rate of criminality. Another pretext used by the local authority was to reshape an estate's image by seemingly providing social and environmental solutions.<sup>341</sup>

Stigmatisation was significant in social housing, contributing to state-led gentrification.<sup>342</sup> Several studies have shown that stigmatisation of social housing played a key role in policy justification to demolish and rebuild in favour of the private sector instead of refurbishing in favour of the working classes. For example, Hastings<sup>343</sup> who studies different estates in the UK (in Edinburgh, in Birmingham, and in North Tyneside) shows how stigmatisation of deprived housing estates in declined neighbourhoods is blamed on external factors (isolated area) rather than internal factors (neglect from the local authorities) and is used as part of the political discourse to regenerate an area. However, sometimes the reputation of the neighbourhood is difficult to reverse, and therefore, some regeneration initiatives to develop public relations and marketing activities were implemented in the UK, especially to improve the image and reputation of an estate. The study also illustrates the direct effects this form of stigmatisation has on residents in terms of economic, educational and social opportunities, for example not being able to secure employment owing to their postcode address. This is known as "territorial stigmatisation", and was coined for the first time by Wacquant<sup>344</sup> in 2008. It is a phenomenon and practice noted in particular neighbourhoods where it creates external, stigmatised public opinion regarding the residents of these neighbourhoods.

Another similar study by Campkin,<sup>345</sup> which focuses on various London neighbourhoods (but particularly Southwark), shows similar results concerning stigmatisation. It demonstrates how 'regeneration' discourses, including by the media, highlight physical degradation and the image of housing estates, using these factors to justify 'regeneration' and 'gentrification'. This form of stigmatisation is sometimes created, but always worsened, by media coverage which plays an essential role in "territorial stigmatisation" and in shaping and constructing the image of an

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<sup>341</sup> Mera Ferreri. "Refurbishment versus Demolition? Social Housing Campaigning for Degrowth." *Housing for Degrowth*. Routledge, 2018, pp. 109-119.

<sup>342</sup> Paul Watt and Anna Minton. "London's Housing Crisis and its Activism." *City*, vol. 20, no. 2, 2016.

<sup>343</sup> Annette Hastings. "Stigma and social housing estates: Beyond pathological explanations." *Journal of housing and the built environment*, vol. 19, no. 3, 2004, pp. 233-254.

<sup>344</sup> Loïc Wacquant. *Urban Outcasts: A Comparative sociology of advanced Marginality*. Cambridge, Policy Press, 2008.

<sup>345</sup> Ben Campkin. *Remaking London: Decline and regeneration in urban culture*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013.

area. Further in-depth research about media involvement in shaping and spreading stigmatisation of council estates will be examined more closely in Chapter 5, which will revolve around a case study of how the press shaped Peckham's image, and how the perception of this area (and its social housing) was portrayed, and has evolved over time.

Focusing on these major estates is important as they are among some of the largest council estates in England, and are most targeted by the media. Examining these housing estates is of interest owing to the fact that residents were more aware of the process of gentrification, and therefore demonstrated forms of resistance. These estates also represent an example of Southwark Council's strategy for reducing the provision of social housing and encouraging privatisation, leading to the gentrification of not only these neighbourhoods but also the surrounding areas.

#### **5.4. Southwark Council Shaping Gentrification**

The London Borough of Southwark has been a source of interest to both mainstream media and academic researchers owing to rapid changes which have led to gentrified neighbourhoods within the borough. There is a growing body of literature that recognises local urban and housing policies which have shaped gentrification in London generally, and particularly in Southwark. For example, Loretta Lees, one of the British pioneers, has examined how state-led gentrification and Local Authority involvement in various boroughs have led to social inequalities. Although she is aware of the impact welfare reforms have had on housing,<sup>346</sup> her main focus is on social housing regeneration schemes and she has identified and denounced social cleansing as one of the outcomes.<sup>347</sup> She highlights the direct impact of these schemes on the working classes who have been pushed out of their neighbourhoods and displaced to poorer areas. In partnership with the *London Tenants Federation* (a federation of organisations of social housing tenants both in Southwark and the rest of London) and *Just Space* (a London-wide network of voluntary and community groups) and *Southwark Notes Archive Group* (local people writing about gentrification), Lees<sup>348</sup> published a handbook which raises awareness of

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<sup>346</sup> "Welfare changes and the vagaries of working poverty are also pushing Londoners out of council housing and indeed the capital." Loretta Lees and Hannah White. "The social cleansing of London council estates: everyday experiences of 'accumulative dispossession'." *Housing Studies*, vol. 35, no. 10, 2020, pp. 1711-1712.

<sup>347</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>348</sup> The London Tenants Federation, et al. *Staying Put: An Anti-Gentrification Handbook for Council Estates in London*, 2014. <<https://southwarknotes.files.wordpress.com/2014/06/staying-put-web-version-low.pdf>> Accessed on 22 July 2022.

forms of resisting gentrification, while also explaining the link between ‘regeneration’ schemes and gentrification. The handbook focuses on a case study of the Heygate Estates, examining the impact of its demolition. It shows how residents were evicted by court orders, by being displaced, or having chosen to leave owing to the lack of maintenance and poor conditions. It provides a detailed map (Figure 8) of locations that some residents were displaced to. The map reveals that some residents left the borough, either moving to areas in outer London, or moving out of London entirely.

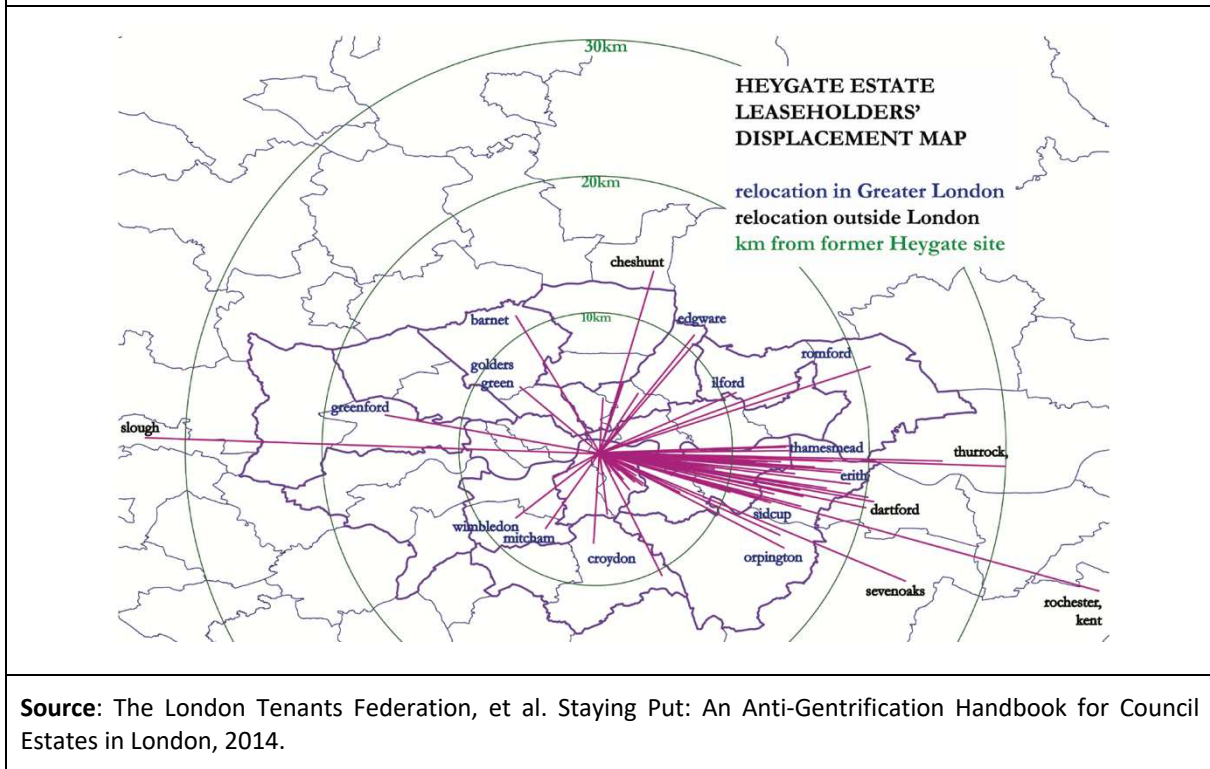
Lees also studied other housing estates in Southwark, notably the Aylesbury Estate,<sup>349</sup> which has been in the process of being demolished since 2009, while continuing to undergo a major regeneration programme which has caused residents to be displaced. Lees shows how the council used legal means to displace residents, deploying, for example, Compulsory Purchase Orders (‘CPO’) which gives the state the right to buy back properties without the consent of their owners. Ironically, CPOs were implemented after the Second World War to clear slums in order to build council housing, and were enacted by *The Planning and Purchase Act 2004* (Section 99).<sup>350</sup> The latter gives power to the local authority to purchase back homes already sold to leaseholders if the council thinks that it will facilitate the carrying out of development and the improvement of social and economic conditions of the area. Eviction and bailiff actions were also used by the council to force residents to leave their homes.

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<sup>349</sup> Loretta Lees and Phil Hubbard. "Legal geographies of resistance to gentrification and displacement: Lessons from the Aylesbury Estate in London." *The Handbook of Displacement*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2020, pp. 753-770.

<sup>350</sup> "Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004." *Legislation.gov.uk*, Statute Law Database, <<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/5/section/2>> Accessed 22 July 2022.

Figure 8 – Heygate Estate Leaseholders Displacement Map



As previously mentioned in the third chapter, the “mixed community” discourse was used to justify regeneration. Lees further criticises these “mixed community” policies implemented by both the government and local authorities, describing it as a tool to facilitate gentrification and displacement.<sup>351</sup> She defines the mixed community policies as “a major urban policy and planning goal in the 1990s in reaction to large concentrations of supposedly socially homogenous populations of poor people living in the inner cities of Western Europe and North America.”<sup>352</sup> This policy resulted in the displacement of previous residents, who were instead replaced by a new homogenous group of middle and upper-middle class residents, and middle-

<sup>351</sup> Loretta Lees. “Public Inquiry Aylesbury Estate London: Whiteness Statement.” 29 April 2015. <<https://southwarknotes.files.wordpress.com/2017/05/aylesbury-estate-public-inquiry-witness-statement-of-loretta-lees-29-april-2015.pdf>> Accessed 22 July 2022.

<sup>352</sup> *Ibid.*



class spaces. This is seen, for example, in the increase of the median salary in the borough in 2020 that grew to £43.7K<sup>353</sup> from £30.6K in 2009.<sup>354</sup>

Another factor that proves that the government and local authorities are implementing pro-gentrification policies is through partnering with private developers, and providing public-private funds. In the last two decades, Southwark Council has been partnering with private developers and attracting private investors into deprived neighbourhoods. While these partnerships improved the structure and aesthetics of these neighbourhoods, they also caused reduced levels of affordable and social housing. The perfect example, that shows the link between these private-public partnership programmes and the lack of affordability, is the Heygate Estate Scheme.<sup>355</sup> According to a study by Loretta Lees and Mara Ferreri, it illustrates:

[...] deviations from the local authority's own policies, particularly around sustainable energy and the provision of 'affordable' housing (25% instead of the Council's 35% policy, including the provision of just 71 rented units to replace the over one thousand lost by the demolition).<sup>356</sup>

Southwark Council has, thereby, attracted widespread criticism for engaging in these partnerships. For example, one architectural critic commented that, "Southwark Council has been played by developers. It has had its tummy tickled, arm twisted and arse kicked. It has got multiple promises which have been broken and violence done to the lives of many who lived there."<sup>357</sup>

Further research has been developed since then. In 2021, Runnymede, a UK independent think tank on race equality and race relations, published a report entitled *Pushed to the margins: a*

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<sup>353</sup> Plumplot. "South East London Average Salary Comparison." *South-East-London Average Salary and Unemployment Rates in Graphs and Numbers.*, <[www.plumplot.co.uk/South-East-London-salary-and-unemployment.html](http://www.plumplot.co.uk/South-East-London-salary-and-unemployment.html)> Accessed 14 June 2023.

<sup>354</sup> Richard Walker. *Focus on London: Income and Spending at Home*. GLA Intelligence Unit, 2010. <<https://londondatastore-upload.s3.amazonaws.com/fol/FocusOnLondon2010-income-and-spending.pdf>> Accessed 14 June 2023.

<sup>355</sup> A scheme that was announced by Southwark council in 2004 as part of the £1.5 M Elephant and Castle regeneration plan (Aylesbury Estates and the Elephant & Castle Shopping Centre), in order to demolish the Heygate Estate (a large housing estate in Walworth, contained more than 1200. The development agreement was signed in 2011 with Lendlease, and the demolition started the same year.

<sup>356</sup> Loretta Lees, and Mara Ferreri. "Resisting gentrification on its final frontiers: Learning from the Heygate Estate in London (1974–2013)." *Cities*, vol. 57, 2016, p. 20.

<sup>357</sup> 35% Campaign. "No Profit for Southwark." 35% Campaign, 11 May 2016, <<https://www.35percent.org/posts/2016-05-11-no-profit-share-the-true-value-of-the-heygate-regeneration/>> Accessed on 24 July 2022.

*quantitative analysis of Gentrification in London in the 2010s.*<sup>358</sup> The report examines the impact of gentrification on the working class and ethnic minorities in deprived neighbourhoods, and identifies gentrified areas in three London boroughs, including parts of Southwark:

Southwark is gentrified in most of the three case study boroughs and severely gentrified in the London Bridge-West Bermondsey area, the Southwark- Borough area, Elephant and Castle, Camberwell, East Dulwich, Peckham Rye and Queens Road Peckham, and pockets of Bermondsey, Old Kent Road and Rotherhithe. Gentrification was widespread throughout the borough except in areas with exceptionally high or low levels of deprivation.<sup>359</sup>

The report also identifies Southwark as “estate-demolition gentrification” and “transit-induced gentrification” and therefore links local government involvement in gentrification, identifying the demolition of social housing as the main factor.

Using an equation to calculate the index of gentrification,<sup>360</sup> the report provides maps that show the index/degree of gentrification in different neighbourhoods in the three boroughs studied, where 0.0 means no gentrification perceived, between 0.1 to 0.3 minor gentrification, between 0.3 and 0.4 low gentrification, between 0.4 to 0.5 moderate gentrification, between 0.5 and 0.6 high gentrification, and from 0.6 to 0.8 severe gentrification.

Consequently, the London Borough of Southwark scores 0.526, “above the average London-wide score of 0.485,”<sup>361</sup> and the fifth highest levels of gentrification in Inner London, preceded by Lambeth and followed by Hammersmith and Fulham, where Tower hamlets is leading with the highest level of gentrification, and scores the sixth-highest levels across all boroughs.

The report also provides a clear map of the index of gentrified neighbourhoods in Southwark (Figure 9) illustrating that between 2010 and 2016 the entire borough was undergoing gentrification with mostly moderate to high gentrification. Not only are certain neighbourhoods like west Bermondsey (Old Kent Road) and Borough (from London Bridge to Tower bridge, from Blackfriars to Elephant and Castle) in the north of the borough subject to severe gentrification (gentrification index superior to 0.6, with the lowest index in some parts of

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<sup>358</sup> Adam Almeida. “Pushed to the Margins: A Quantitative Analysis of Gentrification in London in the 2010s.” *Runnymede Trust and Class*, 2021.

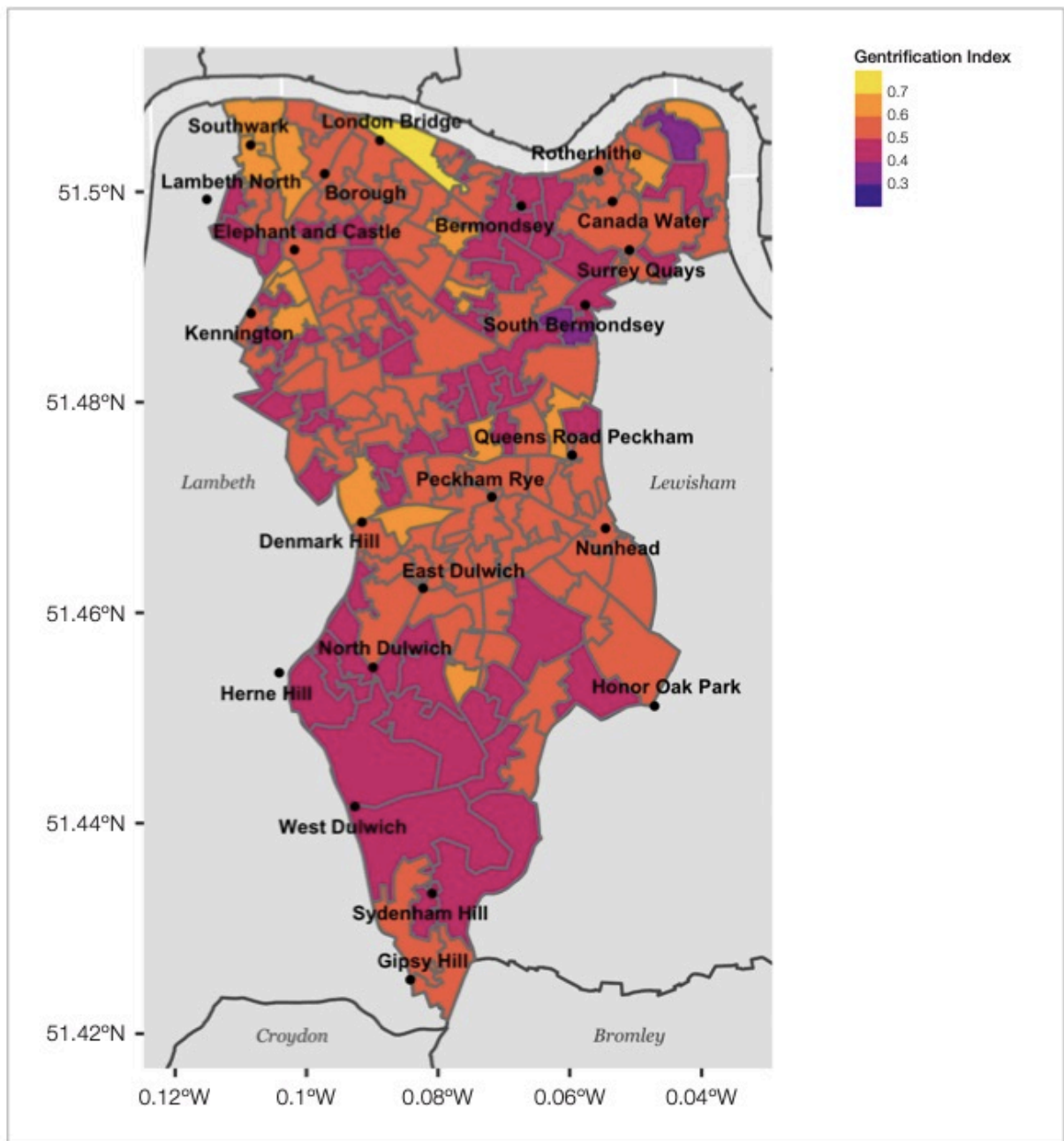
<sup>359</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>360</sup>  $G = \frac{1}{2}c - \frac{1}{4}e + \frac{1}{8}h - \frac{1}{8}d + 0.25$  Where  $G$  represents the index of gentrification,  $c$  represents population churn between 2010 and 2016,  $e$  represents the relative change in the portion of non-white residents,  $h$  represents the relative change in median house sale price between December 2009 and December 2016,  $d$  represents relative change in the index of multiple deprivation score between 2010 and 2015, and adding 0.25 to standardise the gentrification score between 0.0 and 1.0.

<sup>361</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

Rotherhithe, like Surrey Quays), but others are in Peckham (Queens Road and north Peckham Rye) and some neighbourhoods in Camberwell (around Denmark Hill Station), too.

Figure 9 – Gentrification in the borough of Southwark



**Source:** Adam Almeida. "Pushed to the Margins: A Quantitative Analysis of Gentrification in London in the 2010s: Runnymede Trust & Class Report Funded by Trust for London." *Trust for London*, Runnymede and CLASS report2, 2021, [www.trustforlondon.org.uk/publications/pushed-to-the-margins-a-quantitative-analysis-of-gentrification-in-london-in-the-2010s/](http://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/publications/pushed-to-the-margins-a-quantitative-analysis-of-gentrification-in-london-in-the-2010s/). Accessed 15 July 2022.

The report makes it clear that gentrification in the three boroughs studied – the borough of Southwark, Waltham Forest and Brent – represent “both distinct and shared gentrification.” In Southwark, the high index of gentrification indicates large-scale displacement caused by the demolition of social housing and the failure to replace it. In fact, the highest index in Southwark neighbourhoods were detected in the proximity of massive council estate regeneration schemes such as the Heygate Estate scheme that led to the demolition of over 1,200 homes and the displacement of residents, as further developed by Lees.<sup>362</sup>

Severe gentrification was also perceived in parts of Bermondsey, caused by the Bermondsey Spa Estate Regeneration Scheme, launched early in the twenty-first century and completed in 2014, which led to the demolition of a large social housing estate. In Peckham, the high index of gentrification between 2010 and 2016 can be traced to the demolition of the Wood Dene Estate in the Queens Road area of Peckham in 2007.<sup>363</sup> This followed the massive demolition of over 3,200 homes on the North Peckham Estate in 2000, and was one of the first regeneration schemes in the borough under part of Southwark’s *Five Estates Peckham Masterplan*. This scheme announced the regeneration of five council housing estates in the north part of the district: The North Peckham Estate, Willowbrook Estate, Sumner Estate, Camden Estate, and Gloucester Estate. This will be further developed in the following chapter that shows the different schemes and projects that led to rapid urban change, leading to a sharp increase in housing prices and the gentrification of Peckham. In Camberwell, the highest index of gentrification is seen around the Elmington Estate Regeneration Scheme that was launched in 2009, which led to the demolition of the estate. Another high gentrification index was noted in the Old Kent Road where the Coopers Road Estate was demolished in 2010. The report therefore links the regeneration schemes implemented in the last decade in London to rapid urban and demographic change and the resultant gentrified neighbourhoods in Inner London. In Southwark, this has been happening for over two decades.

The report also highlights transit-induced gentrification in Southwark, and explains that:

Prior to 2010 in Southwark, only three Underground lines serviced eight stations in the entire borough: the Northern line, the Jubilee line and the Bakerloo line. All stations were located in the northern-most part of the borough, resulting in major transit limitations for the rest of Southwark (especially the central

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<sup>362</sup> London Tenants Federation, Loretta Lees, Just Space and Southwark Notes Archive Group. *Staying Put: An Anti-Gentrification Handbook for Council Estates in London*. Calverts Cooperative, 2014.

<sup>363</sup> 30% percent Campaign SE. “Wood Dene Estate Regeneration3.” *Wood Dene Estate Regeneration*, <[www.35percent.org/wood-dene-regeneration/](http://www.35percent.org/wood-dene-regeneration/)> Accessed 15 June 2023.

section between Kennington or South Bermondsey and Dulwich).<sup>364</sup>

Since 2010, the East London Line of the Overground has been extended to south London. Several regeneration schemes led to the refurbishment of particular stations including Rotherhithe, Honor Oak Park, Surrey Quays and Canada Water, and to the extension of the South London Line to Queens Road Peckham and Rye, linking these southern stations to the northern stations.

Several studies have confirmed that transit-based interventions can be linked to gentrification. For example, a paper<sup>365</sup> published in 2019, examined 35 quantitative research-based (published between 2000 and 2018) studies which confirm that gentrification is the outcome of transit-based interventions. According to the study:

Since transit-oriented development creates conditions for real estate investment, land values are expected to increase, thus potentially leading to restrictions for low-income groups with regards to accessing housing and maintaining their residential locations. In this manner, the improved local economics might engender additional displacement cases and the replacement of low-income families by better-off households, which raises serious equity concerns.<sup>366</sup>

This can be further explained by the fact that making poor neighbourhoods accessible is attractive to middle class people who want to settle close to the centre of the capital because they cannot afford more affluent central areas. They, therefore, choose poor neighbourhoods with cheaper housing and accessibility. Another similar study<sup>367</sup> shows that transit-oriented development leads to gentrification particularly in low-income immigrant communities. However, the study suggest that gentrification caused by transit-oriented development can be mitigated by the involvement of community residents in shaping and guiding the development process.<sup>368</sup>

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<sup>364</sup> Adam Almeida. "Pushed to the Margins: A Quantitative Analysis of Gentrification in London in the 2010s." *Runnymede Trust and Class*, 2021, p. 21.

<sup>365</sup> Miguel Padeiro, et al. "Transit-oriented development and gentrification: a systematic review." *Transport Reviews*, vol. 39, no. 6, 2019, pp. 733-754.

<sup>366</sup> *Ibid.* p.734

<sup>367</sup> Sandoval, Gerardo Francisco. *Making Transit-Oriented Development Work in Low-Income Latino Neighborhoods: A comparative case study of Boyle Heights, Los Angeles and Logan Heights, San Diego*, No. NITC-RR-762. National Institute for Transportation and Communities (NITC), 2016.

<sup>368</sup> *Ibid.*

## Conclusion

In summary, this chapter has examined the policies implemented by Southwark Council in the face of the housing crisis. It illustrates the radical reforms that were made by the local authority in deprived areas, or those known as “key revitalisation areas”, which have led to a worsening of the housing crisis—by creating social inequalities in various parts of the borough. In partnership with private investors and developers, several projects emerged to improve the infrastructure, environment and living conditions in poor neighbourhoods. However, these projects failed to deliver the required social and affordable housing and led to a massive increase in housing prices. As these schemes sharply reduced the number of social housing units, they have led to direct (eviction) and indirect (‘pricing out’) displacement of long-standing working-class residents.

Evidence emerged that some of the schemes that led to demolition were unnecessary. In some cases, the cost of demolition was inflated in order to justify demolition. Degeneration of particular areas through neglect and lack of maintenance was also needed to justify regeneration. This form of marginalisation led to stigmatised neighbourhoods, and the misrepresentation of reality.

This chapter has also shown that local government has been focusing on key revitalisation areas by encouraging privatisation and reducing the capacity of social housing, identified as “the final gentrification frontier.”<sup>369</sup> Social housing is clearly the only affordable housing for the working classes, and reducing capacity means limiting the capital city to the wealthier classes. Shortages of social housing created a gap between supply and demand, and also inequalities between social classes in the capital. Advocating for community and social inclusion, while manipulating the bad reputation and poor living conditions of social housing as a political tool to justify regeneration, central and local government have failed to create mixed communities, instead causing the displacement of working-class residents.

The following chapter will further highlight the physical impact these policies have had, particularly in Peckham, as the area went through rapid changes leading to gentrification in the area.

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<sup>369</sup> Loretta Lees. “The death of sustainable communities in London.” *Sustainable London* 2014, pp. 149-172.



# Chapter 6

## Physical Changes in Peckham since 1997

Peckham has been undergoing physical changes on several levels since the early twenty-first century including renovating pre-existing projects like the rehabilitation of the Bellenden Road, the renovation of Peckham Rye Park, as well as constructing new schemes such as the Peckham Library, Peckham Coal Line, and PeckhamPlex. Some programs focused on urban and physical changes leading to greener areas and increasing leisure facilities, while others focused on financial aspects, leading to economic changes and new investments.

The aim of this chapter is to highlight the physical urban changes in Peckham that participated in improving the public realm. It also explores the political initiatives that have triggered these changes, thereby, highlighting their role in the gentrification of the neighbourhood. Furthermore, the chapter will examine the social changes that have accompanied the physical urban transformations, leading later on to a change of the neighbourhood's image.

In order to establish a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between the urban, physical and social changes in Peckham and their influence on the neighbourhood's new image that attracted new middle-class comers, a thorough examination of these physical changes during the last two decades was undertaken. This involved visiting the *Southwark Archives*, situated in the borough of Southwark, to gather information on the various implemented schemes in the neighbourhood of Peckham from 1997 to 2022. The archival research provided valuable insights into the historical context and development initiatives that have shaped the area.

Multiple visits and observations were also made to the neighbourhood itself, allowing for first-hand observations of the transformed environment. Exploring the streets, landmarks, and public spaces provided a tangible sense of the physical changes that have taken place. The direct on-site observations were crucial in comprehending the visual aspects which played a major role in attracting the new middle-class residents.



In addition to on-site observations, semi-structured interviews were conducted with several residents. The interviews took place in diverse locations, including the library, Morrison, and Rye Lane, among others. By engaging with the local residents, their perspectives and experiences were gathered, offering valuable insights into their perceptions of the neighbourhood's changes.

## **6.1. Physical Changes**

Part of Peckham's identity lies in its urban environment, its park, Peckham Rye Park, which goes back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and its 21<sup>st</sup> century Library with its unique architecture. These facilities have been part of some of the renovation and construction projects carried out in order to enhance the image of the area, encouraging the emergence of new programs in the area such as the Peckham Coal Line project that was community-led, and leading to a social change of the area, hence a process of gentrification.

### **6.1.1. Peckham Rye Park**

Peckham Rye Park (figure 1) is very much a part of the local heritage, variously described as a “spacious site”, a “hidden gem”, and a “peaceful place” in the interviews conducted with the local residents. The park, occupying 51 acres initially, consists now of 113 acres of open space and was designed on a vacant site in 1894 by the Parks Committee of the County Council at a cost of £7,450.<sup>370</sup> It continues to be a popular feature and is one of the few places mentioned by several interviewees, newcomer and long-term residents alike, having seemingly influenced their choice to settle in the area. For instance, one of the interviewees who moved to Peckham in 2013 acknowledged that “as a parent of two toddlers, we were looking for an affordable place in a neighbourhood with green spaces, and Peckham Rye exceeded our expectations. It was actually perfect for our family, and one of the reasons why we chose Peckham.”<sup>371</sup>

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<sup>370</sup> John D. Beasley. *Peckham Rye Park centenary*. South Riding Press, 1995, p. 6.

<sup>371</sup> Anonymous. Interview with a local resident. Conducted by Habiba Jelali at Peckham Rye Park, 4 August 2019.

Figure 1 - two photographs of the park when it was created in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and in 2010



BANK HOLIDAY ON PECKHAM RYE.

Photo. by Finch, Peckham Rye. (Copyright.)



**Source:** both photographs were taken from Friends of Peckham Rye Park. “History of Peckham Rye Park.” *Peckham Rye Park*, <[www.peckhamryepark.org/history](http://www.peckhamryepark.org/history)> accessed 3 February 2020.

Friends of Peckham, a group of volunteered locals, launched a campaign to bid for money from the Heritage Lottery Fund in 2004 to restore the park. The campaign was successful and led to redevelopment works which took a year and restored both existing infrastructure and added new facilities.<sup>372</sup> This community-led project cost £2.461.000 and aimed to enhance and restore the themed gardens and to upgrade facilities.<sup>373</sup> But before that, according to the official website of the park, the park was neglected for years and vandalized,<sup>374</sup> even though some of the locals

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<sup>372</sup> A campaign lunched by the Heritage Lottery Fund, to bid money in order to restore the park. It managed to collect the necessary amount of money, and restoration took place from 2004 to 2005.

<sup>373</sup> “Peckham Rye Park Restoration.” Trustees of the National Heritage Memorial Fund. <<https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/projects/peckham-rye-park-restoration>> Accessed 26 June 2023.

<sup>374</sup> Friends of Peckham Rye Park. “History of Peckham Rye Park.” *Peckham Rye Park*, <[www.peckhamryepark.org/history](http://www.peckhamryepark.org/history)> Accessed 3 February 2020.

assure that the park was a lovely park even in the mid-1990s.<sup>375</sup> Further developments include the opening of a café on Peckham Rye in 2007, along with the Community Wildlife Garden in 2012 following funding by the London Borough of Southwark's *Cleaner Greener Safer* fund, and the *National Lottery Community* fund.<sup>376</sup>

In 2017, a sustainable new play area, a children's playroom, and changing rooms were constructed as part of the "Revitalise Peckham Rye Park and Common" programme funded by the Olympic Legacy and Council Capital Funding.<sup>377</sup> Today the park offers numerous facilities and features including a café, picnic areas, nature and community gardens, a rentable football pitch and an outdoor gym.

### 6.1.2. Peckham Coal line

In 2014 the resident-led Peckham Coal Line innovation led to a network of public routes and spaces, later attracting media attention and the interest of other residents and councillors. It was first publicised in the *Peckham Peculiar*, the *Peckham and Nunhead* local newspaper, and later in *Southwark News*, followed by multiple articles being published across various national media. For instance, according to *the Peckham Peculiar*, "[t]he current publicity around the Garden Bridge and other environmental initiatives in London is fuelling interest in the Coal Line as well, as is the huge success of the High Line linear urban forest in New York, which the Coal Line most closely emulates."<sup>378</sup> The Peckham Coal Line was compared to New York's High Line by other newspapers as well, such as *The Evening Standard*,<sup>379</sup> *The Telegraph*.<sup>380</sup>

The Peckham Coal Line is an urban project, "[it] is a community-led project that aims to better connect Peckham's neighbourhoods: a 900m long park to link Queens Road and Rye Lane. The line will run on disused coal sidings alongside the railway line, through the heart of

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<sup>375</sup> Noticed through several conducted interviews.

<sup>376</sup> Friends of Peckham Rye Park. "The Park Today." *Peckham Rye Park*, <<http://www.peckhamryepark.org/the-park-today>.> Accessed 3 February 2020.

<sup>377</sup> Southwark Council. "Revitalise Peckham Rye Park and Common." Southwark Council, 16 August 2017, <[www.southwark.gov.uk/regeneration/peckham-and-nunhead/revitalise-peckham-rye-park-and-common](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/regeneration/peckham-and-nunhead/revitalise-peckham-rye-park-and-common).> Accessed 20 June 2023.

<sup>378</sup> The Peckham Peculiar. "Walking the Line". *The Peckham Peculiar*, 28 September 2015. <<https://peckhampeculiar.tumblr.com/post/130064916279/walking-the-line>.> Accessed 20 June 2023.

<sup>379</sup> Lizzie Edmonds. "Disused Peckham Rail track could be London's very own 'High Line'". *The Standard*, 5 January 2015. <<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/disused-peckham-rail-track-could-be-london-s-very-own-high-line-9957168.html>.> Accessed 20 June 2023.

<sup>380</sup> Tim Richardson. "New York glamour comes to Peckham: The High Line vs the Coal Line." 10 September 2015. <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/gardening/gardens-to-visit/New-York-glamour-comes-to-Peckham/>.> Accessed 20 June 2023.

Peckham.”<sup>381</sup> The project was initiated by a crowdfunding campaign in 2015, with the support of local residents and local activist groups such as *Peckham Vision*, *The Peckham Society*, *Peckham Citizens* and others. It is also supported by councillors and the Mayor of London. By 2016 the crowdfunding campaign had succeeded and the project raised in excess of £70,000 for its feasibility study.<sup>382</sup> By June 2018 the *Peckham Coal Line Feasibility Study* was published by *Adams and Sutherland*, a well-known architectural consultancy, and *The Friends of Peckham Coal Line*, a constituted charity with volunteers who work to promote, survey, and deliver the project was set up. The study<sup>383</sup> provides an initial vision of the project, including overall value, estimated costs, and funding requirements for maintenance purposes. It is estimated that the project will cost between £20 to 25 million in total.

The study is divided into sections which describe the project and consider benefits to both the immediate and wider community. It highlights the participation of the Peckham community and the implications thereof. The report also provides a concept design with a more detailed analysis of the project. Finally, it presents a timetable for the next steps and phases. According to the timetable, some sections of the Peckham Coal Line will be constructed and open to the public by 2023. Others will take between three and five years to come to fruition.

The proposal was accepted by the London Borough of Southwark in the same year the study was published (2018) and appeared in the *New Southwark Plan 2018 to 2033*.<sup>384</sup> The latter confirmed the council support to redevelop the site where the Coal Line is located “with lively accessible spaces for creativity, new jobs and retail.”<sup>385</sup>

In February 2021 the founder of *South East Salon* (a platform promoting issues relevant to south-east London) confirmed that the project is maintained and in an open phase for suggestions from local residents insisting that:

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381 LDN\_gov. “The Peckham Coal Line Urban Park.” *London City Hall*, 11 May 2016, <[www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/regeneration/funding-opportunities/crowdfunding-pilot-programme/peckham-coal-line-urban](http://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/regeneration/funding-opportunities/crowdfunding-pilot-programme/peckham-coal-line-urban)>. Accessed 3 May 2018.

382 The Peckham Coal Line group. “Peckham Coal Line.” *The Peckham Coal Line group*, <[www.peckhamcoalline.org/](http://www.peckhamcoalline.org/)>. Accessed 9 May 2018.

383 Friends of Coal Line Peckham. *Coal Line Feasibility study*. Adams and Sutherland, June 2018, <[https://issuu.com/peckhamcoalline/docs/1806.pcl.final\\_pages.compressed](https://issuu.com/peckhamcoalline/docs/1806.pcl.final_pages.compressed)>. Accessed 11 February 2019.

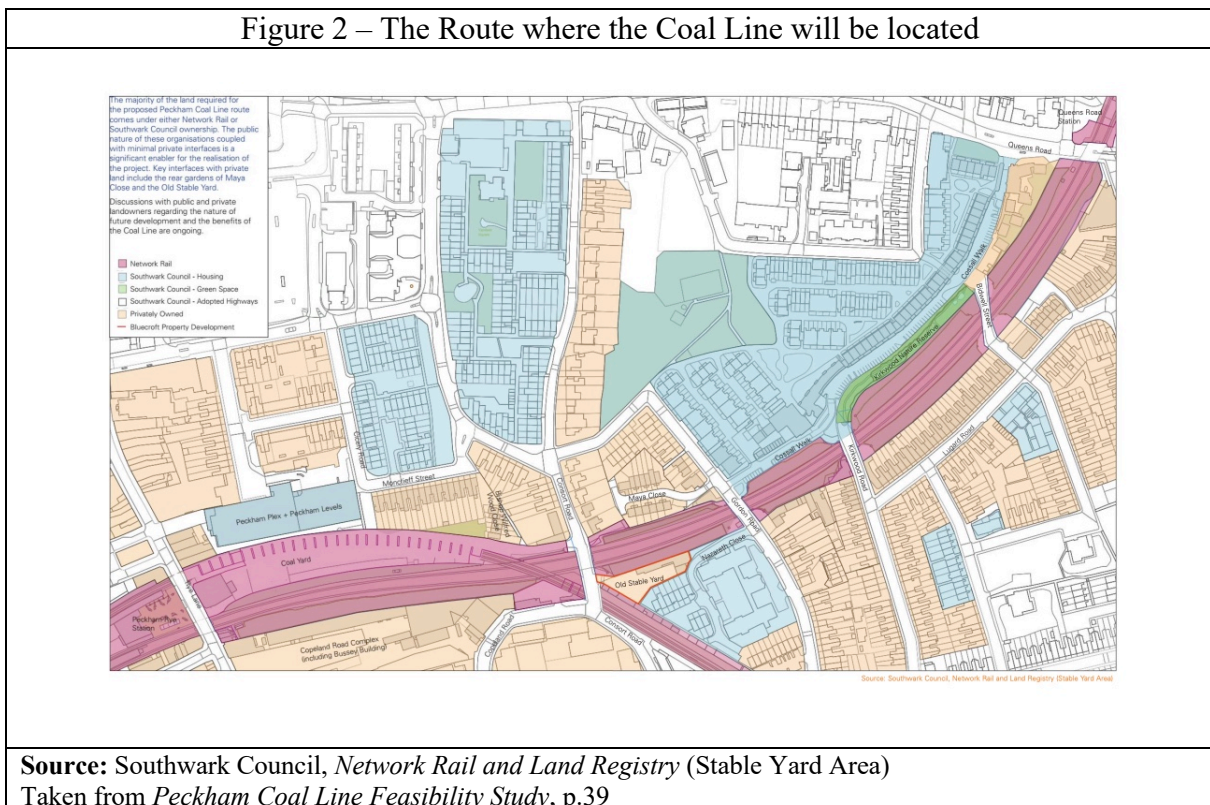
384 Southwark Council, *New Southwark Plan: Southwark Council Proposed Changes to the Submitted New Southwark Plan 2018 to 2033*. Southwark Council, August 2020.

385 *Ibid.* p. 70.

This project is different, it is an example of a project that comes from the community that will have a lasting impact and a community ownership, so it is not for a profit thing, it doesn't fall into the political aspects like other developments like the Aylesham Centre project or affordable Housing projects.<sup>386</sup>

According to the *Peckham Coal Line* website<sup>387</sup> the project aims at furthering accessibility to the area by establishing cycle routes, footpaths and green spaces, while also giving consideration to “economic prosperity” to attract new businesses and investors to the area in tandem with showcasing London’s unique industrial heritage via this novel high line pedestrian route. The project also aims at enhancing lifestyle outcomes and general wellbeing by providing running and cycling spaces alongside plans for a leisure and health centre and an innovative scheme to encourage potential food growing programmes.

Figure 2 – The Route where the Coal Line will be located



**Source:** Southwark Council, *Network Rail and Land Registry* (Stable Yard Area)  
 Taken from *Peckham Coal Line Feasibility Study*, p.39

<sup>386</sup> Jason Page. Interview with the founder of South East Salon. Conducted by Habiba Jelali online, 24 March 2021.

<sup>387</sup> The Peckham Coal Line group. “Peckham Coal Line.” *The Peckham Coal Line group*, <[www.peckhamcoaline.org/](http://www.peckhamcoaline.org/)> Accessed 9 May 2018.

The graphic above adopted in the feasibility study shows that the route will be established on unused land that follows the railway route and through industrial buildings, surrounded by both private (mainly) and council housing.

Interviews with diverse communities yield different responses. For example, the majority of the working-class local residents interviewed hadn't even heard of the project, some thinking that the project had been "scrapped"<sup>388</sup> since it was no longer a topic of interest to the media. Others believe that the project is a brilliant idea that can "enhance" the image of Peckham – but it is worth mentioning that the majority of local residents participating in this project are from a white middle-class background as confirmed by two interviewees: the founder of South East Salon<sup>389</sup> and a local resident. The founder of South East Salon mentioned "it is a bit sad though that the participants come from a particular social class and are not the working-class residents."<sup>390</sup> The local made this observation:

It is unfortunately true, but it is very complicated and I believe it is because the ones who are plugged to social media, to certain websites are people of a certain age of a certain community and people who lived their whole life here, born and raised and from different communities, are less informed or so tired of hearing about new projects that will affect their neighbourhood and will change it, this is only an assumption, of course. But this project is completely different and it will be a public space for everyone.<sup>391</sup>

According to a study by Hakansson<sup>392</sup>, the initiatives behind the Peckham Coal Line can be "counter-productive," even though the initiators use strategies to avoid the gentrification-related conflicts, this type of project will lead to demographic changes of the neighbourhood, as it will not only serve the actual grassroots and the local shops, but will attract new residents, tourists, and investors.

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<sup>388</sup> Anonymous. Interview with a local resident. Conducted by Habiba Jelali at Morrison Peckham, 3 August 2019.

<sup>389</sup> South East Salon is a physical network that connects people in the South East London, and encourages creators and entrepreneurs.

<sup>390</sup> Jason Page. Interview with the founder of South East Salon. Conducted by Habiba Jelali online, 24 March 2021.

<sup>391</sup> Interview with a passer-by in Peckham, Conducted by Habiba Jelali, 5 august 2019.

<sup>392</sup> Irene Håkansson. "The Socio-Spatial Politics of Urban Sustainability Transitions: Grassroots Initiatives in Gentrifying Peckham." *Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions*, vol. 29, 2018, pp. 42-43.

### 6.1.3. Peckham Library

Another transformed local facility is Peckham Library which opened in 2000, commissioned by Southwark Council, and was awarded the Stirling Prize<sup>393</sup> for its bold and unusual architecture, along with the Civic Trust Award in 2002 for excellence in public architecture.<sup>394</sup> According to the Southwark Council archive,<sup>395</sup> construction cost five million pounds with £1.25 million provided by the Single Regeneration Budget Programme. The balance was provided by the Council's capital programme.<sup>396</sup> Of note is that the library project took five decades to come to fruition as the new building was to replace the previous local library, the 'Luftwaffe', built 50 years ago but soon failing owing to economic restraints. According to Adrian Olsen, one of the previous Library and Information Services managers, the new library project was launched after several failed projects in the early 1980s and again in the early 1990s.<sup>397</sup> The project materialised in the late 1990s, leading to the building of the current library by the well-known architectural firm Alsop and Strömer which specialises in urban design; in this case the building is in the shape of an inverted 'L'. The library is located on the fourth-floor level and has a large studying space. A smaller study space is located at a mezzanine level, and other facilities including meeting rooms are located in lower floors (Figure 3).

What makes Peckham library interesting is that it is frequented by a diverse range of visitors, including both working class residents and the newly arrived-middle class residents. The library became well used and is visited by people from across the borough. In 2008 the library attracted more than 35,000 visitors each month, some nine per cent above the Council's target. Membership of the library is higher than the wider Southwark Council average. Membership of teenagers aged between 14 and 19 represents 14% of the membership, twice the borough average.<sup>398</sup> Entrance to the library is via Peckham Arch, another non-housing project.

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<sup>393</sup> It is called the Royal Institute of British Architects Stirling Prize. It is a British Prize given for Excellence in architecture.

<sup>394</sup> Council Southwark. "Southwark Council: Your Services: Libraries: About Peckham Library." *Southwark Council*, 3 July 2007, <[web.archive.org/web/20071218054535/www.southwark.gov.uk](http://web.archive.org/web/20071218054535/www.southwark.gov.uk)> Accessed 10 May 2018

<sup>395</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>396</sup> Adrian Olsen. "A New Library for Peckham in South London – After 50 Years!" *Library Review*, vol. 46, no. 1, 1997, p. 11.

<sup>397</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>398</sup> Martin Spring. "Will Alsop's Peckham Library Revisited." *Building*, 20 March 2009, <[www.building.co.uk/focus/will-alsops-peckham-library-revisited/3136504.article](http://www.building.co.uk/focus/will-alsops-peckham-library-revisited/3136504.article)> Accessed 10 May 2018.

Figure 3 – Peckham Library inside and out



Source: a photograph taken in 5 August 2022 by phone



Semi-direct interviews conducted with some of the visitors have shown the significance of Peckham Library as a community hub and a feature of Peckham's new image. People from various backgrounds and age groups appreciate the library's inclusive atmosphere. For instance, during my visit to the Library on several occasions, I have noticed a vibrant mix of visitors. One visitor, a working-class mum expressed her appreciation, saying: "I bring my kids all the time here. It's lovely and friendly, and we really appreciate the library."<sup>399</sup> Another visitor, a newly arrived middle-class resident, shared his thoughts, stating: "Peckham Library has been a pleasant surprise. The Library's architecture and design are impressive, and the range of resources available is fantastic."<sup>400</sup>

The library is a perfect example of a shared space in Peckham, as both long-term working-class residents and newly arrived middle-class residents frequent the public space. But it also confirms the presence and the influx of more affluent individuals into the previously disadvantaged neighbourhood, and highlights a shift in the socio-economic landscape in Peckham.

#### **6.1.4. Peckham Arch**

Peckham Arch is a monument with a unique span structure and canopy, situated in an open space next to Peckham Library. It was built in 1994, as the first regeneration project in the neighbourhood. Today, it represents a symbol and a part of the identity of Peckham. That notwithstanding, the structure is earmarked for demolition and is to be replaced by apartment blocks. According to Southwark News,<sup>401</sup> on the 8<sup>th</sup> November 2016, the Council announced that the arch would be demolished in favour of two blocks of four and six storeys, totalling 19 dwelling apartments. Six of the 19 apartments will be social housing, with the remainder both shared ownership and private rental. This decision remains in force despite resistance from the public, and an online petition launched by activists. This will be further development in the chapter dedicated to resistance.

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<sup>399</sup> Anonymous. Interview with a working-class mother at the Library. Conducted by Habiba Jelali at the library, 3 August 2019.

<sup>400</sup> Anonymous. Interview with a newly arrived resident. Conducted by Habiba Jelali at the library, 3 August 2019.

<sup>401</sup> News desk. "Peckham Arch to Be Demolished after Southwark Council Approval." *Southwark News*, 10 November 2016, <[www.southwarknews.co.uk/news/peckham-arch-demolished-southwark-council-approval/](http://www.southwarknews.co.uk/news/peckham-arch-demolished-southwark-council-approval/)> Accessed 10 May 2018.

Figure 4 – Peckham Arch



**Source:** The picture was taken in August 2018 by phone

The public space (figure 4) known as Peckham Square which falls within the arch is used by locals and visitors as a meeting point. It houses the weekly farmers' markets and daily food and coffee vendors. Its removal was resisted for being another obvious step in the gentrification process. In the UK, public spaces are sold for private development, leading to extreme and easily perceived changes in the area. A recent study by Matthew Carmona highlighted that there is a growing concern among many in the British capital about the harmful societal consequences of turning public spaces over to private control or ownership, however, he also admits that “[m]uch of the city was built by private interests and whilst most streets are now in public ownership and management, public spaces are owned by a huge diversity of public authorities,

public institutions, charitable trusts, private institutions, resident groups, private corporations and individuals.”<sup>402</sup>

### 6.1.5. Bellenden Road Regeneration Scheme

The Bellenden Road Regeneration Scheme (1997-2007) was one of the earliest projects which led to radical transformation in the area. Its aim was to entice the private housing sector to Bellenden Road, close to Rye Lane in the southern part of Peckham. The scheme was announced in 1997 and commenced the following year, allowing for a consultation period open to residents’ suggestions before launching the scheme. This consultation period was an opportunity that local artists, some of them known,<sup>403</sup> took to participate in the project. Southwark Council commissioned these artists to contribute designs for the regeneration scheme. In fact, a study<sup>404</sup> by Cecil Doustaly has shown including art in regeneration projects was a central policy area after the election of New Labour in 1997. The study has also identified three models of culture contribution to urban regeneration: Culture-led regeneration, cultural regeneration and culture and regeneration. Doustaly categorises the Bellenden Renewal Scheme in the third model, and confirms that culture in this scheme was successful to “[...] reverse the image of urban decline in ten years to encourage landlords – primarily private ones – to renovate their properties.”<sup>405</sup>

This scheme, which cost Southwark Council £12.42 million,<sup>406</sup> led to the refurbishment of local housing by retaining its Victorian and Edwardian touch, while adding new modern retail shops and art studios. By 2004, a major part of the renovation was complete. In the same year, The *Housing Scrutiny Committee*, a sub-committee whose aim was to examine and monitor the

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<sup>402</sup> Matthew Carmona. "The “public-isation” of private space—towards a charter of public space rights and responsibilities." *Journal of Urbanism: International Research on Placemaking and Urban Sustainability*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2022, p. 141.

<sup>403</sup> Tom Phillips was an English visual artist and a Painter. Antony Gormley is a famous sculpture, and John Latham was a pioneer of conceptual art.

<sup>404</sup> Cécile Doustaly. "Le rôle de la culture dans la renaissance urbaine depuis 1997 en Angleterre: de l'économie au socioculturel?." *Vers une renaissance urbaine britannique? Dix ans de politique travailliste de la ville*, 2008, pp. 75-95.

<sup>405</sup> *Ibid.*, « Il s’agissait de renverser l’image de déclin urbain en dix ans pour encourager les bailleurs – principalement privés – à rénover leurs biens. »

<sup>406</sup> Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee. *Review of the Bellenden Scheme. Southwark Council*, March 2005.

services provided by Southwark Council regarding housing, declared the project a success and a “positive thing” for improving the image of Peckham and Southwark.<sup>407</sup>

Figure 5 - Bellenden Road before Renewal



Source: Cllr Fiona Colley, “Regeneration in Peckham”, Southwark government, Peckham Town Centre Meeting, 14 march 2014, p.5.

Figure 6 – Bellenden Road after Renewal



Source: Cllr Fiona Colley, “Regeneration in Peckham”, Southwark government, Peckham Town Centre Meeting, 14 march 2014, p.6.

<sup>407</sup> Eileen Conn. « Living with the Bellenden Renewal Scheme.” *Notes for presentation to the Housing Scrutiny Committee*, 7 December 2004, p. 1.

Figures 5 and 6 below are both taken from the report “Regeneration in Peckham” written by Cllr Fiona Colley, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Corporate Strategy, in 2012.<sup>408</sup> They show the area before the scheme and the results; how this part of Peckham became completely modernized, with greener spaces and cleaner areas. The area is known today as Bellenden village by locals and outsiders. It has been voted as one of the coolest in the world.<sup>409</sup> It is very attractive with its trendy restaurants and clothing boutiques, but also very pricy to settle in. For example, the website of Rightmove shows a two-bedroom flat that was sold three times on their platform, in 1999 for £59,500, in 2013 for almost £450,000, and in 2019 for £550,000.<sup>410</sup>

In 2002, the same urban regeneration strategies had led to the demolition of the Gaumont Palace building. The building, located between Peckham High street and Mormont Road, used to be a well-known cinema. It closed its doors in the early 1960s and was replaced by a Top Rank Bingo Club until 1998.<sup>411</sup> The building was demolished in order to be replaced by a block of flats with the ground floor dedicated to the NHS. Today, it is known as Gaumont House instead of Gaumont Palace.

## **6.2. Commercial Changes: The Shopping Street of Peckham/ the Heart of Peckham**

Some of the obvious changes are commercial in nature. Peckham has always been well known for its shops and retail outlets and since 2009 Peckham records the highest rates of start-up and sole trader businesses in the Central Activities Zones of London.<sup>412</sup> These businesses are distributed all over the neighbourhood, but particularly in Rye Lane.

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<sup>408</sup> Cllr Fiona Colley. “Regeneration in Peckham”, Southwark government, Peckham Town Centre Meeting, 14 March 2014 pp. 4-5

<sup>409</sup> Rachel Hosie. “I Spent an Afternoon Exploring Peckham, the London Neighborhood That Was Voted One of the Coolest in the World - and I Found 2 Different Communities Living Side-by-Side.” *Insider*, 18 December 2019, <[www.insider.com/peckham-london-coolest-neighborhood-photos-what-its-really-like-2019-9](http://www.insider.com/peckham-london-coolest-neighborhood-photos-what-its-really-like-2019-9)> Accessed 29 January 2020.

<sup>410</sup> “Land Registry Sold Prices.” *House Price History*, <[www.rightmove.co.uk/house-prices/detailMatching.html?prop=92963588&sale=72273051&country=england](http://www.rightmove.co.uk/house-prices/detailMatching.html?prop=92963588&sale=72273051&country=england)> Accessed 29 January 2020.

<sup>411</sup> Stephen, et al. “SE15: Something's a ‘Rye.’” *Walking London One Postcode at a Time*, 31 December 2017, <[www.londonpostcodewalks.wordpress.com/2017/12/31/se15-somethings-a-rye](http://www.londonpostcodewalks.wordpress.com/2017/12/31/se15-somethings-a-rye)> Accessed 29 January 2020.

<sup>412</sup> Southwark Council. Peckham and Nunhead Area Action Plan. Southwark Council, November 2014, p. 23.

### 6.2.1. Rye Lane

Rye Lane is both historically and currently well-known for its shops, ethnic and cultural diversity, and historical character. It is situated in the commercial core of the neighbourhood in south London. In 2011 Rye Lane was designated a conservation area for its historical value, and is home to both Victorian and Georgian architecture. This decision came thanks to the *Peckham Society* and *Peckham Vision*,<sup>413</sup> an amenity society and a citizen action group respectively, which fought to preserve Rye Lane's unique identity. However, as highlighted in the second chapter, conservation areas can affect the process of gentrification, as it participates in rising the housing prices. In addition, the *Rye Lane Peckham Conservation Area Appraisal* indicates that "[t]here are a number of sites located throughout the conservation area that contribute poorly to the character and appearance of the area. As such, it is recommended that they be nominated for redevelopment".<sup>414</sup> This statement suggests that the area is not protected in its entirety, and that regeneration programs are still encouraged in order to "aesthetically" enhance the area.

Rye Lane is a well-established shopping area dating back to the nineteenth century. One of the first shops, *Jones & Higgins*,<sup>415</sup> a prestigious department store, was opened in 1867 and was operational until 1980. Much later, part of the ground floor became a low-cost clothing outlet called Blue Inc., before closing in 2016 to be replaced by a branch of chain-store coffee giant *Costa Coffee*. The latter can be seen as an indicator of gentrification as the coffee chain does not target a working-class clientele. A study to measure gentrification has shown that known coffee shops such as *Starbucks* or other chains can increase house prices and even help predict the process of gentrification.<sup>416</sup>

Another building with roots in the nineteenth century is the Bussey building which originated as a gun factory and shooting range. After having been abandoned for years, 2016 saw its transformation into art gallery, yoga studio, rooftop film club, and studio/workshop space. This will be further developed in chapter 6 tackling art and the newly emerged art in Peckham.

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<sup>413</sup> It is a resident-led local citizens' association of individuals who live, work or run a business in Peckham. The association aims at promoting and encouraging citizen action to improve living conditions in Peckham.

<sup>414</sup> Southwark Council. *Rye Lane Peckham Conservation Area Appraisal*. Southwark Council, October 2011, p. 30.

<sup>415</sup> Beasley, John D. *The Story of Peckham*. Council of the London Borough of Southwark, 1983. p. 6.

<sup>416</sup> Edward L. Glaeser, et al. "Nowcasting gentrification: using yelp data to quantify neighborhood change." *AEA Papers and Proceedings*, vol. 108, 2014 Broadway, Suite 305, Nashville, TN 37203, American Economic Association, 2018.

Besides these hipster facilities co-exist independent clothing shops, food retailers and wholesalers, mobile phone and beauty services, most of which are Afro-Caribbean in origin.

Rye Lane was one of the first streets to show visible signs of gentrification. Throughout the previous decade local shops have closed to be replaced by new “trendy” outlets. In December 2017, *Peckham Levels* was launched, home to seven floors dedicated to art studios, new bars and coffee shops, and other new independent businesses. Restaurants that emerged in the area include *2 Girls Coffee* (est. 2017) that offers homemade vegan and vegetarian food, a Vietnamese restaurant *BÀNH BÀNH* (est. 2016), located in the basement of the Bussey building, a “fancy” barbershop *Rocket* (est. 2015), *Rye Wax* which sells books, vinyl records, CDs,<sup>417</sup> and many other stores clearly intended for a new clientele that replaced previous local shops and barbers.

It appears that the emergence of these new “posh” outlets came about as a consequence of the *Revitalise; Peckham and Nunhead Area Action Plan*,<sup>418</sup> a regeneration plan published by Southwark Council in 2012, the purpose of which was to encourage investment and the opening of new bars, restaurants and chain stores. The plan further suggested to preserve the historical building and identified areas to be redeveloped on Rye Lane. The street was described, by Suzanne M. Hall in her article “Super-Diverse Street: ‘Trans-ethnography’ across migrant localities”, published in 2015, as a “frontline to gentrification.”<sup>419</sup> The study examines how the signs of gentrification or early gentrification are clearly visible on this street in particular as it shows a contrast between multi-ethnic local shops and newly emerged shops.

Today, Rye Lane is occupied by a mixture of traditional shops comprising Afro-Caribbean hair-care and food stores, inexpensive fruit and vegetable markets, a cinema, with newly opened “fancy” shops, co-existing in the same road. The arrival of hipster stores and restaurants caused social changes which ultimately led to the displacement of some local shops, creating social division in the area. Simply put, the trendy hipster shops do not attract the same clientele [or social class/ethnic background] as the local shops. This can be seen in two examples: pricing and ‘belonging’. For example, the price of a classic haircut in the *Local Barber* (100 Rye Lane)

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<sup>417</sup> The Peckham Guide, “What’s new in Peckham” 2019,

<<http://www.southlondonguide.co.uk/peckham/whatsnew.htm>.> Accessed 11 June 2019.

<sup>418</sup> London Borough of Southwark. “Revitalise: Peckham and Nunhead Area Action Plan”, February 2012.

<<http://www.southwark.gov.uk/futurepeckham>.> Accessed 11 June 2019.

<sup>419</sup> Suzanne M. Hall, “Super-Diverse Street: ‘Trans-ethnography’ across migrant localities”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 2015, p. 27.

costs eight pounds, compared to an upmarket barber shop on the same street, *The Groom Lounge Barber* (291 Rye Lane), where a comparable haircut would cost £20. Secondly, many established locals feel unwelcome when they go to hipster bars and, conversely, the newcomers feel unwelcome in the traditional shops. This was noticeable during many interviews with both longstanding and more recent, better-off residents. An interview conducted in a local Wetherspoons with a university student in her early 20s, born and raised in Peckham, reveals that she no longer feels culturally at ease in certain newly established venues.<sup>420</sup>

Research conducted by Hall in 2012 involved interviewing independent proprietors in order to understand the diversity and multi-culturalism in Rye Lane, concluded that “[...] 21% of the traders had been on Peckham Rye Lane for [more?] than twenty years. Forty-five per cent had occupied their shops for five years or less, with 69% for ten years or less, indicating a condensed period of transformation over the last decade.”<sup>421</sup> It appears that the departure of some stores and the arrivals of others transformed and created a new character for the neighbourhood.

The Aylesham Shopping Centre is another development soon to be demolished to make way for an alternative project.

### **6.2.2. Aylesham Centre**

The Aylesham Centre (figure 7) is a shopping centre situated in the heart of Peckham, occupying a large site (30,462 m<sup>2</sup>), between Hanover Park and Rye Lane. Opened in 1984 the site includes Morrison’s supermarket, various retail outlets, the bus garage (2,000 m<sup>2</sup>), and a petrol Station (600 m<sup>2</sup>).<sup>422</sup>

In March 2013, Southwark Council published a strategy for redevelopment:

The policy sets out that a taller element could be provided within our identified large sites by a distinctive building of exceptional quality and exemplary design linked to an improved and generous public realm. It should be designed to improve local legibility, to act as a local landmark within a public space of its own, and as a focus of route/s across the site. This will be encouraged on the following sites:

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<sup>420</sup> Anonymous. Interview with 20-year-old resident. Conducted by Habiba Jelali at the local Wetherspoons, 5 August 2019.

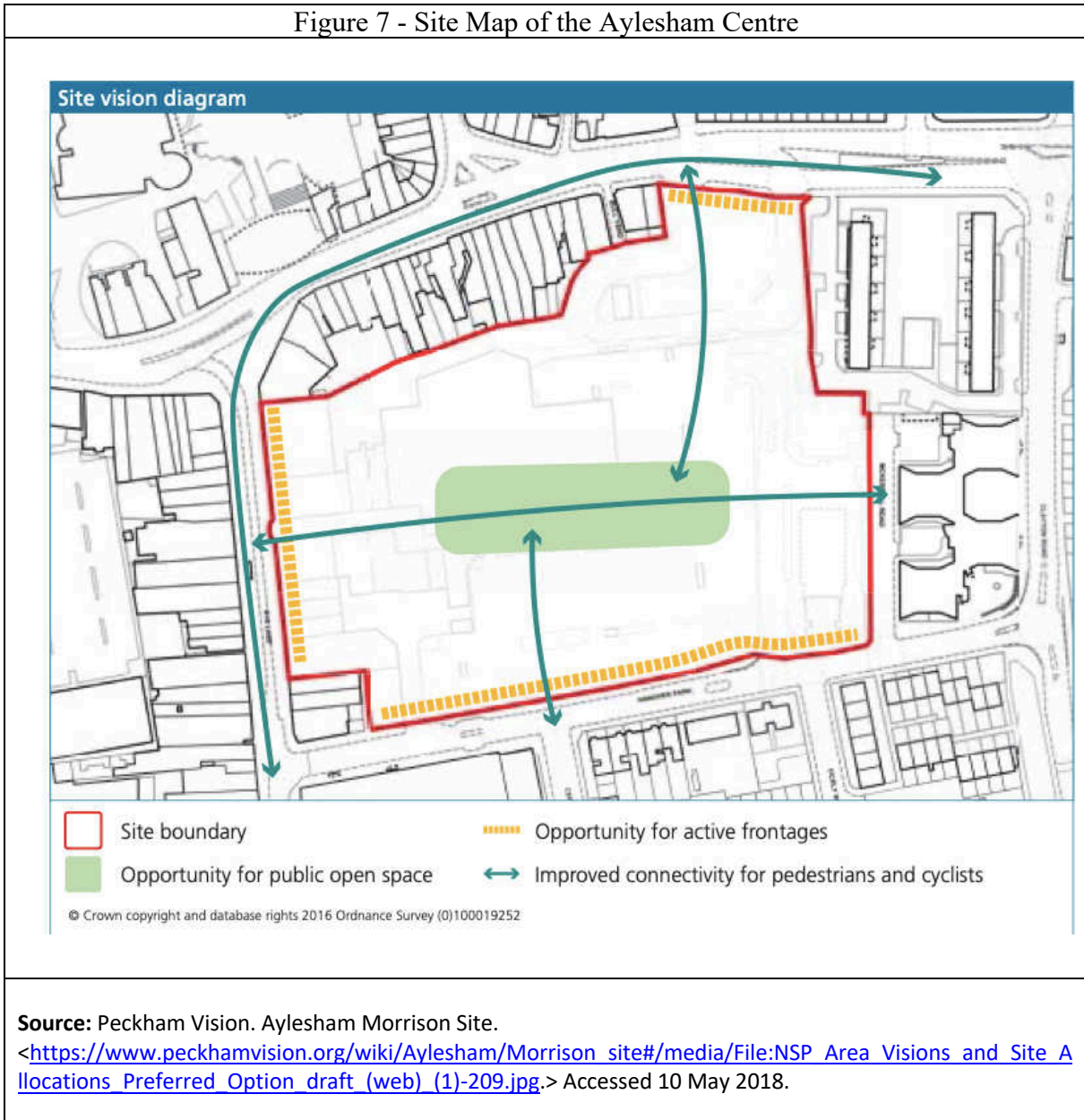
<sup>421</sup> Suzanne M. Hall. “Super-Diverse Street: ‘Trans-ethnography’ across migrant localities”. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 2015, p. 28.

<sup>422</sup> Southwark Council. “New Southwark Plan Preferred Option.” *Peckham Area Vision*, 24 January 2017. <<http://modern.gov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s66121/Appendix%20A%20New%20Southwark%20Plan%20Area%20Visions%20and%20Site%20Allocations%20Preferred%20Option%202017.pdf>> Accessed 10 May 2018.



- Copeland Industrial Park and 1 - 27 Bournemouth Road (PNAAP 4),
- Site of former Wooddene estate (PNAAP 5), and
- Aylesham Centre (PNAAP 1).<sup>423</sup>

Figure 7 - Site Map of the Aylesham Centre



<sup>423</sup> Southwark Council, “Revitalise: Peckham and Nunhead Area Action Plan.” Southwark Council, March 2013, p. 34.

In 2016, Southwark Council announced that the entire site was to be demolished to build, predominantly, apartment blocks, with provision made for retail and dining units.<sup>424</sup> The space will include a pedestrian-friendly area, emphasising Southwark Council's policy which allows for the construction of tall buildings. Tiger Developments Ltd, the assigned property developer, has announced that Morrison's will not be demolished, but rehabilitated, proposing to repurpose the current parking area into housing and retail usage, with future car parking facilities being provided under ground.

In September 2020, Tiger Development Limited confirmed that their scheme will include seven blocks totalling 900 flats, earmarking 35% as 'affordable.'<sup>425</sup> The official website, "Rethinking the Aylesham Centre," promises 14,000 m<sup>2</sup> of public space with 700 m<sup>2</sup> of play space for children. Eleven thousand square meters is to be dedicated to a new commercial space, leading to the creation of new job opportunities.<sup>426</sup>

Construction was due to start in 2019 and end by 2023. Although the initial start date has lapsed, with no current start date advertised, the project is set to proceed despite an online petition entitled "Support Local Voices in Peckham Town Centre", signed by more than 3,000 people by March 2021, calling for an end to the project, or at least to modify Tiger Development's existing plan.<sup>427</sup> The campaign is fighting against the construction of between six and twenty-storey high buildings which would reshape the character of the neighbourhood.

Another venue showing noticeable signs of gentrification, and which represents a magnet for gentrifiers, is the local cinema, situated in Peckham Levels, a previously derelict multi-storey car park. Even though Peckham Levels was inaugurated in 2017, the cinema goes back to the early 1990s. Formerly, the Premier Cinema, PeckhamPlex Cinema opened its doors in 1994, replacing the previous Sainsbury's supermarket. It closed in 2003, before another operator

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<sup>424</sup> News Desk. "Demolishing the Aylesham Centre for flats would mean 'no more Peckham'." *Southwark News*. 18 February 2016. <<https://southwarknews.co.uk/news/regeneration/demolishing-the-aylesham-centre-for-flats-would-mean-no-more-peckham/>> Accessed 14 May 2019.

<sup>425</sup> "Re-thinking the Aylesham Centre." Aylesham Centre. <<https://ayleshamcentreconsultation.co.uk/proposal/>> Accessed 14 May 2019.

<sup>426</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>427</sup> "Sign the Petition." *Change.org*, <[www.change.org/p/southwark-council-tigerblackrock-your-future-peckham](http://www.change.org/p/southwark-council-tigerblackrock-your-future-peckham)> Accessed 14 May 2019.

reopened it the same year under the new name, Peckham Multiplex, before being further renamed PeckhamPlex in 2015.<sup>428</sup> This will be further developed in chapter nine.

### 6.2.3. New Projects to be Implemented in the Neighbourhood

According to the New Southwark Council Plan 2017,<sup>429</sup> future regeneration schemes and new housing strategies are scheduled to improve Peckham. The new plans aim at improving the economy, the quality of open spaces, increasing employment and enhancing education, but also at providing new private and social housing. The new regeneration plans concern the Aylesham Centre and Peckham Bus Station, the land between the railway arches, Blackpool Road Business Park, Copeland Industrial Park and Bournemouth Road. The last two urban projects are intended mainly for housing developments (mainly private).

Blackpool Road Business park is a site located in the south of Peckham. It consists of 17,580 m<sup>2</sup>, but only 13,000 m<sup>2</sup> are used for business and industrial purposes. The plan proposes the redevelopment of housing and new accessibility by constructing taller buildings and a new pedestrian route.

The second project is Copeland Industrial Park and Bournemouth Road, a large site close to Peckham Rye station. It consists of 11,630 m<sup>2</sup>. This space is already used by small businesses. The plan is to provide new homes, a new retail space, in addition to cultural and leisure spaces. It will also provide accessibility and relieve pedestrian congestion in Rye Lane. According to Southwark Council website:

This development will deliver a total of 67 residential on this former car park site. The scheme will deliver 24 council rent, 25 private homes and 18 intermediate rent homes. It will comprise of 3 distinct blocks including a taller element of 7 storeys with a setback 8th floor immediately adjoining the access road. The height along Copeland Road reduces from 6 to a block of 4 storeys.<sup>430</sup>

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<sup>428</sup> "PeckhamPlex." *Cinema Treasures*, <[www.cinematreasures.org/theaters/21139](http://www.cinematreasures.org/theaters/21139)> Accessed 1 March 2021.

<sup>429</sup> Southwark Council. "New Southwark Plan Proposed Submission Version." *Southwark Council*, December 2017.

<sup>430</sup> Southwark Council. Copeland Road Car Park. Southwark Council Website, <<https://www.southwark.gov.uk/housing/new-council-homes/where-we-re-building/rye-lane/copeland-road-car-park-se15>> Accessed 30 June 2023.

As discussed in the previous chapter, even though, housing schemes are announced in Peckham in order to improve the supply, however, there is no focus on the real need of social housing. It is worth noting that these housing policies have resulted in reduced council housing stock in the area as seen in the previous chapter. Even though, there are a large number of working-class residents living in social housing, many are being displaced and some municipal buildings are even being sold to private investors.<sup>431</sup> This has resulted in a rapid surge in housing prices, exacerbating the housing crisis, and creating tensions within the community.

Social housing in an area represents and reflects political ideologies. Therefore, housing can be considered as a “catalyst for social, economic and political interests [as these three] often conflicting with each other.”<sup>432</sup> It is clear that housing and housing policies have created tension in Peckham. There is a division and a polarization in the area. For example, the north part of Peckham is where most council accommodation is located and is geographically poorer. The south part, where Rye Lane and Bellenden Road are situated, has greater diversity. A previous study,<sup>433</sup> that included interviews with middle-class residents at Peckham, has described this division as “two worlds,” one for the white middle class and one for the “others.” During one of the interviews conducted, the study stated:

This division is evoked by P6 a lawyer in his early thirties who described the division in people exiting Peckham Rye station at the evening rush hour, the people that turn left towards North Peckham (in his account mainly black and poor) and those who turn right (mainly white) towards the Bellenden Road area.<sup>434</sup>

This division is further evident when walking along Rye Lane. On one side of the pavement, establishments like afro-hairdressers and butcher shops cater to the predominantly working-class population. On the other side, new trendy restaurants and bars attract mainly white middle-class residents. This physical segregation along the street reflects the socioeconomic disparities and the distinct experiences of different communities in Peckham. Such divisions can contribute

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<sup>431</sup> Elephant Amenity Network. “11000 New Council Homes: Figures Show Loss Rather than Gain.” *35% Campaign*, 12 November 2018, <[www.35percent.org/2018-11-12-11000-council-homes-manifesto-pledge/](http://www.35percent.org/2018-11-12-11000-council-homes-manifesto-pledge/)> Accessed 29 January 2020.

<sup>432</sup> Nicco Bazzoli. “the conflict about the social meaning of housing in a neighbourhood subject to gentrification: representations and practices of space appropriations.” University of Urbino, June 2015, p. 14.

<sup>433</sup> Emma Jackson, and Michaela Benson. “Neither ‘Deepest, Darkest Peckham’ nor ‘Run-of-the-Mill’ East Dulwich: The Middle Classes and their ‘Others’ in an Inner-London Neighbourhood.” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, vol. 38, no. 4, 2014, pp. 1195-1210.

<sup>434</sup> *Ibid.* p. 1198.

to tensions and inequalities within the community, reflecting the ongoing process of gentrification and its impact on the neighbourhood's social fabric.

## Conclusion

Physical, urban and social changes (the latter mentioned in Chapter 2 and will be further developed in chapter 10) are happening very quickly in Peckham. These rapid shifts, particularly evident in the housing market, have resulted in soaring property values. This sudden escalation has only made housing less affordable for many long-term residents, and these transformations attracted a newer, often more affluent, demographic. Consequently, the neighbourhood is witnessing an intriguing juxtaposition: a convergence of various socio-economic groups cohabiting the same space. The old and the new, the affluent and the working-class, are navigating a shared urban landscape, creating a “transitional zone” or what Anne Clerval called: a “frontier zone,”<sup>435</sup> defined as a space where different social classes coexist; yet, the rapid transformations result in a form of segregation between the long-term and newly arrived residents, perceived across the neighbourhoods undergoing the process of gentrification in the streets, but also through education and leisure activities.

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<sup>435</sup> Anne Clerval. "Gentrification, a frontier reshaping social division of urban space in the inner Paris." *Urban life, boundaries and transformations, 50th IFHP World Congress*, Ville de Genève, 2006.

## Conclusion of Part II

It is clear that policies, political strategies, and investments (public or private) played a major role in the process of gentrification in Peckham. Although the programmes implemented lean towards a sustainable vision, and advocate for the preservation of the area's identity, these numerous projects are hastening the process of gentrification.

New comers are attracted to the neighbourhood, leading to an increase in house prices and, therefore gentrification, with obvious changes going back to the early 2000s and the early urban regeneration schemes. The new residents from the middle and upper-middle classes became conspicuous between 2007 and 2012, coinciding with the arrival of the Overground and the emergence of a competing new lifestyle, accompanied by start-ups, and trendy stores, bars, and restaurants that did not exist before.

Even though, Peckham is still diverse with its working-class locals, the newcomers created new diversity, a new unique identity. However, as noted in other gentrified areas, it is rare that the process of gentrification stops before eventually becoming responsible for having created a less diverse area, once former residents and traders are forced out of the area. Several programmes instigated through local initiatives ended up attracting investors.

These changes also participated in a shift in the image of the neighbourhood at the media level. For example, in the late 1990s and early 2000, Peckham was portrayed as dangerous; it was linked to gang activities and violence. This image has evolved to a new Peckham, trendy and attractive as the study of the Press will show. These changes also attracted artists who themselves played a role in constructing the new image of the neighbourhood as we shall see in the next part.



## **Part III – Beyond Production Factors**

This third part of the thesis will look beyond production factors and will examine agency factors. It will also delve into the evolving image of the neighbourhood. Organised into two distinct chapters, this part elucidates how the urban transformations align with the shifting image of the area, as discerned both through the lens of the written press and from artists' perspectives.

Chapter 7 sheds light on the evolution of Peckham's image as portrayed in the press. The chapter aims to explore how the written press (national, and local) constructed and shaped perceptions of Peckham, particularly in relation to the gentrification process that has unfolded over the past two decades. It analyses the transformation of Peckham's image from being perceived as a dangerous and rough area to becoming a trendy and iconic destination through a selection of articles and outlets.

Chapter 8 focuses on the role of artists in shaping and redefining the image of Peckham. It explores how artists and their cultural venues have influenced the neighbourhood's identity over time. Through interviews conducted with artists, this chapter highlights the artistic history but also initiatives that contributed to the neighbourhood's new image, showcasing the transformative power of art and creativity in the context of urban development.





# Chapter 7

## Image and Discourse: The Press

The press plays an important role in conveying information while also shaping and influencing public perception. For example, when dealing with gentrification, the media generally – and the press in particular – over-simplifies a very complex process. For decades the topic has either been avoided or its links to government policies ignored. Gentrification has sometimes been presented as a solution and used interchangeably with redevelopment and regeneration. This has been further developed in the second part of this thesis when tackling policies and how politicians would display it as a solution to economic decline.

From an academic perspective, a lack of literature review on the link between gentrification and the press has been noted. This can be explained as well through the complexity of the topic: Gentrification is a complex and multifaceted process that involves a variety of social, economic, and cultural factors. Understanding the role of the media in this process may require a nuanced and interdisciplinary approach that is not always feasible for researchers to undertake. Only few articles tackle the link between a district's bad reputation, and the image portrayed by the press. For example, a study by Kearns and al.<sup>436</sup> of the role of newspapers in shaping reputations, particularly in areas of social housing, has shown mixed coverage, with negative coverage dominating and the widespread demand for social and urban regeneration. It examined 1800 local press articles between 1998 and 2011 focusing on two council estates in inner-city Glasgow. The study concluded that both local and national press participate in creating a poor reputation in some areas, particularly in relation to council estates.

The purpose of this chapter is to understand how Peckham's image was constructed through the press, and how the gentrification process has been perceived over the last two decades.

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<sup>436</sup> Ade Kearns, and al. "Notorious Places: Image, Reputation, Stigma. The Role of Newspapers in Area Reputations for Social Housing Estates." *Housing Studies*, vol. 28, no. 4, 2013.

Previous research<sup>437</sup> has shown that print media uses three techniques to promote gentrification. First, it celebrates areas that underwent ‘successful’ gentrification. Second, particular areas in need of gentrification are identified. Finally, it “celebrates the gentrifier as a brave pioneer who saves the city from blight.”<sup>438</sup>

In this chapter, and in the case of Peckham, the study of the press and its representation of gentrification shows similar techniques. TV and social media are not examined. First, the scope of this research study had to be limited for precision and depth. Second, the primary aim was to examine long standing narratives and public discourses. Nevertheless, while the press offers valuable insights, incorporating TV and social media in future studies could provide a broader understanding of the topic.

At first, the press identifies the neighbourhood as in need of gentrification through “regeneration.” Then, it celebrates the success of the process by inviting “outsiders” to come and experience this new life and lifestyle in the neighbourhood. Recently, however, some awareness concerning the negative impact of gentrification and its effect on the diverse communities and long-term residents, and on its unique identity, has been acknowledged.

This chapter is divided into three sub-sections. The first sub-section tackles the first discourse that was dominating the press in which Peckham was described as a ‘dangerous place’ where crime and violence were part of local life, therefore giving rise to the need for social and urban regeneration. The second sub-section deals with press coverage focusing on how trendy Peckham is becoming, attracting private investment and middle-class residents. The third sub-section demonstrates that the press, and journalists, are becoming slightly more aware of the negative impact gentrification has had on Peckham.

The approach used in this chapter is “critical discourse analysis” (CDA). The benefit of this approach is that discourses, as part of a language and society, are critical in constructing perceived images and reality. According to Fairclough, the linguist and one of the founders of CDA, “[d]iscourses do not just reflect or represent social entities and relations, they construct or ‘constitute’ them.”<sup>439</sup> In the context of the written press, analysing journalists’ discourses is

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<sup>437</sup> Japonica Brown-Saracino and Cesraea Rumpf. "Diverse Imageries of Gentrification: Evidence from Newspaper Coverage in Seven US cities, 1986–2006." *Journal of Urban Affairs*, vol. 33, no. 3, 2011, p. 291.

<sup>438</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>439</sup> Norman Fairclough. “Discourse and Social Change.” *Polity Press*. 1992, p. 3.

very important to understand how they helped shape the receivers' or audience' perception of something in particular at a specific time. language influences society, and can be explained as:

“[...] a kind of dialogue with society: language is produced by society and (through the effect of language use on people) it goes on to recreate it. Language *first* represents social realities and *second* contributes to the production and *reproduction* of social reality or social life.”<sup>440</sup>

Language reflects attitudes and expectations, and participates in creating a reality that may not be true. The text is understood as the journalist/producer intended it to be understood.

The purpose of this approach, in our case, is to analyse language through its context. It does not focus on the number of texts but rather on what is said in a particular context. Peckham was known for being rough from the 1980s until the early 2000s. Analysing the press will show that it participated in the widespread dissemination of this image, and encouraged and welcomed gentrification as a solution. Yet, today, the area is portrayed as trendy and attractive.

This chapter examines articles that mention the neighbourhood of Peckham or events related to the neighbourhood published between 1997 and 2022 in a number of national and local newspapers. To be precise, the chapter scrutinises articles that mention the word ‘Peckham’ or both ‘Peckham’ and ‘gentrification’, ‘Peckham’ and ‘gentrifiers’, or other terms related to the same topic as ‘regeneration’, ‘rehabilitation’, ‘displacement’ and ‘affordable housing’. It must be noted that this chapter analyses a limited sample of articles that dealt with the area over different time periods, and the sources are unfortunately limited because of the difficulty in accessing their archives. The articles analysed were found in Southwark Archives or on the official archive website of each newspaper. The research online was done by using search database of newspapers and searching for key terms.

Articles were categorised according to the image they conveyed of Peckham, but also during a particular time. For example, according to my findings, the first image that the press conveyed about Peckham as a rough neighbourhood that needs rehabilitation was noticed in the early 2000s<sup>441</sup> and lasted until 2011 when the image shifted after the London riots, when Peckham

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<sup>440</sup> John E. Richardson. *Analysing Newspapers: An Approach from Critical Discourse Analysis*. Palgrave, p. 10.

<sup>441</sup> Different press articles were shared during that period including “A Year in Peckham.” *The Guardian*, 3 December, 2000, or Sarah Helm. “It’s lawless out there.” *The Guardian*, 29 November 2000, among others that will be further discussed in this chapter.

came to be noticed as a unique community, and fascinating to discover. Only in the last few years has the press started to shed more light on the process of gentrification in the area.

The press articles used in this chapter are only a sample, and are taken from different sources (Table 1) that provide national and local perspectives: first, *the Guardian*, a national daily broadsheet founded in the early nineteenth century as *The Manchester Guardian* changing its name to *the Guardian* by 1952. According to an Ipsos MORI poll<sup>442</sup> conducted in the early 2000s, the newspaper's readership is composed of a majority of middle-class Labour voters. Its political affiliation is left-leaning. No other national press was considered due to the limited coverage of the neighbourhood.

The second source is *The Evening Standard*, a free<sup>443</sup> daily local tabloid also known as *The London Evening Standard*, founded in the early nineteenth century. Its political orientation is not well identified as it does not exhibit a clear political stance. For example, in 2004 it showed support for the Labour candidate Ken Livingstone, yet recently supported Boris Johnson, the present conservative Prime Minister.<sup>444</sup> The third source is *Southwark News*, an independent paid weekly local newspaper published every Thursday. This newspaper was founded in 1987 under the name of *The Bermondsey News*, changing its name in 2002 when its two co-directors, Chris Mullany and Kevin Quinn, two locals from the London borough of Southwark and former reporters, bought the title and started to cover the whole borough.<sup>445</sup> The fourth source *The Peckham Peculiar* is also a local newspaper but targets only the residents of Peckham and Nunhead. Funded by the local community, *The Peckham Peculiar* was established in 2013 by four co-founders: three freelance journalists and a social media manager, who live in the neighbourhood.

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<sup>442</sup> "Voting Intention by Newspaper Readership Quarter 1 2005." *Ipsos MORI, Publications & Archive, Polls 2005* <<https://web.archive.org/web/20090523104959/http://www.ipsos-mori.com/content/polls-05/voting-intention-by-newspaper-readership-quarter-1.ashx>.> Accessed 21 December, 2021.

<sup>443</sup> *The Evening Standard* became free newspaper (used to be 90 pence) in 2009 after being purchased by Alexander Lebedev a Russian businessman as a consequence of the global recession and in order to compete with news published on the internet.

<sup>444</sup> Martine DROZDZ, « L'Espace du discours : médias et conflits d'aménagement à Londres », 2016, *op. cit.*, p. 241. Mentioned as well in MP these.

<sup>445</sup> "About Us." *Southwark News*, 23 Mar. 2020, <<https://www.southwarknews.co.uk/about-us/>.> accessed 13 December 2021.

**Table 1- Press sources -Types and Formats**

Title	Format	Type	Days of publication	Political Orientation	Audience
The Guardian (or The Observer)	Broadsheet Tabloid format since 2018	National	Daily	Centre-left	Middle-class Mainstream left
The Evening Standard	Tabloid	Local	daily	Not well identified	Londoners
Southwark News	Tabloid	Local	weekly	Non-identified	Locals of the borough of Southwark
The Peckham Peculiar	Tabloid	Local	monthly	Non-identified	Peckham and Nunhead Locals

The purpose of this chapter is to provide additional information about the area, how it is viewed by journalists, and to understand how this influenced the public's perception; also how press usage of the term 'gentrification' evolved over the years. It scrutinises the three discourses: the first deliberately ignores or avoids the term and the process of gentrification and focuses on the worst areas, presenting 'gentrification' as a solution to social issues such as crime, poverty and poor housing by legitimising 'regeneration' schemes. The second discourse shows a shift as a new perception emerges, as journalists started to focus on the area as having become more interesting and trendier. The third discourse tackles gentrification directly. Journalists started to show awareness of the district having been gentrified, with local gentrification beginning to receive greater attention.

## 7.1. Peckham as a Rough Neighbourhood

Peckham was known for years for its bad reputation which was shaped and presented by press coverage. Several studies show that the reputation of an entire neighbourhood is based on how people see an area and how it is influenced by the image provided by the media. For example, one study of image-shaping of council housing in Glasgow showed that press coverage was delivered in a stereotyped fashion which managed to create a negative image and continue to sustain it.<sup>446</sup> Another similar study<sup>447</sup> in the Inner London borough of Camden examined how images of council housing tenants are formed through stereotypes and prejudices “ [...] by the discursive practices of a range of groups and organizations, including the local press [...]”<sup>448</sup> It highlights how these representations are one-sided when they should be complex and multi-layered. This can be further explained by the fact that the press, i.e. journalists, pick bad news stories and display stereotypes as they can be more profitable.

The same techniques were used in Peckham when presenting its social housing challenges (for example the North Peckham Estate), devaluing the area and portraying it as unsafe. This was followed by another phase: the neighbourhood is in need of social and urban solutions, or that these solutions are praised.

### 7.1.1. National Coverage

It is worth noting that the printed press had for decades focused on the roughness of life in Peckham, a practice indulged in by several national newspapers, but especially *the Guardian*, which published several articles between 2000 and 2011, (as the first articles found were published in 2000 on the basis of the criteria mentioned previously and none between 1997 and 1999), containing some mixed coverage, while predominantly focusing on negative narratives of local criminality.

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<sup>446</sup> Ade Kearns, et al. “Notorious Places: Image, Reputation, Stigma. The Role of Newspapers in Area Reputations for Social Housing Estates”. pp.6.

<sup>447</sup> Paul Watt. "Respectability, roughness and 'race': Neighbourhood place images and the making of working-class social distinctions in London." *International journal of urban and regional research*, vol. 30, no. 4, 2006, pp. 776-797.

<sup>448</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 777

For example, on 3 December 2000, *the Guardian* published an article entitled “A Year in Peckham”<sup>449</sup> which gives examples of criminal activity from each month between January and November 2000:

**MAY**

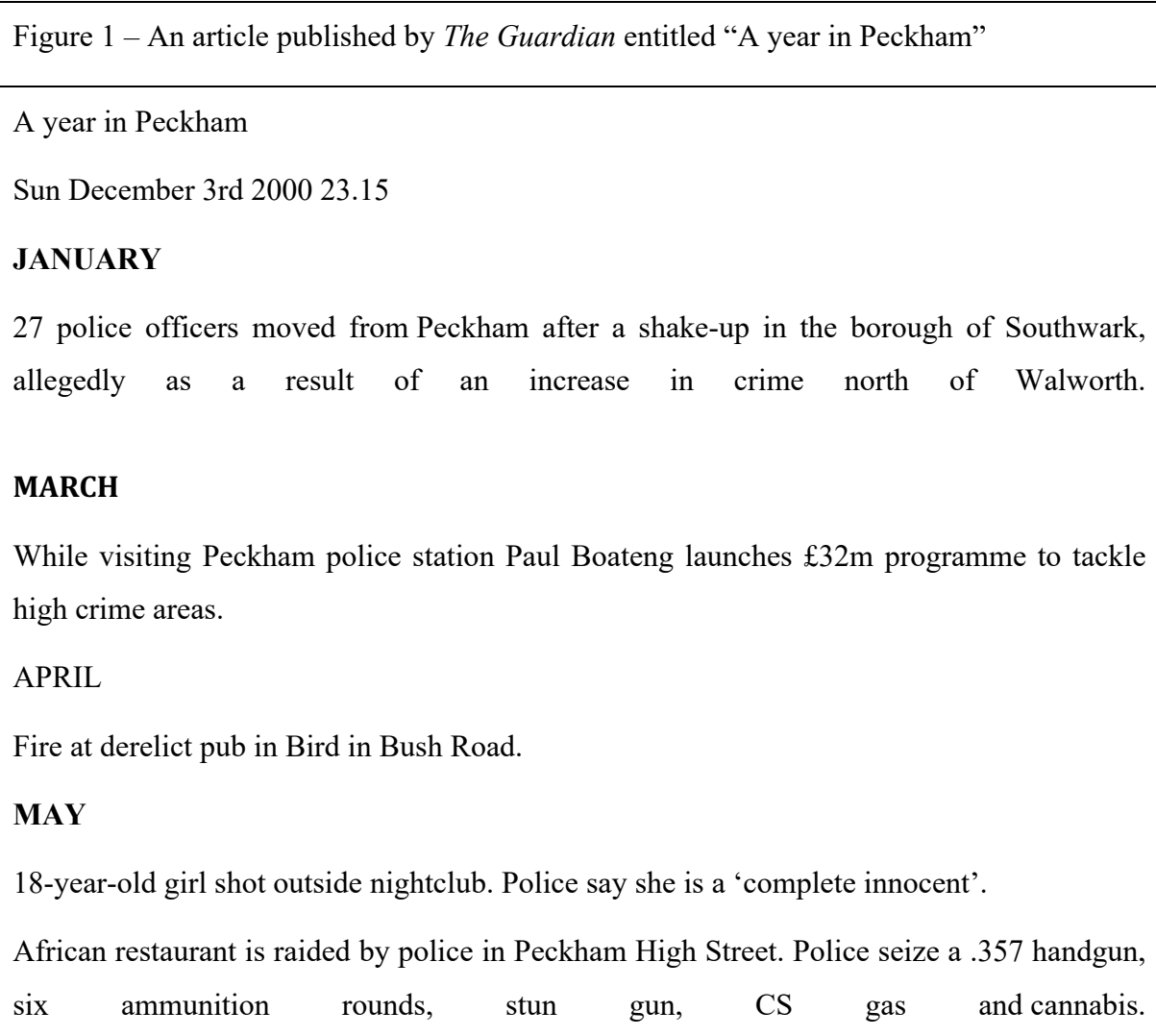
18-year-old girl shot outside nightclub. Police say she is a ‘complete innocent’.

African restaurant is raided by police in Peckham High Street. Police seize a .357 handgun, six ammunition rounds, stun gun, CS gas and cannabis. [...]

**AUGUST**

Teenagers rescued from blazing builders’ cabins on North Peckham estate.

Billy Dark, 14, attacked by youths in the same stairwell where Damilola Taylor died. They take 80p.



<sup>449</sup> “A Year in Peckham.” *The Guardian*, 3 December, 2000.  
<<https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2000/dec/03/ukcrime.focus1>> Accessed on 3 June 2019.



## **JUNE**

12-year-old appears in court after being found with sweets in one pocket, £400 in cash, plus heroin and crack cocaine in the other.

Fan Tsang, a kitchen porter, is jailed for life after poisoning and strangling daughter during a matrimonial row.

## **JULY**

Gun battle outside Chicago's nightclub. Eight shot, including 15-year-old.

## **AUGUST**

Teenagers rescued from blazing builders' cabins on North Peckham estate.

Billy Dark, 14, attacked by youths in the same stairwell where Damilola Taylor died. They take 80p.

## **SEPTEMBER**

Man abducted and taken by car to abandoned flats, where he is pistol whipped and beaten all night.

## **OCTOBER**

Superintendent Charles Griggs calls for demolition of Peckham High Street, 'heaving with crack dealers'.

## **NOVEMBER**

17-year-old Shola Agora, of Sceaux Gardens estate, Camberwell, is stabbed and dies later at Kings College Hospital. A 17-year-old boy is later charged.

Source: "A Year in Peckham." *The Guardian*, 3 December, 2000,  
<<https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2000/dec/03/ukcrime.focus1>> Accessed on 3 June 2019.

The article cites a criminal event (or two) per month, skipping February, as nothing "interesting to the press" happened that month. The events are linked to gang activities in general. Terms and expressions such as 'high crime areas', 'fire', 'police', 'gun', 'stabbed', 'cannabis', 'heroin', 'crack cocaine', 'attacked' and many others were continuously used. This lexical field

has been used repeatedly in several articles in order to construct a stigmatised image. It will further be developed in this section. The article is short with just 230 words. Its title “*A Year in Peckham*” explicitly shows how life is experienced in the area, rough and full of gang activities in “one” year. The article states that the then Minister of State for Home Affairs, Paul Boateng, while visiting the area, announced the launching of “A £32m programme to tackle high crime areas”. The article plainly welcomes such government programs.

*The Guardian* also published several other articles in 2000 concerning Peckham, such as “It’s lawless out there”<sup>450</sup> which narrates the story of the tragic death of a 10-year old boy, Damilola Taylor, on 27 November 2000, and was published two days after the incident. This event was extensively covered by the press in the early 2000s, leading to peak coverage of the area. The Nigerian boy, who had just moved to England with his family to get medical treatment for his sister, was stabbed outside of Peckham Library on his way home. He was found bleeding on a stairwell in the North Peckham Estate, where his family had taken up residence a few months earlier.

The article starts with “[t]hey call it the Peckham frontline” to describe the road where the young boy was found. The journalist announces how dangerous the area is by her choice of the word ‘frontline’. Specific vocabulary, such as ‘gang’ (used 19 times) and ‘violence’ (used on 13 occasions), can be perceived to accentuate this idea further and show how gang culture and violence are part of everyday life in Peckham. The journalist explains that “[t]he children and teenagers who loiter along this stretch of Peckham High Street, on their way to and from school, are used to violence.” She further adds, “[a]nd just as they accept the violence here, the children accept that it will follow them into the school playgrounds. It is not uncommon for schools in this part of south-east London to have security guards patrolling their playgrounds and CCTV cameras monitoring their corridors.” The article normalises violence in Peckham but particularly in the council estates. It explains how gangs work and how they recruit 12 and 13-year-old children. It discusses crime rates and how it is rising locally. The journalist provides statistics, for example, “[i]n October 2000 there were 854 instances of violent crime in the London Borough of Southwark, 54 more than occurred in October last year and part of a steady rise.” To sum up, the article portrays Peckham as a dangerous war zone made up of gangsters and gang culture. It shows how schoolboys, if not part of a gang, are victims.

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<sup>450</sup> Sarah Helm. “It’s lawless out there.” *The Guardian*, 29 November 2000, <<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2000/nov/29/socialcare.crime>> Accessed on 3 June 2019.

A similar short article entitled “*Estate ‘One of the toughest in Europe,’*”<sup>451</sup> published in November 2000, tackles the poor living conditions and violence in the neighbourhood; “[v]iolence is common, drugs a massive problem and inter-gang rivalry a worrying feature. Many locals believe they struggle to get work because employers are put off by their address.” The article cites the Bishop of Southwark, the Right Reverend Tom Butler, who asserted that the North Peckham Estate is “one of the toughest in Europe,” yet, “a lot of efforts are going into that state.” Besides using the same vocabulary used in different articles and related to violence, drugs and crime activities, the article shows that the area is going through redevelopment, and that demolition programs are being implemented. The estate, portrayed as a source of violence, will be demolished, and the neighbourhood will thus be improved.

A previous study has shown that press coverage of the estates was predominantly negative, tackling the poor environment, poor living conditions, crime and violence, for example. It explains that when crimes are committed by people living on the estates, in the estates or elsewhere, “the press is likely to use the opportunity to describe the offenders’ estates of residence in negative terms in reports of those events.”<sup>452</sup> In the case of Peckham, this image continued for years, even after estates were demolished. Coverage continues to mention the estate and how the neighbourhood is still unsafe. For example, “Scepticism rules on Peckham Estate,”<sup>453</sup> an article published two years after Damilola Taylor’s death describes how nothing changed in those two years. Peckham is still unsafe. The paper shows how even though the [North Peckham] estate was demolished after the tragedy, there were no radical solutions to local problems. It criticises the shortage of police officers in the area and cites some of the locals who are still frightened, “many parents were terrified to let their children walk home by themselves”. Yet it acknowledges the efforts of local politicians such as Councillor Ian Wingfield, leader of the Labour Group of Southwark Council, who stated that, “After Damilola died the number of police on the streets did go up. But [...] now back down to the level we had before his death.”

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<sup>451</sup> Steven Morris. “Estate ‘One of Toughest in Europe.’” *The Guardian*, 30 Nov. 2000, <<https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2000/nov/30/ukcrime.stevenmorris>> Accessed 29 November 2021.

<sup>452</sup> Ade Kearns, and al. “Notorious Places: Image, Reputation, Stigma. The Role of Newspapers in Area Reputations for Social Housing Estates”. P.15.

<sup>453</sup> Steven Morris. “After Damilola Taylor Murder: Scepticism Rules on Peckham Estate.” *The Guardian*, 10 December 2002, <<https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2002/dec/10/ukcrime.stevenmorris>> Accessed 29 November 2021.

One exception is an interesting short article published by *the Guardian* in 2005 entitled “*That Sinking Feeling on ‘Estate From Hell’*”<sup>454</sup>, written by Jonathan Glancey, a former correspondent at *the Guardian* who specialises in design and architecture. This article criticises the poor quality of the different estates in London; the North Peckham estate included, and how these estates were built, “Too quickly, too cheaply, too brutally and without the necessary skills. Result, misery.” The article glorifies the historical heritage of the neighbourhood where, “[...] Peckham was a place of market gardens, brickworks, barge-building, beekeeping and a zoo, and through which flowed the river Peck and Great Surrey canal.” It further explains that these estates suffered from bad management and lack of proper funding.

The article draws on the theory that the physical quality of the estates can have an impact on social behaviour in a particular neighbourhood. This was developed by the geographer and urban planner Alice Coleman who argued that the physical design of neighbourhoods has a significant impact on social dynamics and quality of life.<sup>455</sup> Coleman argued that certain types of design, such as high-rise housing and large uniform housing estate could create social isolation and undermine the sense of community among residents, but could also lead to serious social problems, and therefore, bad reputation.

Another event that attracted media’s attention was Taylor’s tragic death in 2000 that shook the neighbourhood. For example, according to the *The Guardian* archives, 27 articles were published in the first two years (27 November 2000 to 31 December 2002) following his death. In the first month, nine articles mentioned the name ‘Damilola Taylor’. A number of these articles conclude that the neighbourhood is in need of change, and state-led regeneration programmes, thereby inviting regeneration.

As mentioned in one of the previously analysed articles, renovations that launched in the late 1990s and early 2000s under the New Labour government, were, and continue to be, welcome locally, particularly when it concerns demolishing council estates in order to improve urban aesthetics, the environment and offer better housing to the new middle-class residents. Therefore, by the late twentieth, and early twenty-first, century, gentrification was described as a solution, an “urban idyll”<sup>456</sup> for the middle class who aspired to live close to their offices, and

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<sup>454</sup> Jonathan Glancey. “That Sinking Feeling on 'Estate from Hell'.” *The Guardian*, 22 September 2005, <<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2005/sep/22/communities.uknews1>> Accessed 29 November 2021.

<sup>455</sup> Alice Coleman. *Utopia on Trial: Vision and Reality in Planned Housing*. Hilary Shipmen: London 1985.

<sup>456</sup> G. Hoskins, and A. Tallon. “Promoting the “urban idyll””: Policies for city centre living.” In C Johnstone & M Whitehead (Eds.), *New Horizons in British Urban Policy: Perspectives on New Labour’s Urban Renaissance*. Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2004, pp. 25–40.

a reflection of their new lifestyle. The press rarely used the term ‘gentrification’, but when it did, it was to advocate it as a solution. Regarding the working class and their displacement, they were marginalised. For example, in *The Guardian*’s archives (that included its sister paper, *The Observer*), while searching for both terms “Peckham” and “gentrification” between 2000 and 2011, only three articles came up, one published by *The Guardian* and two by *The Observer*. The article published by *The Observer* was the most relevant.

The article in question, (Figure 2) was published as part of the Property section of the newspaper. It does not have a title but the sub-title reads, “If you choose a down market area that is ripe for regeneration, you could be on to a winner. Look for a Blockbuster but not yet Starbucks, says Marianne Curphey.” Blockbuster was an American video rental chain store that was popular at the time, while the arrival of American coffee chain Starbucks in a particular neighbourhood signalled social changes. Since the video rental shops were less expensive than Starbucks, they were considered less “harmful.”

The article covers how “gentrification” can be good for investment and predicts future trendy gentrified areas, aimed at property buyers looking to invest in an inexpensive area “before it becomes fashionable,” and prices increase. The article targets first-time buyers, the middle-class, and “professional families” who are being ‘priced out’ of already gentrified areas which are too expensive. The article gives a list of areas likely to be gentrified, where housing is currently affordable, but will be subject to dramatic price increases in future years.

The article answers the question: “What makes a street ripe for gentrification?” According to the journalist who cites Stephen Ludlow, director of Ludlowthompson.com, a residential buy-to-let estate agency, the next gentrified area is identified when large chain companies and good quality independent retailers are spotted, but also when regeneration programmes emerge and local authorities start to get involved in urban changes. “For example, Southwark Council in south London has spent a lot of money improving its property, installing new windows, and cleaning up the area, street by street.”

Figure 2 – Article published in October 2002 by *The Observer* to spot future regenerated/gentrified neighbourhoods

Other 17 -- No Title

*The Observer* (1901- 2003); Oct 27, 2002;

ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Guardian and The Observer  
pg. B28

## ng the next

If you choose a downmarket area that's ripe for regeneration, you could be on to a winner. Look for where there's a Blockbuster but not yet a Starbucks, says **Marianne Curphey**

IT'S A seductive prospect: to find the next Notting Hill before it becomes fashionable, buy a house or flat there, and then sit back and watch property prices rise.

In fact, spotting the next up and coming area is becoming imperative for any potential first-time buyer who has already been priced out of much of the market in Britain's towns and cities. Likewise, the opportunity to trade up to a bigger house is starting to elude even professional families. So an increasingly popular middle-

class preoccupation is to seek out areas on the cusp of being gentrified.

The rewards are bigger houses for the same price as a cramped flat in a fashionable part of town. Often there is the opportunity to buy a wonderful period property with many original features intact.

But there are pitfalls. Young professionals got their fingers burnt in the late Eighties and early Nineties when they tried to spot the next big thing in the excitement of the last housing

boom. Unable to afford property in the established areas, couples and families moved into neighbourhoods such as Montpelier and St Pauls in Bristol, and Hackney in east London. They hoped the areas around them would start to move upmarket – but these regions were among the first to fall when the market crashed.

King's Cross in London is often touted as ripe for richer pickings, but so far it is resolutely downmarket.

'Unfortunately you do

have to be choosy as some areas like Kings Cross have promised much but produced little over the last 15 years,' says Stephen Ludlow, director of ludlowthompson.com, the residential buy-to-let agency.

The King's Cross problem is its road layout, and there always seems to be some scheme to regenerate the area.'

So what makes a street ripe for gentrification? 'People tend to choose period properties, particularly Edwardian and Victorian,'

says Ludlow. 'They make good family homes and appeal to couples who are moving out of a flat and looking for more space.'

'Look for independent retailers moving into an area. Cafes, bars and good quality florists all signal the presence of young professionals with a high disposable income.'

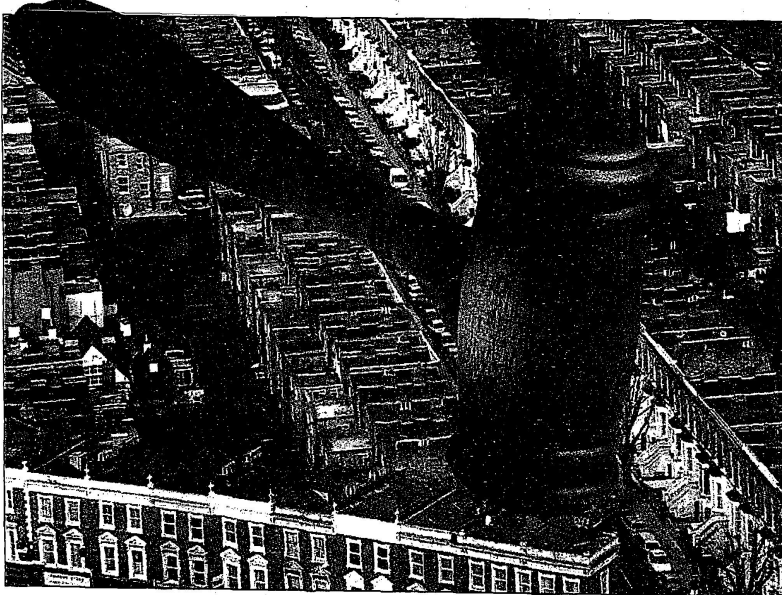
'Once the big chains arrive you know the area is in a much later stage of development. The presence of Marks & Spencer, Starbucks and Carphone Warehouse means these companies have spotted the potential and the success of the independents, and think they can make money there.'

'Keep an eye out for regeneration projects by local councils. For example, Southwark council in south London has spent a lot of money improving its properties, installing new windows, and cleaning up the area, street by street.'

'Two years ago houses were selling for around £150,000. Now a three bedroom property would be close to £270,000. If you pick the right area you can outperform the market.'

He points to such areas as East Dulwich, Peckham, Mitcham Common and Finsbury Park in London as likely to be in the next wave of gentrification. Manchester

*Continued on page 27*



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Source: "Finding the next Notting Hill." *The Observer*, 22 October, 2002,

<<https://www.proquest.com/hnpguardianobserver/docview/478328332/pageviewPDF/5B5567F616034813PQ/5?accountid=13089>> Accessed 29 November 2021.

The article lists East Dulwich, Peckham, Mitcham Common, and Finsbury Park as areas that have been gentrified or are undergoing gentrification. It encourages future middle-class home owners to explore these areas which are going through regeneration and, therefore, enhancement. It uses both terms ‘regeneration’ and ‘gentrification’ interchangeably and positively. The article coincides with urban and regeneration schemes launched in Southwark, particularly in Peckham, such as the construction of Peckham Library, Peckham Pulse healthy living centre, and the demolition of the North Peckham council estate. This article, among others, welcomes state-led regeneration and regeneration policies that lead to radical transformation of the neighbourhood. This has been further developed in the second part tackling urban policies at the three different levels (national, regional, and local).

At a local level, research was very limited owing to the archives of *Southwark News* only being available after December 2014, *The Peckham Peculiar* since January 2014, and *The Standard Evening* from 2012. However, a limited number of articles about Peckham regeneration schemes published between 2000 and 2010 by *Southwark News* and *The Standard Evening* were located in Southwark Archives.

### 7.1.2. Local coverage

At a local level, similar articles were published, most notably by *The Evening Standard*, in the first decade of the twenty-first century, where regeneration programmes were highlighted, to indicate future urban changes and future increases to housing costs. In May 2000, *The Evening Standard* published an article entitled, “*Up-and-coming Peckham: the delights of Peckham High Street*,”<sup>457</sup> (Figure 3) as part of the *New Homes* section. The article indicates that Peckham, with its “Victorian terraces ripe for gentrification,” is becoming attractive for both developers and middle-class buyers who were, “Priced out of other inner London areas.” It provides the readers with housing prices which “go from £259,000 to £329,000” which may have been considered expensive at that time, but were still cheaper than other central areas, and were for “generously-sized” accommodation; these prices have today quadrupled.

The journalist highlights how the area is undergoing urban changes and becoming a better neighbourhood. For example, warehouses converted into contemporary houses, galleries, and

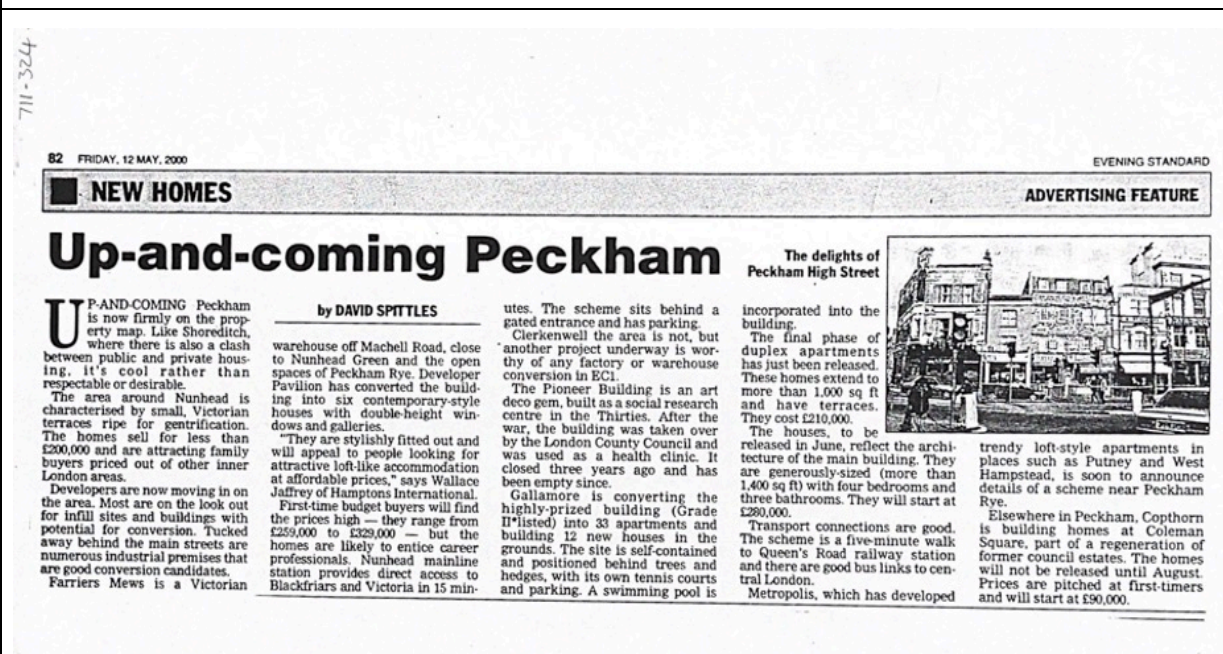
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<sup>457</sup> David Spittles. “Up-and-coming Peckham: the delight of Peckham High Street.” *The Evening Standard*, 12 May 2000. The printed copy was found in Southwark Archives, located in the Borough of Southwark.

“numerous industrial premises” are becoming available for new retailers. New projects are implemented, offering modern housing such as loft-style apartments, and even known developers (such as Metropolis Construction Limited and Copethorne Construction Limited) are interested in the area and plan on developing housing schemes locally. The article focuses on what the area can offer the professional class, from both a housing and accessibility perspective. “Nunhead mainline station provides direct access to Blackfriars and Victoria in 15 min,” and “there are good bus links to central London.” It presents Peckham as an opportunity for investment but also to the ones looking for housing in a new trendy area with “reasonable” prices.

Gentrification in this article is considered an opportunity where Peckham, a historically poor area, is becoming suitable for the middle class, with modern housing and trendy shops. Although the article alludes to working class displacement, neither this nor the consequences of future middle-class home buyers on the area, is acknowledged as having a negative impact. It only considers housing prices and future housing opportunities in the area.

Figure 3 – An Article published by *The Evening Standard*, on 12 May 2000 to emphasise on how trendy Peckham is becoming.



Source: “Up-and-coming Peckham” article published by The Evening Standard, on 12 May 2000.



Two years later, *The Evening Standard* published another article that tackled regeneration in the area, entitled “*Estate where hope has had no chance.*”<sup>458</sup> The article explains that regeneration programmes are positively transforming the area, making it safer; “[s]tart walking from Peckham Library and it really is possible to believe that things are getting better, that the massive £260 million regeneration project to knock down the old tower blocks and put people in new homes is making a difference.” It makes reference to the tragedy that led to the death of Damilola Taylor and briefly discusses how the police failed to apprehend the perpetrators. It highlights the harsh and unsafe life that used to exist on the North Peckham Estate, and the fear that was widespread in the communities. The article points out that Peckham somehow became safer after the estate was demolished. This is seen through two types of vocabulary that were perceived. For example, when tackling the estate, words such as ‘dark’, ‘fetid’, ‘death’, and ‘depressed’ are used. Conversely, when discussing regeneration, terms such as ‘light’, ‘hope’ and ‘optimism’ are used: “It is a journey that starts in light and hope, in the optimism that even a depressed inner-city area like Peckham can be transformed with money and well-meaning projects: it ends in the bleak reality of the North Peckham Estate, where hope – like Damilola himself – has never really had much of a chance.”

The article portrays ordinary life in Peckham “[o]utside the smart new houses on the Renaissance development, nice shiny cars stand alongside well-tended front gardens. Proud fathers show off their babies to the neighbours.” The renaissance development refers to Bellenden Road, an area that underwent regeneration and that was known to be the white middle-class street. The article provides two points of view from local residents. One view is that, “It’s quieter and more safe, [...] Kids can play where they want. Even my cousins play about in the dark and nothing happens to them, they are only eight and 10. They are changing stuff around here, like the parks are getting better.” The other perspective is that, “[n]othing’s changed. It’s still the same old place. It’ll take more than new houses to make a difference.” The article concludes with “[p]erhaps one day. But today it still feels a long way off.” It shows that there is a long way to go, and even though it highlights the dark side of the neighbourhood it also clearly hopeful that the new regeneration schemes implemented by local authorities will improve local life.

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<sup>458</sup> Valentine Low. “Estate Where Hope Has Had No Chance.” *Evening Standard*, Evening Standard, 12 April 2012, <<https://www.standard.co.uk/hp/front/estate-where-hope-has-had-no-chance-6328848.html>.> Accessed 29 November 2021.

With no doubt, *Southwark News* had published some articles tackling regeneration in the early 2000s; unfortunately, only three articles discussing regeneration in Peckham were found in the Southwark Archives. The first article (Figure 4) was published on 5 July 2001 in the *Southwark News*, “*The regeneration with the ‘art.’*” It tackles the regeneration scheme launched in the mid-to-late 1990s, particularly in Bellenden Road, and the involvement of local artists in the process. The article begins by announcing large regeneration schemes implemented by Southwark Council such as Canada Water, the Peckham Partnership, and the Aylesbury scheme. It acknowledges that “[...] the *ambitious* plans will see the face of the borough change forever. With such huge plans, about to go underway, hundreds of residents are concerned about their future and how the schemes are to affect them.” [Italics mine] The journalist embraces these schemes and highlights the positive change that can bring to the neighbourhood. The article addresses particularly the Bellenden Road scheme and the involvement of its residents in the project. According to the article:

The scheme called the Bellenden Renewal Area, has attracted a lot of press attention, and discussion because of the number of high-profile artists involved in the scheme doing the job usually left to professional designers. But some residents say the best thing is not its uniqueness, but the fact that the level of community involvement has created a common aim, which has bought locals closer together.

The journalist writes that, “[t]heir residents have been making their own decisions on what their area should look like, something which many say, is revitalising the community spirit”, further highlighting the fact that these locals are responsible for decision-making. During organised street meetings they created plans and submitted these plans to an elected board of residents for approval. The article provides details of some of the artists involved in the scheme: Heather Burrell, who recreated the metal ornament gates of Peckham Rye Park; Anthony Gormley, the Turner Prize-winning artist who created the bollards on three different roads in the Bellenden area; Zandra Rhodes, the artist who opened the design museum in Bermondsey Street; and Camilla Goddard, an art consultant who coordinated the artists. The article compares Bellenden project, “local project,” to the North Peckham Estate led by the Peckham Partnership, highlighting the differences between these schemes and focusing on the locals’ involvement in Bellenden Road. It also indicates that the project was fully funded by the local authorities; “[r]eceived between £1.6 and £1.9 million a year and will run until 2007. There is no demolition and rebuild like the Peckham Partnership on the other side of the High Street, but cleaning and small works.”

Figure 4 – Article published by *Southwark News* on 5 July 2001, the copy found in Southwark Archives

10 Southwark News July 5 2001

# THE REGENERATION WITH THE 'ART'

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**“It sounds like a good idea. But people have to make sure they keep it nice and look after the place” - George Gauci, barber**

**WITH ITS HOUSING STOCK** aging rapidly, Southwark Council is embarking on an unprecedented number of large regeneration schemes. Schemes, from Canada Water, the Peckham Partnership, the Aylesbury and at the Elephant, the ambitious plans will see the face of the borough change forever. With such huge plans about to go underway, hundreds of residents are concerned about their future, and how the schemes are to affect them. But in the Bellenden area of Peckham the mood seems to be different. There residents have been making their own decisions on what their area should look like, something which many say, is revitalising the community spirit.

Letting a modern artist loose on the plans of a big urban regeneration scheme could be every resident's nightmare. With images of Damien Hurst's dead sheep floating in formaldehyde or Tracey Emin's dirty bed coming to mind, who would entrust an artist with the fate of their street, home or shop? But when residents in the Bellenden ward of Peckham were asked how Southwark should regenerate their area, that's precisely what they wanted.

The scheme, called the Bellenden Renewal Area, has attracted a lot of press attention and discussion because of the number of high profile artists involved in the scheme, doing the job usually left to professional designers. But some residents say the best thing about the scheme is not its uniqueness, but the fact that the level of community involvement has created a common aim, which has brought locals closer together.

Residents have actively organised regular street meetings to create plans of re-imagining their streets, as the decisions have been left to them, not council officers. They then submit their plans to an elected board of residents for a decision of approval or not. One street, Masted Road, has even started up its own newsletter, called the Masted Messenger, to keep neighbours informed of local issues.

The Bellenden Renewal Area scheme was granted funding in 1997 after Southwark identified it as an area with a considerable level of disrepair to its housing stock, with over a third of ward residents on means tested benefits. The 'renewal' scheme, designed to revitalise localities, receives around £1.6 to £1.9 million a year, and will run until 2007. There is no demolition and rebuild, like the Peckham Partnership on the other side of the High Street, but cleaning and small works.

What makes this 'renewal area' different is that when residents were informed that money had been granted to regenerate the place, and were asked how they would like it to happen, they said 'use the local artists' to design the more mundane and functional things, housing officer Roger Young told the 'News'. With an abundance of local artistic talent, often ex-Camberwell Arts School or Goldsmith's College students living or working in and around the area, there is a large pool to draw from.

So far work has centred around laying new pavement, shopfronts and homes being washed down and new walls - chosen by each particular street - have been fixed in. With six years to go and the scheme still in its early days, the most novel ideas are yet to take shape.

But some innovative schemes have already been undertaken. A space of unsightly wasteland has been done up by BBC's Charlie's Garden Army last year, and also the gates to the Centre for Wildlife Gardening and also Bellenden Primary School have been revamped with designs by its own pupils.

McDermott Grove, off McDermott Road, was turned around from being a dumping ground by gardening TV presenter Charlie Dimmock's team. Local artist Tom Phillips created the gates and much of the garden's contents were dreamed up by local school children or the locals who helped turn the ground around.

Helen Firringer, of the London Wildlife Trust's Centre for Wildlife Gardening on Marsden Road, who helped advise the residents' board on use of green spaces said: "The thing I've found really positive about McDermott Grove is the people who did the hard slog. Loads of people turned out when Charlie was there, but some people came back. They built that garden and dug it out, which was not a nice job. They kept on finding bits of china when they were digging and asked if a mural could be created. So an artist came in and did it."

The gates to Helen's centre were also completely overhauled, and re-created by metal work artist Heather Burrell, which she said she is very, very pleased with. Commenting on her advisory work with the residents' board, she said: "Right from the start what the Bellenden board was interested in was new and different ideas."

Ambitious plans are also on the book for the future of the scheme. Turner Prize winning artist Antony Gormley is creating bold letters for Masted, Bellenden, Choumert and Marsden Roads. Zandra Rhodes, who is opening up a design museum in Bermondsey Street, is helping to design a parade of shops on East Dulwich Road. And Turner Prize nominee Bill Woodrow is to revamp the old railway bridge across Bellenden Road.

Camilla Goddard, who has coordinated the artists for the scheme, says the whole aim was to keep it local. She told the 'News': "In getting them [artists] involved in doing things in the local area, it's quite a new departure for them. The board wanted functional stuff, not stand alone sculptures."

Local people wanted to use the talent of artists living in the area, but did not want free-standing pieces of modern art littering the streets. They wanted their streets to be done up, but with a twist. An example is the work about to take place above the laundromat. Currently being cleaned by contractors, the once dirty building will be adorned by a colourful artwork of a washing machine going around a cycle of clothes going around a cycle of washing machine (pictured, above).

**Picture captions:**  
 (clockwise) Paul Moss with waitress Lara; Heather Burrell in front of wildlife centre gates; the gates before planned new lighting; artist Claire Burbridge and photographer plans for above the laundromat; artist Zandra Rhodes; George Gauci.

**Picture captions:**  
 (clockwise) Jane Munro with little Harvey, baby Jasper and the Masted Messenger; Helen Firringer; Charlie Dimmock; Tom Phillips; Zandra Rhodes; Heather Burrell; Bill Woodrow; Antony Gormley.

Source: "The regeneration with the art." *Southwark News*. 5 July 2001.

The Bellenden Renewal Scheme, mentioned a few times in this study, took place between 1997 and 2007. It led to major transformation including improved housing, and transition into a successful shopping street. It is very important to note, however, that the Bellenden Road area is known for its white, middle-class residents, as previously mentioned, when compared to the

rest of the neighbourhood which is well known for its ethnic diversity. It is also very important to mention that the article does not blame the artists. The term “gentrification” was never used, while the term ‘renewal’ appeared in quotation marks each time it was linked to the scheme. This renewal scheme could be criticised for its unfairness as it did not lead to demolition nor displacement of local residents, which took place under other schemes.

A further article (Figure 5) was published on 4 April 2002 entitled, “Society fears for loss for rich history.”<sup>459</sup> The perspective of this article is different to the articles published by the guardians as it does not show state-led gentrification as positive. The article objectively details the Peckham Society’s response to Southwark Council’s proposal, revealed in November 2001, to transform the local town centre by demolishing certain parts of the street. The Peckham Society, amenity society for Peckham, encourages interest in and cares for the environment and history of Peckham and the surrounding area, makes it clear that it rejects projects that lead to the destruction of the historical identity of the area.

Figure 5- Article Found in Southwark Archives entitled “Society Fears for Loss of Rich History”

Regeneration  
 Page 47

April 4 2002 Southwark News

## Society fears for loss of rich history

**CONCERNS HAVE** been raised publicly for the first time over the council's radical plans to transform the centre of Peckham, with one local group saying the area's rich history should not be erased to be replaced with new buildings. The Peckham Society has said that plans to demolish certain parts of the high street should not go-ahead, and claims the council should instead opt for the renovation of the road's Victorian buildings. The Society, in the most recent edition of its magazine Peckham Society News, lays out its argument after a meeting to look over the plans. In an echo of the campaign to save historic Pelican House further along, in Peckham Road, John Beasley, the magazine's editor and local historian, outlined the Society's concerns to the 'News', saying the Victorian buildings which form part of the main road, if revamped, would



**CONCERNED...** Peckham Society News editor John Beasley in Peckham High Street

complement any new buildings in the council's plans. He said the renovation of the buildings, between Melon Road and Sumner Road could prove to be an attractive feature of the revamped town centre. The 'News' exclusively revealed Southwark's plans in November last year after a briefing from council officers. The Peckham Partnership had commissioned consultancy firm D1Z Pleda to produce a report into the transformation of the town centre. The proposal was radical, with the firm proposing the demolition of large swathes of the centre, including the buildings that enclose Peckham Rye station, and also several sections of the high street, which constitutes a major feature of the area. John Beasley told the 'News': "The Peckham Society applauds some of the proposals for further improving the environment in the heart of Peckham, for example, we've been campaigning for the demolition of the buildings around the train station for years. But we strongly object to the Victorian block of houses and shops in the high street, between Melon Road and Sumner Road being demolished." He highlighted some of the history of the shops, showing that Alfred Harman, who started the photographic company Ilford Ltd, started off on the corner of the high street and Peckham Hill Street. A council spokeswoman commented: "Our vision for the new town centre is just a vision. But we want to make the best of everything that's good about Peckham, not destroy it. Our relationship with the Peckham Society and other interested groups is of enormous importance to us. Their expertise and shared passion for the area will help us in our work towards a new vision for the town centre."

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Source: Anthony Phillips. "Society fears for loss of rich history." *Southwark News*. 4 April 2002.

<sup>459</sup> Anthony Phillips. "Society fears for loss of rich history." *Southwark News*, 4 April 2002.

The article says that “[t]he proposal was radical, with the firm proposing the demolition of large swathes of the centre, including the building that encloses Peckham Rye Station and also several sections of the high street, which constitutes a major feature of the area.” The article informs the readers that the project came to light in November 2001, but does not provide further details about other future projects, only informing us demolition is proposed, and discusses the Peckham Society’s news editor (and local historian) John Beasley’s opposition to the demolition of certain Victorian buildings. It further illustrates that the amenity society is not strictly opposed to demolition and has “been campaigning for the demolition of the buildings around the train station for years.” The Peckham Society strongly opposes the demolition of historical buildings, being in favour of renovation instead. The article concludes with a Council spokesman saying, “Our vision for the new town centre is just a vision. But we want to make the best of everything, not destroy it.” The article does not make its view of the project known, but objectively reports the position taken by the Peckham Society.

In 2003, *Southwark News* published an article (Figure 6) under the heading “*Report praises Peckham revamp but says the community were brought in too late to be effective.*”<sup>460</sup> The article criticises the schemes launched in Peckham by the Council for lacking involvement with the local community. The schemes referred to are the *Peckham Partnership Regeneration Schemes* that led to the building of Peckham Library and the demolition of the North Peckham Estate, the Gloucester Grove Estates and other council housing estates in Southwark.

The article examines an independent report published by Wavehill Consulting<sup>461</sup> that investigated the effects of these particular regeneration schemes on the area. It clearly states that locals were kept in the dark by the Council, stating that “[...] although the area has been transformed, together with notable improvements in education, crime and other aspects of deprivation in the area, initiatives to get the community involved were introduced too late to be effective.” According to the report, the neighbourhood witnessed radical changes, citing decreases in both unemployment and the crime rate. The report also asserts that this scheme attracted private investment. The article quotes Russell Profit, the fifth head of the project, who

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<sup>460</sup> Anthony Philips. “Report praises Peckham revamp but says the community were brought in too late to be effective.” *Southwark News*, 7 August 2003.

<sup>461</sup> Wavehill Consulting is an independent monitoring and evaluation service. It consists of a well-established professional team of researchers and specialised consultants. It provides social and economic research services across the UK.

said that “the changes in the area have made a difference to residents and their perception of Peckham”. The journalist, therefore, claims that “[h]is sights are now firmly set on bringing the tram to Peckham, and transforming Rye Lane and high street, as the ‘News’ reported last year, into the ‘new Notting Hill.’” Two decades later Peckham became ‘the new Notting Hill’ where housing prices are becoming increasingly less affordable, with council housing having drastically decreased owing to the demolished estates never having been replaced.

Figure 6 – Article Published by *Southwark News* Found in Southwark Archives

## Report praises Peckham revamp but says the community were brought in too late to be effective

**AN INDEPENDENT report investigating the effects of the massive Peckham Partnership regeneration, which saw the sprawling North Peckham Estate demolished and the creation of a world-famous library, has said that although its achievements 'are tangible', there were a number of 'key issues of concern', particularly with the council's involvement with the community.**

The report, prepared by Wavehill Consulting, has said that although the area has been transformed, together with notable improvements in education, crime and other aspects of deprivation, in the area, initiatives to get the community involved were introduced too late to be effective.

The Peckham Partnership regeneration scheme, described by the report as 'perhaps one of the most ambitious regeneration programmes ever undertaken in the UK', became more and more controversial as it progressed to its official end last year. Residents kicked up a fury in its fi-

**By Anthony Phillips**

nal few years, claiming those that had not been decanted had been left to live in 'a sea of demolition', which had left them isolated and in constant fear of becoming the victim's of crime. Those fears were compounded following the death of 10-year-old schoolboy Damilola Taylor who was found stabbed to death on a stairwell of a soon-to-be demolished block of flats on the north Peckham Estate.

The £60 million scheme, which began in 1994, was meant to last seven years. But nine years later a number of blocks of the North Peckham and Gloucester Grove estates, two of the five earmarked for demolition as part of the scheme, are still standing. Such work is not expected to end for at least another year.

But, the report said, there has been a 'substantial reduction' in the underlying rate of unemployment in the area. A dramatic drop from 26 per cent in 1994 to 4.6 per cent in 2002 has been recorded.

Looking at education, Key

Stage 2 results have improved 120 per cent since 1994. It says the 'former community of the five estates has been transformed, both in physical terms and in terms of lifestyle and aspirations of its residents'.

The scheme, the report notes, has also seen a 'substantial reduction' in certain types of crime, most notably burglary'. And also in the fear of crime, it states. There has also been success in attracting investment in Peckham town centre.

Speaking about the report last week, Russell Profitt, who was the fifth head of the project, told the 'News' that although he was confident the scheme had made a drastic change for the better in north Peckham, he would do it differently if he had a chance to do it again.

"The decanting process was difficult for families," he commented, "Over the lifetime of the partnership changes were made to try and improve the poor experiences for those who lived through it all." He added: "I would say the programme was a project of its time. These days there's much more of an

effort made to involve people more directly in the process. I would hope that if we started out again, taking into account the present set of policies about community involvement and development, we would have approached it in a different way."

The report itself states that the scheme was too 'top-down' in its approach, that there were 'poor relations between the council and community structures', and even that other council departments 'sometimes displayed a failure to share the Partnership's vision'.

But even though there were some things that he would now do differently, Profitt said that the changes in the area have made a difference to resident's and their perception of Peckham. And this is what he plans to build on he says, with the Partnership's successor, the Peckham Programme. His sights are now firmly set on bringing the tram to Peckham, and transforming Rye Lane and the high street into, as the 'News' reported last year, the 'new Notting Hill'.

*Southwark News*  
7/8/03

Source: Anthony Phillips. "Report praises Peckham revamp but says the community were brought in too late to be effective." *Southwark News*. 7 August 2003.

These articles convey community involvement in regeneration. They show that radical change is happening in the area, unemployment and the crime rate decreasing. They support private investment and begin to show an interest in Peckham but fail to acknowledge the negative impact.

To sum up, both the national and local press praise regeneration in the area. The local press provides more details about the projects, while the national press (the *Guardian* in this instance), describes the projects only superficially. Undoubtedly some articles portray Peckham positively when tackling its heritage or transformation, yet the dominant stories were bad news, especially when describing social housing. A prior study indicated media portrayal of housing estates was predominantly negative, emphasising issues the deprived environment, poor living conditions, crime and violence: “[It is] also seen that if crimes are committed by people living on the estates, even if the crimes occur elsewhere, the press are likely to use the opportunity to describe the offenders’ estates of residence in negative terms in reports of those events”.<sup>462</sup> The North Peckham Estate was portrayed negatively by both the local and national press.

With reference to the local press in particular, it is noteworthy that *The Evening Standard* ran very few articles that tackled regeneration in Peckham, perhaps owing to the fact that the area was not yet sufficiently newsworthy, nor trendy for their readers. The following sub-section will demonstrate that the *Evening Standard* focused mainly on the ‘new’ Peckham as a hotspot.

## 7.2. Trendy Peckham

There was a sudden shift in discourse as Peckham became attractive. This is seen in 2011, in some publications. This can be explained by the riots that were widespread that year. These riots originally started in Tottenham, north London as a response to the fatal shooting of a mixed-race 25-year old man by police officers.<sup>463</sup> It started peacefully and ended up in a four-day series of rioting in ethnically diverse neighbourhoods across 21 boroughs in London, and later in other cities such as Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool. In Peckham, shops on Rye Lane were targeted by some rioters, and their windows were shattered. When the riots came to an end, shop-owners provided Post-it Notes and pens, and asked passers-by to write down why they loved Peckham, then displaying the notes on Poundland’s shop windows.

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<sup>462</sup> Ade Kearns, et al. “Notorious Places: Image, Reputation, Stigma. The Role of Newspapers in Area Reputations for Social Housing Estates.” *Housing Studies*, vol. 28, no. 4, p. 15.

<sup>463</sup> Tim Newburn, et al. “Framing the 2011 England Riots: Understanding the political and policy response.” *Howard Journal of Crime and Justice*, vol. 53 n. 3, September 2018, <[http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/90171/1/Newburn\\_Framing%20the%202011%20riots\\_2018.pdf](http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/90171/1/Newburn_Framing%20the%202011%20riots_2018.pdf)> Accessed 29 November 2021.

Figure 7 – Photographs of the Peckham Peace Wall



Source: Taken by phone during my stay in Peckham 18 January 2022.



The notes were later preserved and transferred permanently to a wall next to Peckham Library, and given the name *Peckham Peace Wall* (Figure 7). Some of the notes read, “Peckham is Home,” “We all love Peckham,” “Peace”, and so on. This exercise has attracted both academic and media attention, and helped shed light on deprived communities and the area generally. The Post-it Note endeavour changed the image portrayed by both local and national press. Peckham was now perceived as a united community.

Another change was noticed in 2012 when the London Overground was extended to Peckham making it more accessible to central London, and the focus soon shifted to Peckham’s new trendy and posh image.

### 7.2.1. National Coverage

At the national level, the *Guardian* published a few articles that showcased the new, “gentrified Peckham.” One of these articles entitled, “*Let’s move to Peckham, South London: People love Peckham. And why not?*”<sup>464</sup> was published in September 2011 in response to the London riots which had taken place a month previously. According to the journalist, “[y]es, people love Peckham. And why not? True, it still has its tricky patches, fried chicken joints, and the high street ain’t all that. But it’s got another side: adorable streets and a sturdy, hard-to-faze community.”<sup>465</sup> The article states that the area has attracted trendy pop-up bars and restaurants, as well as, “the arties, and not far behind, the aspirant middle classes, not seen around these parts for some time,” also emphasising Peckham’s proximity to central London and good infrastructure, housing and schools, while “its reputation ensures it’s still pretty cheap.”

The article is divided into separate paragraphs with headings such as “Well Connected?”, “Schools”, “Hang out at...”, “Where to buy”, and “Market Values”. In the section offering tips for ‘hang out’ venues, it mentions “Frank’s terribly trendy bar,” a bar located in the multi-storey car park, a place known to attract middle and upper-middle-class clientele, and considered a sign of gentrification. In “Where to buy,” Bellenden Road is suggested: the road that underwent a series of regeneration programmes in the late 1990s and early 2000s, and where house prices

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<sup>464</sup> Tom Dyckhoff. “Let’s Move to Peckham, South London.” *The Guardian*, 23 September 2011, <[www.theguardian.com/money/2011/sep/23/lets-move-to-peckham-south-london](http://www.theguardian.com/money/2011/sep/23/lets-move-to-peckham-south-london)> Accessed on 4 December 2021

<sup>465</sup> *Ibid.*

doubled between 2000 and 2004. According to the archives of Right Move,<sup>466</sup> the UK's largest property website, a one-bedroom flat in Bellenden Road was sold for £49,000 in 1997 and was re-sold in 2001 for £109,500. By 2005 the price had almost doubled, when it was sold for £194,100. Eventually the same one-bedroom flat was sold in January 2021 for £462,500 (the price having increased ten-fold in less than 25 years). In the same archives, there is a record of a three-bedroom terraced house being sold in July 1998 for £130,000, fetching £399,950 in 2009, before realising £710,000 in November 2013. The article even predicts the future "Give it five years and it'll be like Clapham. Crime and gangs a serious problem. It's all right, but it's still just Peckham." Comparing it to Clapham, a gentrified district of south London that went through a series of regeneration programmes in the 1980s, the article anticipates Peckham becoming a fully gentrified area in the near future.

A *Guardian* food review relating to a newly-opened restaurant in Peckham was published on 13 July 2013, where Peckham, or at least Bellenden Road, was praised. The article is entitled "*Peckham Refreshment Rooms: restaurant review*"<sup>467</sup> and was written by a restaurant critic and feature writer who describes, "the food, the service and atmosphere at this new Peckham diner is as buzzy and colourful as the neighbourhood." The article gives the restaurant's address, and the price for dinner for two: £70, with wine included.

The restaurant is located at the entrance to Bellenden Village. The article describes its location in these terms: "if you approach this restaurant from the west you might dismiss it as merely a part of the gentrified corner of Peckham through which you pass to get there. It is known rather cutely as Bellenden Village, a term which makes some locals roll their eyes." Gentrification is acknowledged and the term 'gentrified' is used once, not negatively but to indicate some level of polarisation: the fact that some 'locals roll their eyes' when the area is referred to as a village confirms this idea: Bellenden Road was the first part of Peckham to be gentrified, and the description above is indicative of local fragmentation.

The article further focuses on such polarisation, and shows two sides to Peckham:

However, carry on west from the door of the Peckham Refreshment Rooms – named after a local hostelry, now long gone – and you quickly realise you aren't in some gussied-up version of Peckham but in the

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<sup>466</sup> "House Prices in Bellenden Road." *Rightmove*, <[www.rightmove.co.uk/house-prices/se15/bellenden-road.html?country=england&referrer=landingPage&searchLocation=Bellenden%2BRoad](http://www.rightmove.co.uk/house-prices/se15/bellenden-road.html?country=england&referrer=landingPage&searchLocation=Bellenden%2BRoad)> Accessed on 4 December 2021.

<sup>467</sup> Jay Rayner. "Peckham Refreshment Rooms: Restaurant ReviewJ." *The Guardian*, 7 July 2013, <<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2013/jul/07/peckham-refreshment-rooms-jay-rayner>> Accessed on 13 December 2021.

real thing. Here are rows of Afro-Caribbean hairdressers bubbling with laughter and the ricochet and crack of gossip. Beyond that is Rye Lane. It's a vivid, scuffed place of saturated colours where normal everyday life is a spectator sport.

The article also acknowledges “other” ungentrified part of the area and explains:

The point? This is a good restaurant *where you would least expect to find it*. The fact that it is here is proof both that the no-go areas for good taste are in retreat, and that in the patchwork quilt of London, poverty and surplus can sit side by side. It just needs to be unshowy, which this place is. [Italics mine.]

The journalist highlights this form of polarisation, indicating that it is part of the new local identity, but does not demonstrate the impact of the process on the area. The remainder of the article focuses on the restaurant's cuisine, which is “French”, “Italian”, and “Spanish”, making it mainly “modern English.” Examples of dishes are given including Bourgogne snails described thus, “Snails and their ponds of melted butter are what that sourdough was destined for [...]” and Steak bavette, “Which rewards those who look after their teeth, is served with a roasted marrowbone, the contents of which have been mixed with heavy-duty breadcrumbs and butter,” or the Duck confit that “Has crisp skin and has been cooked by someone who knows that the only thing it understands is serious heat”, while not forgetting that the wine list “is admirably concise” The food is described as exquisite, yet explicitly for the middle and upper-middle classes. Even the ungentrified part of the neighbourhood was represented as attractively exotic. The Peckham Refreshment Rooms illustrates an example of many independent restaurants and shops that have opened locally over the last decade, but which only attract new clienteles which do not necessarily belong in the area.

*The Guardian* devoted further articles to reviewing restaurants and bars in the area. One such example, published in 2014 by the same journalist as above (who acknowledges that he lives in Bellenden Village), covers another newly-opened restaurant in the area, and says:

It's not my fault my neighbourhood happens right now to be where some of the most interesting restaurants in Britain are opening. It's not my fault they're leading the way. It just happens to be so. If I could find places like Artusi in Leicester or Droitwich or Nuneaton I would holler about it from the rooftops. But I can't. Artusi is in Peckham. Near where I live. Deal with it.

The article is called “Artusi: Restaurant Review.”<sup>468</sup> It displays a menu that does not target the working-class locals, and its modern cuisine presented by its chef. In 2015, “My 50 favourite UK restaurants”<sup>469</sup> was published by another restaurant critique in the *Guardian*, included Ganapati, a “[s]mall, vibrantly coloured restaurant with a vaguely urban-hippy vibe was an early beacon in Peckham’s burgeoning status as a destination for food-lovers”. The restaurant, known for its south Indian cuisine, is located in Holly Grove, Bellenden Village. In 2016, “Top ten craft beer pubs in South London”<sup>470</sup> was published, identifying Beer Rebellion Peckham, located on Queen’s Road close to Queen’s Road Peckham Overground station and, “[b]ased in a converted Victorian slaughterhouse in Penge, Late Knights brewery only launched in 2013 but it has rapidly established itself as one of south London’s most dynamic craft beer evangelists.” So, the *Guardian* mainly focused on what the neighbourhood can offer in terms of culinary experiences. The spotlight on these new establishments highlights Peckham’s transformation into a hub for food and beverage enthusiasts.

### 7.2.2. Local Coverage

Peckham also attracted attention from the local press, being described as the new “hotspot”. In 2013 after the arrival of the Overground, *The Evening Standard* published an article entitled “*Peckhamania: out on the town in London’s newest hotspot.*”<sup>471</sup> The article begins, “[t]he South London neighbourhood is fast becoming a bohemian hotspot, buzzing with go-to galleries, rooftop bars and foodie night markets that make East London look positively parochial.” The journalist, looking for the next coolest place, discovers that Peckham, despite its reputation, is becoming trendy. He quotes the founder of the Bussey Building, Mickey Smith, who declares that “[...] the common perception [of the neighbourhood] was that visitors would be stabbed or robbed, which wasn’t true, but was the impression the media gave out. For the rest of the

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<sup>468</sup> Jay Rayner. “Artusi: Restaurant Review .” *The Guardian*, 4 May 2014, <<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2014/may/04/artusi-peckham-restaurant-reviews-jay-rayner>> Accessed on 20 December 2021.

<sup>469</sup> Marina O’Loughlin. “My 50 Favourite UK Restaurants.” *The Guardian*, 24 Octobre 2015, <<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2015/oct/24/marina-oloughlin-top-50-uk-restaurants>> Accessed on 20 December 2021.

<sup>470</sup> Tony Naylor. “Top 10 Craft Beer Pubs in South London.” *The Guardian*, 17 Feb. 2016, <<https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2016/feb/17/top-10-craft-beer-pubs-in-south-london>> Accessed on 20 December 2021.

<sup>471</sup> Clive Martin. “Peckhamania: Out on the Town in London’s Newest Hotspot.” *London Evening Standard | Evening Standard*, Evening Standard, 2 August 2013, <[www.standard.co.uk/lifestyle/esmagazine/peckhamania-out-on-the-town-in-london-s-newest-hotspot-8739833.html](http://www.standard.co.uk/lifestyle/esmagazine/peckhamania-out-on-the-town-in-london-s-newest-hotspot-8739833.html)> Accessed on 20 December 2021.

country, it was *Only Fools and Horses*.<sup>472</sup> [italics not mine] The article also highlights the importance of community, inexpensive Victorian houses, and new changes in the area: classy bars, the prize-winning library, a fancy bookshop, and art galleries...etc. The article invites the reader to visit these places: the rooftop bar Frank's Café, Kerb (a new concept of street food market that was based in King's Cross and moved to Peckham), Bar Story...etc. These places represent one of the signs of gentrification having taken place (expanded on in another chapter).

The article focuses on art and how it became rooted in the area. For example, Frank's café emerged from an artistic initiative co-funded by Hannah Barry, the founder of Hannah Barry Gallery that was established in 2007 in Peckham. It uses specific terms such as 'bohemian', 'culture', 'filming', 'band', 'gig', 'gallery', and 'art' (the last two terms were each used on three occasions) in order to emphasise the new artistic and trendy side of Peckham. The article also updates the area's reputation, announcing that "[r]ather than a drink- and drugs-fuelled scene, it's a kind of anti-retirement home: a place designed to spur you back into life, a creative utopia not unlike the one thought up by the evil dreamer Bobby Crawford in JG Ballard's *Cocaine Nights*". The journalist uses specific vocabulary linked to crime to describe the area, but as wordplay and with irony. Again, "[...] Kerb, the street-food collective based in King's Cross that has decided to cross the river for the evening, bringing with it an *arsenal of sensory assault weapons* including Taiwanese pulled pork buns, moreish burritos and exotic sorbets" [Italics mine].

The purpose of using language in this way is to make readers think of Peckham's earlier reputation, and what it was actually like now. According to the journalist, Peckham has changed for the better, and worth checking out as the "new promised land", also admitting that, "Peckham is on a fearsome ascent" while describing contrasts between classy places "and gangs of kids on bikes, payday-loan shops and bouncers wearing stab vests." He concludes by mentioning, "everybody's favourite sociological buzzword right now: *gentrification*" [italics not mine]. Using the term 'gentrification' twice in the article, the writer explains that there are two separate Peckhams: the authentic, and Bellenden Road (which became the road with the highest house prices in the area). Tackling gentrification, while citing the co-owner and DJ of the Bussey building, the interviewee mentions Eileen Conn – activist, founder and co-ordinator of *Peckham Vision* (local citizens' action group) and activist member of *Just Space* (community

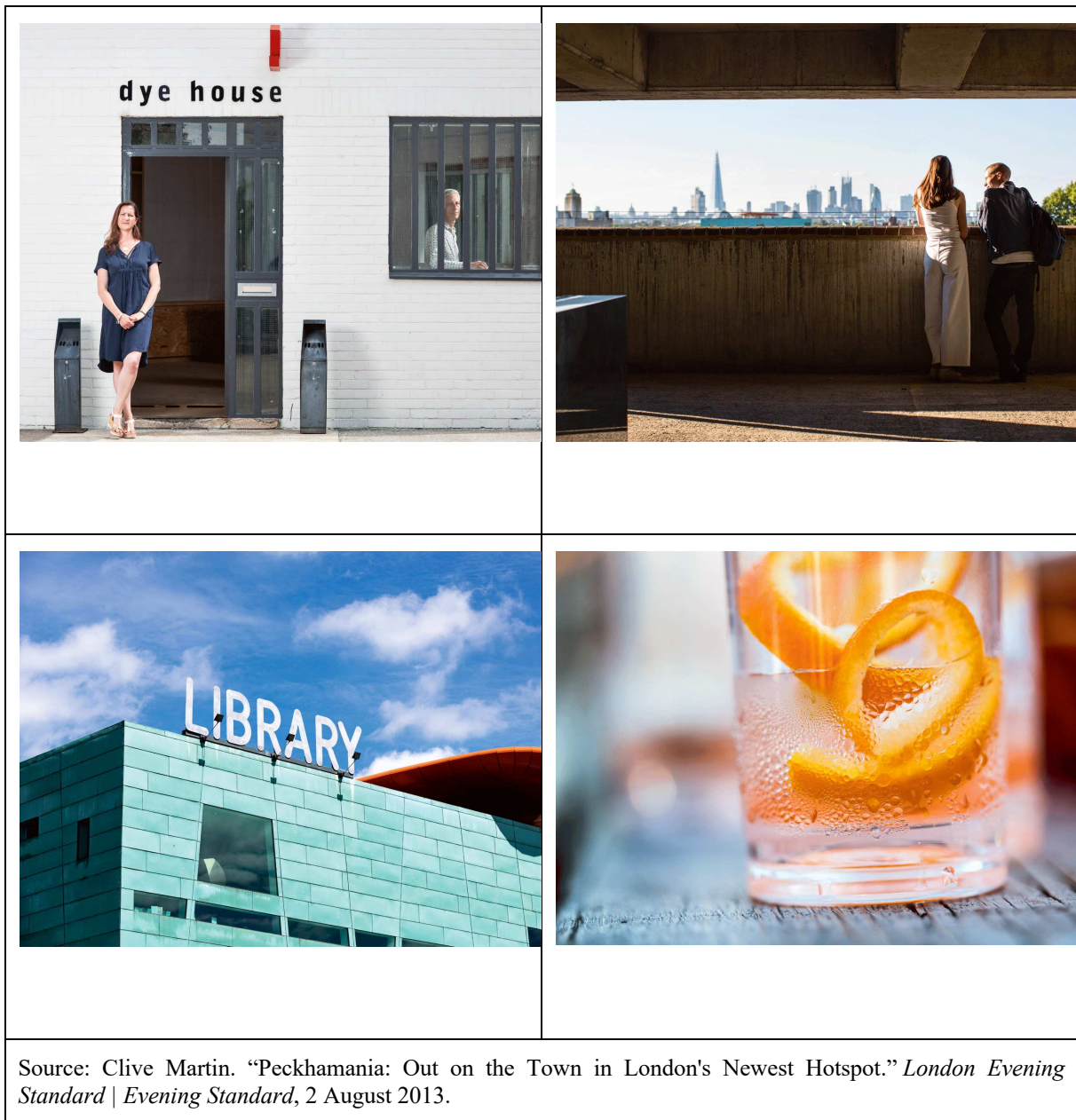
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<sup>472</sup> *Only Fools and Horses* is a British television sitcom podcast on BBC One and set in middle-class Peckham.

network on planning and regeneration) – as a community figure, known for opposing council attempts, making him think that Peckham “has a chance” of avoiding total gentrification.

**Figure 8 – Photographs from - “Peckhamania: Out on the Town in London’s Newest Hotspot.”**





Source: Clive Martin. “Peckhamania: Out on the Town in London's Newest Hotspot.” *London Evening Standard* | *Evening Standard*, 2 August 2013.

To grab the attention of its readers, the article used eight photographs (Figure 8) taken around Peckham (including the library, PeckhamPlex, *The Dye House* gallery), but these images fail to illustrate the diversity and unique identity of the area, instead depicting areas known for having been gentrified and, nonetheless, where the working class is settled.

The *Evening Standard* has also published restaurant and bar reviews showing how trendy Peckham is becoming, including a 2013 review<sup>473</sup> of *Peckham Springs*, newly opened and situated close to Rye Lane. The article is short but describes the venue and menu very well. It starts by explaining the buzz:

Part-gallery, part-bar, you'll find Peckham Springs — yes, the name is inspired by Del Boy's infamous back garden water business — in the shadow of Peckham Rye Station, under the arches by Bar Story. It started as a summer pop-up but is now staying open all year round on Fridays and Saturdays.

The article highlights the refined cocktail list, emphasising the bar's modern and artistic atmosphere. It advises its readers that Peckham Springs is suitable for “pre-drinking with a cool, *arty crowd* before heading on to Peckham hangout the Bussey Building” [italics mine] thereby emphasising the artistic side of the area.

Peckham Bazaar, “London's latest hip foodie hub serves up another winner with the best Greek food in town,”<sup>474</sup> was another restaurant reviewed by the *Evening Standard*. Established in 2014, the restaurant attracted press attention with its savoury Mediterranean menu and exotic décor. Phrases such as “the food has zip”, “there is verve and seasoning knocking on palate's door”, “a heap of shiny pomegranate seeds,” “Serbian vegetable caviar”, and “accrued decor of a Greek village taverna” were used. The clientele was described as “young, presumably local, looking less tight-lipped and furtive than their peers in Hackney and Shoreditch. They know they are in the right place.”

Several trendy restaurants newly opened in the area were reviewed by the *Evening Standard* during the years to emphasise on their authenticity and to show what Peckham can offer to their audience.

*Southwark News* has published a very limited number of 17 articles over the last decade that addressed or reviewed specific places in the area. The topics dealt with included specific events, future council planning, and criminality in the area, yet, no article reviewing trendy places was found. This can be explained by the fact that *Southwark News* and the *Evening Standard* do not target the same readers.

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<sup>473</sup> Kate Lough. “Peckham Springs - Bar Review.” *Evening Standard*, 20 February 2014, <<https://www.standard.co.uk/reveller/bars/peckham-springs-bar-review-8884363.html>> Accessed 12 December 2021.

<sup>474</sup> Fay Maschler. “Peckham Bazaar - Restaurant Review.” *Evening Standard*, 9 February 2015, <<https://www.standard.co.uk/reveller/restaurants/peckham-bazaar-restaurant-review-8951717.html>> Accessed on 12 December 2021.



*The Peckham Peculiar*, meanwhile, also played a role in publicising trendy spots and newly opened bars and restaurants such as *El Segundo*<sup>475</sup>, a fancy Spanish restaurant, *Pedler Good Fortune*,<sup>476</sup> an “Instagram-able” restaurant opened in 2015, *Miss District*, a Mediterranean speciality restaurant, as well as many others.

There has been a clear shift in discourse. Peckham, or at least the gentrified part, was highlighted by the press. However, it is noteworthy that the articles that tackled or reviewed restaurants and bars rarely mentioned gentrification, except as a tool used to attract gentrifiers.

### 7.3. Acknowledging gentrification?

Even though the term ‘gentrification’ was coined in the mid-1960s to describe the process of middle class or affluent people moving into working-class neighbourhoods, often resulting in the displacement of the original residents, it only began to be widely used in the media and academic literature in the 1970s and 1980s. At the mediatic level, the term was presented through different perspectives and its meaning changed over time, and in relation to their depictions of residents and gentrification stages.<sup>477</sup> For instance, ‘regeneration’ and similar terms were used instead of gentrification to describe urban and social changes. Some articles would present it as a solution to economic and social problems. Other articles when addressing the process are mainly informative and descriptive. Resistance to the process, however, is less frequently mentioned. According to a study on gentrification resistance and mobilisation, the press does not publicise resistance to gentrification unless it is part of a mobilisation.<sup>478</sup> Yet, a shift in discourse has been perceived. Some articles would acknowledge the process and its negative aftermath on neighbourhoods.

In relation to Peckham, a similar discourse-shift by the press is perceived as it acknowledges that Peckham is undergoing gentrification. A number of articles, from both the local and national press, identify the area as gentrified and highlight urban changes. Peckham is used as

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<sup>475</sup> “Straight out of Seville.” *The Peckham Peculiar*, 9 May 2017, <<https://peckhampeculiar.tumblr.com/post/160473444306/straight-out-of-seville>> Accessed on 12 December 2021.

<sup>476</sup> “Exclusive: New Dining Destination for Queen's Road.” *The Peckham Peculiar*, 6 July 2015, <<https://peckhampeculiar.tumblr.com/post/123366630484/exclusive-new-dining-destination-for-queens-road>> Accessed on 12 December 2021.

<sup>477</sup> Japonica Brown-Saracino and Cesraea Rumpf. "Diverse imageries of gentrification: Evidence from newspaper coverage in seven US cities, 1986–2006." *Journal of Urban Affairs*, vol. 33, no. 3, 2011.

<sup>478</sup> Marie-Pierre Vincent. « Les résistances à la gentrification et leurs représentations dans le quartier de Hoxton/Shoreditch à Londres de 2008 à 2019 ». *Diss. Sorbonne Université*, November 2021. p. 324.

an example, comparing it with other gentrified neighbourhoods. However, only a limited number of articles published by the national press tackle gentrification, particularly in Peckham.

### 7.3.1. National Coverage

Even though press coverage of the gentrification process has increased in the last decade to describe gentrified areas, only a few articles mention gentrification in Peckham. A simple search of both key terms ‘Peckham’ and ‘gentrification’ in *The Guardian* search database, return 27 articles in the last decade of which more than half (15) mention Peckham as an example. They mention the neighbourhood once to form a comparison by tackling its rapid urban changes or they only include a photo taken from the neighbourhood when tackling gentrification. They were, therefore, considered irrelevant as they didn’t tackle the topic directly.

For instance, “*Let’s move to: Moseley, Birmingham*”<sup>479</sup> is an article that tackle gentrification in different places with Peckham used as an example among other gentrified neighbourhoods. The article was published in November 2013 and showcases the next new trendy place, Moseley, a Birmingham suburb where housing is still affordable and mentions Peckham for house price comparison purposes: “Moseley, where you can buy a *huuuuuuge* Arts and Crafts pile for the price of a three-bed terrace in Peckham.” It further adds “[t]he homes are works of art and, unlike that three-bed terrace in Peckham (no disrespect), worth every penny. Until the oligarchs arrive” – acknowledging that with the arrival of “the obligarchs” (or the upper classes) the area will become less affordable.

As food culture is indicative of demographic and economic transformation and a sign of gentrification, Peckham – with its trendy new food culture – was used as an example in various different articles. “*The caffeine curse: why coffee shops have always signalled urban change*,”<sup>480</sup> an article published on 6 April 2016, reviews the role played by coffee shops in the gentrification process:

[...] as the coffee shop has become a byword for what everyone hates about urban change and

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<sup>479</sup> Tom Dyckhoff. “Let’s Move to: Moseley, Birmingham.” *The Guardian*, 29 Nov. 2013, <<https://www.theguardian.com/money/2013/nov/29/lets-move-moseley-birmingham-property>> Accessed on 12 December 2021.

<sup>480</sup> Rosie Spinks. “The Caffeine Curse: Why Coffee Shops Have Always Signalled Urban Change.” *The Guardian*, 8 April 2016, <<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2016/apr/08/coffee-shops-gentrification-urban-change>> Accessed on 12 December, 2021.

gentrification – first come the creatives and their coffee shops, then the young professionals, then the luxury high-rises and corporate chains that push out original residents – it’s worth asking if that charge is fair.

It examines renovated coffee shop, the *Proud East*, in Kingsland Road, Hackney, and its impact on the neighbourhood, but also details the perspective of a coffee historian on the emergence of these new coffee shops. The article explains the historical origin of coffee shops in Europe and London, and references a study by a blogger and a scientific team that shows new ‘up and coming’ places according to the density of coffee shops, and “Peckham [came as] the rapidly gentrifying south London neighbourhood.”

“Let’s get our gentrification story straight”<sup>481</sup> is another article, published in October 2016, that scrutinises the process, yet questions its credibility. The article starts with:

Are we quite sure we’re against gentrification, the urban phenomenon routinely blamed for everything held to be destroying London’s soul, from high housing costs, to corporatised shopping streets, to the pricing out of artists and other creative folk, to the alleged “social cleansing” of the poor? Do we absolutely know that gentrification is to blame for such bad things? Do we really know what we mean by the word?

The journalist further defines the term and provides its context in London:

Gentrification in London is not new. It has been going on for decades, beginning in the 1960s when bits of the dirty old post-war city began to swing and adventurous young architects started doing up dirt cheap Georgian squares. By the early-1980s, Alexei Sayle had a joke about entire streets in Stoke Newington falling down because all the middle-class people who’d bought terraced houses there chose the same weekend to knock their front and back rooms into one.

The article provides Peckham as one of the areas that no one thought would change, yet is now going through gentrification. The article questions the reality behind the process and its negative impact: “[t]here are good arguments that gentrified areas meet poor people’s needs less well, as shops become posher and more niche. But there are also good ones for saying that they benefit from middle-class pressure for better schools and public spaces.” The journalist

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<sup>481</sup> Dave Hill. “Let’s Get Our Gentrification Story Straight.” *The Guardian*, 24 October 2016 <<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/davehillblog/2016/oct/24/lets-get-our-gentrification-story-straight>> Accessed on 12 December 2021.

insists on showing the positive impact of gentrification on London. The capital that was bombed during the war and was in decline for decades is now being “revitalised.”

Dave Hill, journalist for *the Guardian* on several topics, but mainly urban transformations in the capital, mocks the belief that the poor population is being pushed out and provides data showing that social housing still exists in different boroughs of the capital: “[i]n Camden, 35% of all housing is for social rent, in Islington it’s 42% and in Hackney, 44%. Although poverty rates have fallen in those boroughs, the absolute numbers of poor people living in them remain high.” The article admits that the capital and poor neighbourhoods are undergoing gentrification, but that this has resulted in a positive economic impact, and that gentrification should not be linked to displacement. Peckham was mentioned briefly.

Numerous articles briefly mention the term gentrification, without explanation, even when examining Peckham specifically. For example, “*Cine-files: PeckhamPlex, London: One of London’s few independent multiplexes*”<sup>482</sup>, an article published in June 2013 by a blogger writing about PeckhamPlex as “An unlovely but lively London neighbourhood still struggling to shake off its unmerited reputation as a hive of gang violence and the home of Del Boy Trotter.” The blogger acknowledges that the area is undergoing gentrification, yet does not provide any further detail. It explains that it is vibrant yet still unpleasant and has a bad reputation.

Art in Peckham was one the most referenced topics in the *Guardian*, found in seven of the 27 articles referred to above. These articles address art in Peckham, valuing its importance in the area, yet gentrification was mentioned only in terms of describing the neighbourhood. Most of these articles contain interviews with artists who grew up in the area, or currently live in Peckham.

There is, however, one interesting article published by the *Guardian* in 2013 that attempted to understand the link between art and gentrification in the neighbourhood, entitled “*Is Art to Blame for Gentrification?*”<sup>483</sup> It focuses on the recent changes to the neighbourhood and how art culture is becoming part of the area. The article is very direct and tackles the topic of

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<sup>482</sup> John Nugent. “Cine-Files: Peckhamplex, London.” *The Guardian*, 11 June 2013, <<https://www.theguardian.com/film/filmblog/2013/jun/11/cine-files-peckhamplex>> Accessed on 13 December 2021.

<sup>483</sup> Matt Bolton. “Is Art to Blame for Gentrification? | Matt Bolton.” *The Guardian*, 30 August 2013, <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/aug/30/art-blame-gentrification-peckham>> Accessed on 12 December 2021.

gentrification in Peckham precisely. It starts with the example of the Peckham multi-storey car park, “A sky-high contemporary gallery in one of London’s poorest districts, packed each evening with painfully well-dressed young white people supping Campari bitters, who gaze down upon the streets of pound shops, mobile phone stalls and cheap clothes stores below.” The article makes reference to another article published by *The Evening Standard* “Pekhamania: Out of the town London’s hotspot,”<sup>484</sup> previously analysed in this chapter. It criticises the *Evening Standard’s* article on a number of levels. First, the article failed to acknowledge the area’s diversity: “[n]ot one black or brown person was featured, despite Peckham being one of the most ethnically diverse areas in Britain”. Second, it glorifies art and welcomes Peckham as the new home for white middle-class artists.

The *Guardian* article discusses the link between gentrification and art, wondering clearly: “is art itself to blame? If so, can the trend be broken?” It explains that since the emergence of artists in a poor neighbourhood (such as Peckham), house prices have been rising rapidly, and new trendy places have become widespread, leading to gentrified neighbourhoods and cities. The freelance journalist, who mainly writes about art, adds quotation marks to “regeneration,” indicating his doubts about real regeneration taking place, and how the term is used to replace “gentrification.” He further provides the historical definition of the term gentrification and cites Ruth Glass, the sociologist who coined the term in 1964, and also the Marxist geographer Neil Smith, and his rent gap theory, and defines it as:

[T]he differences between the current ground rent, and what rent the land could potentially yield if it was put to a “better” (more profitable) use. Gentrification takes place, therefore, once the rent gap has grown so big that developers can buy and do up property, pay interest on loans, and still sell the redeveloped property to a “better” user for a profit.

He explains how the new hipster lifestyle is not only affecting popular neighbourhoods in transition, but also the impact of capital’s search for profit. In the case of the UK, and the post-war era, he emphasises the fact that Smith acknowledges art as a major factor, and points out the link between art and capital:

Here we see the first indication of complicity between art and capital. The disdain that “aesthetically minded” people have towards commodified spaces – shopping and eating in “authentic” boutiques and

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<sup>484</sup> Clive Martin. “Peckhamania: Out on the Town in London’s Newest Hotspot.” *Evening Standard*, Evening Standard, 2 Aug. 2013, <<https://www.standard.co.uk/esmagazine/peckhamania-out-on-the-town-in-london-s-newest-hotspot-8739833.html>> Accessed on 12 December 2021.

cafes rather than the crass commercialisation of a Westfield – extends to living spaces too. Middle-class kids who reject the conservatism of the suburbs are drawn to urban areas with “just the right amount of danger” for “meaningful” experiences [...]. This cultural revalorisation thus chimes with capital’s own drive to revalorise “unproductive” spaces.

In summary, artists, while valorising “authentic” spaces, attract business and services that are more convenient to the artistic lifestyle, and in keeping with artists’ consumption, thus, participating in gentrification.

The journalist also references New York City and the American writer Sharon Zukin and her book *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change*,<sup>485</sup> where the emergence of a post-Fordist economy,<sup>486</sup> “a creative economy,” was explained as essential to adapt to this new lifestyle. Another book referred to was *The Rise of the Creative Class*<sup>487</sup> by Richard Florida who argued that the economy is no longer based on industrial production but rather on “creative” production, more suitable for this “creative class.” The journalist explains that “Florida’s suggestion for a suitably creative environment sounds a lot like the *new Peckham* celebrated by the *Evening Standard*: ‘A teeming blend of cafes, side walk musicians, and small galleries and bistros.’” [italics mine]

To further explain the emergence of this creative class in the UK, the journalist examines the link between the New Labour Party and this new class, and therefore its involvement in the process of gentrification:

It was, therefore, no surprise that *culture*-based attempts at state-sponsored gentrification popped up everywhere during the 90s and pre-crash noughties. “Cultural quarters”, “flagship galleries” and huge public works of art appeared everywhere from Gateshead to Margate, each replete with the promise of social inclusion, regeneration and the arrival of those economy-saving creatives.

In the mid-1990s, under Tony Blair, the Labour Party became New Labour with new ideals such as social inclusion and regeneration (further developed in Chapter 1) that were more compatible with this new lifestyle and post-Fordist economy, and emerged to suit the new middle class (artists, but also the managerial class) as “[t]he line between “the artist” and that

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<sup>485</sup> Sharon Zukin. *Loft living: Culture and capital in urban change*. Rutgers University Press, 1989.

<sup>486</sup> Post-Fordist economy is the dominant system of economic production and consumption in advanced industrial societies. It explains the evolution of workforce (flexibility, multi-tasking, co-responsibility...etc.) It characterised by a wide diversity of consumer choice.

<sup>487</sup> Richard Florida. *The Rise of the Creative Class*. Basic Books, 2002.

post-Fordist ideological hero, the entrepreneur, is so slim as to be virtually invisible.” The journalist, therefore, posits that artists are a perfect model of the post-Fordist worker, and thus play an essential role in gentrification. He concludes, however, that it is difficult to criticise artists as they play a “heroic” role in society, since some artists have been anti-eviction activists. This will be further developed in chapter seven tackling resistance in the neighbourhood.

To sum up, this four-page article is not only descriptive, but also informative and instructional. It provides a clear definition of the gentrification process, a brief literary review, and a political context for the UK. It is one of the few *Guardian* articles that tackle gentrification in Peckham and is very detailed. As mentioned already, Peckham and art in Peckham are glorified in the press. In the *Guardian*, articles tackling gentrification are very limited, and only a few acknowledge that the neighbourhood has been gentrified.

In 2015 the *Guardian* published an article entitled “Which London neighbourhoods will disappear next?”<sup>488</sup> This article addresses unique and authentic neighbourhoods which are being threatened owing to their ethnic communities having been dispersed outside of the capital: “How long will Green Lanes remain a Turkish centre, Peckham a Nigerian expat community, or even New Malden a Korean hotspot?” These communities are being priced out owing to gentrification.

In December 2016, *the Guardian* published another article where it officially acknowledges that Peckham is gentrified. Entitled “*The Victoria Inn, Peckham Rye, London: hotel review*”<sup>489</sup>, the article begins, “*Gentrified Peckham Rye now has a pub with rooms to match. And the food’s pretty high-end, too*” [italics mine]. The article describes a few trendy places in the area:

There are spots in Peckham where you could almost believe you’re in an upmarket English town, rather than deep in south London. The Victoria is in one such spot: a handsome inn, which first opened in 1878 on a corner of Bellenden Road, a terrace shared with a cluster of indie businesses, such as trendy deli The General Store and butcher Flock & Herd. On Sunday mornings, when Peckham Farmers’ Market is in full swing, the illusion is complete.

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<sup>488</sup> Tom Bolton. “Which London neighbourhood will disappear next?” *The Guardian*, 24 June 2015, <<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/jun/24/which-london-neighbourhoods-will-disappear-next>> Accessed 12 December 2021.

<sup>489</sup> Will Coldwell. “The Victoria Inn, Peckham Rye, London: Hotel Review.” *The Guardian*, 4 December 2016, <<https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2016/dec/04/victoria-inn-pub-peckham-london-hotel-review>> Accessed 12 December 2021.

The short article reviews *The Victoria Inn*, a small hotel dating to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and admires its historical architecture, also describing the refurbishment that the inn underwent to become a “modern, upmarket” building, with a vintage touch. The journalist confirms that the menu is not “the average gastropub” but very fancy and gastronomic, next to a well selected wine and extravagant beer collection. The article goes on to mention other places the area has to offer such as the Italian restaurant Artusi (where a booking is needed to get a table) Bar Story, the South London Gallery (located in Peckham Road), Rye Wax (shop selling records and graphic novels), and of course the famous Frank’s Café. In this article Peckham is acknowledged as gentrified but it is worth mentioning that the article never acknowledges the negative impacts of gentrification, nor how this upmarket inn will participate in the process. It only confirms that Peckham is gentrified, and glorifies the Victoria Inn along with other places in the neighbourhood.

To conclude, the *Guardian* has started to cover gentrification in different areas over the last decade. In relation to Peckham, it acknowledges that the area is going through gentrification. Yet there is no real focus on gentrification in Peckham, and no title mentions both “Peckham” and “gentrification”. Besides, only a few articles examine the negative impact of gentrification.

### 7.3.2. Local Coverage

At a local level, some differences are seen. For example, in contrast to the *Guardian*’s coverage, the term gentrification was occasionally used in article titles appearing in the local press. Other articles mention some form of resistance. The *Evening Standard*, for example, published a number of limited articles that mention both Peckham and gentrification between 2012 and 2017. One of the first articles that mentions both terms is “*Peckham High Street given £1.7m cash for overhaul*”<sup>490</sup>. This article was published in August 2014 and links regeneration to gentrification announcing that, “[t]he gentrification of Peckham is set to gather pace over the next five years — starting with £1.7 million cash injection to overhaul the town centre.” The article explains that the National Lottery Fund is granting Peckham funds to restore historical facades “to their former glory”. The journalist quotes both Mark Williams, a cabinet member for planning and regeneration at Southwark Council, and Sue Bowers, head of the Heritage

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<sup>490</sup> Josh Pettitt. “Peckham High Street given £1.7m Cash for Overhaul.” *Evening Standard*, 8 August 2014, <<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/peckham-high-street-given-ps1-7m-cash-for-overhaul-9656111.html>> Accessed 12 December 2021.



Lottery fund, who admit that the neighbourhood is in need of revitalisation to make it, “more attractive to live, visit and invest in, it also provides jobs and training opportunities for local people.” The article concludes by quoting three locals: the owners of a bridal wear boutique, a flower shop, and bicycle repair shop. The first two locals believe that aesthetics is lacking in their neighbourhood, and regeneration will be a good opportunity. The third one believes that, “most people who come into Peckham get what they want and leave. It’s not somewhere people stay around. What this place needs is more money spent on housing.” In this article the word gentrification is used interchangeably with regeneration, the term used to denote that Peckham is being gentrified, and going through regeneration schemes to enhance the area. However, it does not explain the impact of this process on housing prices, nor the displacement of some locals.

Other articles, that mentioned both terms, like those in the *Guardian*, reviewed events or places, and gentrification was sometimes mentioned to identify the neighbourhood and at other times events were linked to the term, such as in the short article “*Peckham: The Soap Opera, Royal Court upstairs – Theatre review.*”<sup>491</sup> It reviews the soap opera that highlights the struggles of locals facing gentrification, summarised as:

[...] ten episodes of roughly eight minutes each, *Peckham: The Soap Opera* wears its heart on its sleeve. All the performers are volunteers ‘from the Peckham area’ (which I suppose means they could be from Nunhead or New Cross). Their committed if not always polished work has been marshalled by director Ola Animashawun.

The review provides some of the details about the performers, director and the topics dealt with during the episodes. Finally, the journalist concludes that even though the performance was not at its best, the show was enjoyable. The opera will be further explained in details in chapter eight as part of form of resistance.

As mentioned previously, the number of articles that mention both terms “gentrification” and “Peckham” in the title is very limited. Only one article, published by *the Evening Standard* was found during research. The article, entitled “*New images show how development at centre of*

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<sup>491</sup> “Peckham: The Soap Opera, Royal Court Upstairs - Theatre Review.” *Evening Standard*, 4 September 2013, <<https://www.standard.co.uk/culture/theatre/peckham-the-soap-opera-royal-court-upstairs-theatre-review-8797303.html>> Accessed 12 December 2021.

*Peckham gentrification row is due to look*<sup>492</sup> was published in July 2017. It came as a response to the locals' mobilisation to the Aylesham Centre Site Scheme. In 2016 Southwark Council announced the Aylesham Centre development scheme that would lead to the demolition of the shopping centre, to be replaced by apartment blocks. The article writes about the images that were published and show "plans for a redevelopment in south London that campaigners *claim* could block views from trendy rooftop hangout Frank's Café" [italics mine].

The journalist criticises some of the locals' reactions for basing their beliefs on a claim, and that "[p]roposals have also been put forward for flats and affordable housing above the development – which has previously sparked a row over concerns it would block panoramic views from Peckham's trendy rooftop bar Frank's". The article provides an image of the future scheme showing the location of future shops, open spaces, Morrison's supermarket, business spaces and community facilities. The image provided does not depict the future apartment blocks, focusing instead on favourable options and addition to the neighbourhood. The article also shows that locals are being involved in the scheme as, "consultation, which opened to residents on Wednesday, showed plans for more independent retailers, a high street and underground parking to replace the current shopping centre off Rye Lane." This scheme has been showed in the *Southwark News*, on the other hand, published several articles tackling gentrification in the area covering several regeneration schemes – mainly campaigns that attempted to resist the process. For example, a few articles were published concerning campaigns against the PeckhamPlex rooftop project. In 2015, it published an article entitled, "Campaign to save Peckham's rooftop views gains support,"<sup>493</sup> which announced that the petition signed by 4,500 individuals led to Southwark Council changing its mind about demolishing the building and replacing it with apartment blocks. Other articles covered the Aylesham Centre redevelopment and the public's responses to it. For example, in 2016, *Southwark News* published "*Demolishing the Aylesham Centre for flats would mean 'no more*

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<sup>492</sup> Fiona Simpson. "New Images Show How Development at Centre of Peckham Gentrification Row Is Due to Look." *The Evening Standard*. 13 July 2017, <<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/new-images-show-how-development-at-centre-of-frank-s-gentrification-row-is-due-to-look-a3586456.html>> Accessed 12 December 2021.

<sup>493</sup> "Campaign to Save Peckham's Rooftop Views Gains Support." *Southwark News*, 25 February 2015, <<https://www.southwarknews.co.uk/comment/campaign-to-save-peckhams-rooftop-views-gains-support/>> Accessed 12 December 2021.

Peckham”<sup>494</sup>, and “*Block of thousand flats planned for Peckham Town centre.*”<sup>495</sup> Both articles share the locals’ reactions to the news that the shopping centre was to be demolished. Even though this local press outlet did not use the term ‘gentrification’ in its articles, it covered more stories containing the testimonies of local residents and their views on the urban changes and schemes, and included locals of different ethnicities. It was also more interested in the conflicts and mobilisation than the national press.

Only three articles were found in *The Peckham Peculiar* between 2014 and 2017 that mentioned both ‘Peckham’ and ‘gentrification’. The first was published in 2014, entitled “*Taking pride in Peckham*”.<sup>496</sup> It is based on an interview with the newly elected Labour councillor, Johnson Situ, born and bred in Peckham. He narrates his story and how he got involved in politics, and his life growing up in Peckham. He acknowledges that he sees gentrification “more as an opportunity to build an eclectic and varied mix within our society,” and therefore thinks it has a positive impact on the area. The second article was published in March 2017, “*Council seeks new home for much-loved Peckham landmark*”,<sup>497</sup> and deals with the reaction of Peckham residents to the Council removing a landmark (Figure 9) without prior warning. The landmark was located next to the library, and composed of black icon portraits of famous inspiring black actors. It is a representation of the neighbourhood’s identity as it is composed of diverse ethnic minorities but largely of a black community.

The article is concise and cites a few people such as Ibrahim Kamara, the football player who tweeted: “So last week in Peckham I took this picture in front of this landmark with inspirational black people. Now it’s gone. Gentrification.” Councillor Mark Williams replies that they had to remove it owing to construction work taking place next to the landmark, promising to keep it safe while working “to secure a new home for them locally.” The removal of the landmark in itself may not have a direct link with the process of gentrification, but the fact of its importance

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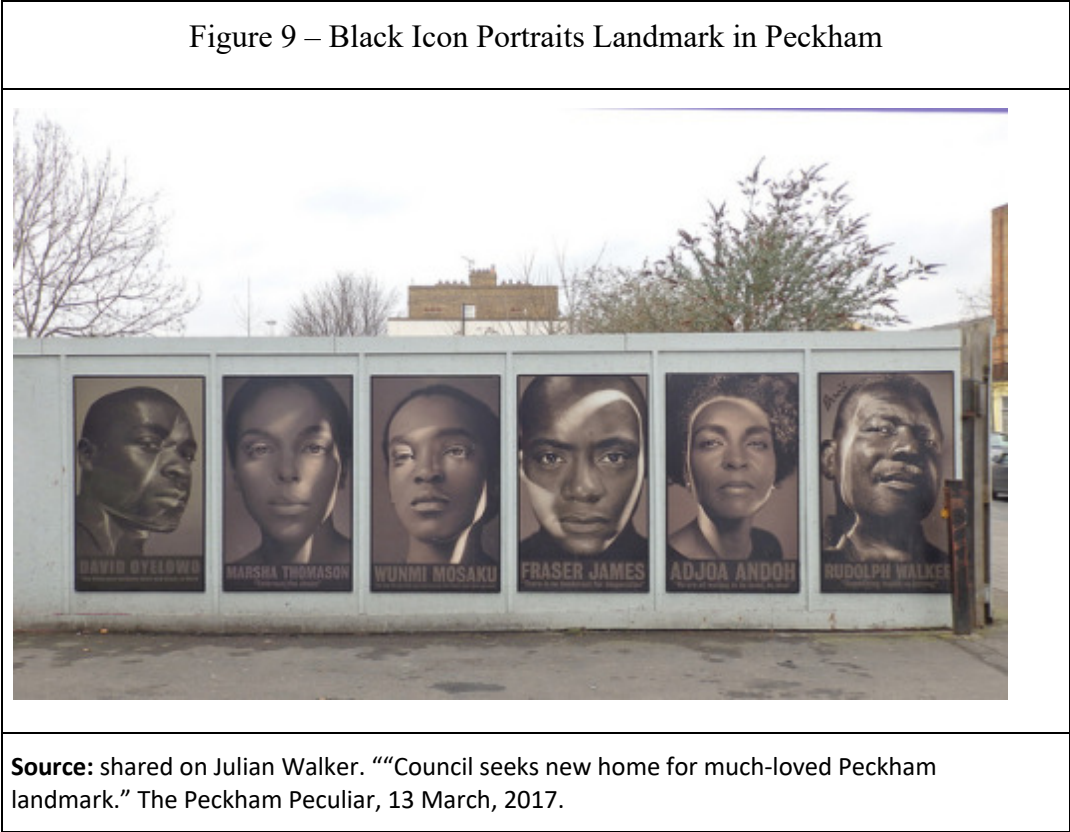
<sup>494</sup> News Desk. “Demolishing the Aylesham Centre for Flats Would Mean ‘No More Peckham’.” *Southwark News*, 17 February 2016, <<https://www.southwarknews.co.uk/news/demolishing-the-aylesham-centre-for-flats-would-mean-no-more-peckham/>> Accessed 12 December 2021.

<sup>495</sup> “Block of a Thousand Flats Planned for Peckham Town Centre.” *Southwark News*, 10 February 2016, <<https://www.southwarknews.co.uk/news/block-of-a-thousand-flats-planned-for-peckham-town-centre/>> Accessed 12 December 2021.

<sup>496</sup> “Taking Pride in Peckham.” *The Peckham Peculiar*, 20 November 2014, <https://peckhampeculiar.tumblr.com/post/103110185229/taking-pride-in-peckham>.> Accessed 12 December 2021.

<sup>497</sup> Julian Walker. ““Council seeks new home for much-loved Peckham landmark.” *The Peckham Peculiar*, 13 March 2017.

to the community and that it is removed to leave space for constructions can be perceived as a further step in the process.



In 2017, local press outlet *Peckham Peculiar* published “*One shiny poop-dog: Gentrification in Peckham*,”<sup>498</sup> an article written by Rosario Blue, a freelance journalist, but also a local who grew up on the North Peckham Estate who says:

As young as I was at the time, I do remember when the regeneration of the five estates – North Peckham, Camden, Gloucester Grove, Sumner and Willowbrook – was proposed. It was suggested that this would reduce crime. But there were some who thought that this was just making the place look new and would it really reduce crime?

The journalist admits that the neighbourhood was unsafe in the early 1990s yet acknowledges that he and his peers thought: “Peckham was doomed: So did Southwark Council and the

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<sup>498</sup> Rosario blue. “On Shiny Dog-Poop: Gentrification in Peckham.” *The Peckham Peculiar*, 5 Octobre 2017, <<https://peckhampeculiar.tumblr.com/post/166068731734/on-shiny-dog-poop-gentrification-in-peckham>.> Accessed on 12 December 2021.

government who were desperate to fix the “problem” of Peckham especially after the tragic murder of Damilola Taylor. “Problem” families were moved out of the estate and new families brought in to replace them.” Feeling nostalgic, he further explains that some of the locals were displaced because of the regeneration schemes that led to the demolition of the council estates.

The article defines gentrification as:

(noun) Gentrification: the process by which something that was seemingly dog-poop gets polished and done up nicely, and new people move in with the money needed to live in nice polished places, and then that nicer polished place becomes a sought-after address, prices hike up on everything and the original non-polished people struggle to live in new shiny parts and have to move away or huddle in the still-poop parts.

The journalist ironically defines the process as “polishing” an area and pushing the “non-polished” people to less nice neighbourhood. He describes Peckham as the new “place-to-be” full of trendy places. “It is hip, it’s happening, it’s in fashion, darling. We have new, nicer houses, and new, more expensive shops. We have modern, cool places to go, like the Bussey Building, Bar Story, Frank’s Cafe, the Hannah Barry Gallery.” He criticises state-led projects such as the Bellenden Village regeneration, and the middle-class in particular: “[t]he middle-class are the great destroyers of culture. They don’t mean to be, but they are what they are and what they are is middle-class,” and their coming to Peckham will lead to an end to its authenticity. Finally, he concludes by recommending that people must not be displaced, in order to protect the area and its sense of community. He adds that the council should inform and should provide “certain privileges” to locals who have been living in the area but can no longer afford to. The fact that the journalist is a local allows him to blend his personal experience with traditional reporting techniques, embodying the essence of citizen journalism. He provides an authentic perspective.

In summary, both the national and local press are showing some awareness that the neighbourhood is undergoing radical urban and social change. However, some form of reluctance toward the usage of the term gentrification can still be seen. For example, the *Guardian* articles tend not to tackle, nor condemn, its negative impact. In both the local and national press, the term was used to identify and describe the area, sometimes to further describe its “positive” impact. This slight shift in discourse and the use of the term, can be explained as locals became more aware of the rapid transformations in their area.

## Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the image towards Peckham's image, and the process of gentrification itself, have evolved over time. This has been proven by a previous study that showed a similar case in the United States which concluded that gentrification coverage varies over both time and newspapers.<sup>499</sup> There are a few similarities to Peckham, whose image has evolved from unsafe to trendy.

The first sub-section of this chapter has shown that the *Guardian* presented a mixed coverage of the district, with negative coverage dominating. It showed how Peckham was a rough area, and therefore, gentrification was presented as a solution to the middle class and their "urban idyll." It provided them with cheaper house prices in specific areas that were later gentrified and are no longer affordable to the same class. The second sub-section shows how Peckham started to be perceived differently as a new and trendy place. This shift was caused by two events: the riots of 2011, and the extension of the Overground to Peckham in 2012. Since the 2011 riots, which caused widespread civil disorder, local authorities have had an explicit strategy to demolish council housing in deprived areas and replace it with mixed communities. The purpose was to fight poverty and lower the crime rate, yet this has attracted press attention to these targeted areas, leading them to attract gentrifiers to these neighbourhoods. Finally, the third sub-section shows that gentrification became gradually linked to the area by the media. The neighbourhood started to be acknowledged by the press as being gentrified, even though it has been noted that the term tends to be avoided; when used, it is rarely well defined as having a negative impact.

This study has shown that there is minimal coverage of the negative consequences of the gentrification process in Peckham. It shows that the local press pays more attention to the process when compared to the national press. The *Guardian*, a left-leaning broadsheet, avoided reporting on the process, while praising the regeneration programs. This can be explained as the national press readership are largely middle-class people and potential gentrifiers.

The examination of media narratives revealed that Peckham's image evolved from a place primarily known for its challenges and urban struggles to one that is increasingly associated

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<sup>499</sup> Japonica Brown-Saracino and Cesraea Rumpf. "Diverse imageries of gentrification: Evidence from newspaper coverage in seven US cities, 1986–2006." *Journal of Urban Affairs*, vol. 33, no. 3, 2011, p. 307.

with cultural vibrancy and artistic flair. The following chapter will tackle the image constructed and shaped by artists and its evolution over time.

## Chapter 8

# Art in Peckham: Peckham through the eyes of artists

One of the new images to become linked to Peckham is art. Recently, the neighbourhood has become a destination for artists, for its galleries and events but also its rooftops that are atypical. Located between two of the most prestigious art schools in London (Camberwell Art School and Goldsmiths College of Art), the neighbourhood has become known for its artist community and as a vibrant hub of contemporary art. The area hosts several famous art galleries, such as the South London Gallery, art studios and artistic hotspots. Such venues have participated in evolving the image of the neighbourhood, especially as perceived by the artists themselves.

Some studies have suggested that artistic and cultural activities can contribute to gentrification and displacement, since artists can be seen as pioneers of gentrification, leading to new residents and investment. By moving to cheap and affordable neighbourhoods, they create more demand, property values rise, and the neighbourhood becomes more desirable for middle- and upper-middle-class residents.<sup>500</sup> Other studies have highlighted the potential for art and culture to play a positive role in neighbourhood revitalisation and community development, as art and cultural activities promote neighbourhood revitalisation.<sup>501</sup>

It should, however, be made clear that this chapter is not about the new influx of artists to the neighbourhood and their role in the process of gentrification, as gentrifiers. While their arrival may have partly influenced the image of the neighbourhood, and played an indirect role in the process of gentrification, the primary focus of this chapter is on how the image of Peckham has evolved due to their presence, and how these artists perceive the neighbourhood.

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<sup>500</sup> Cameron, Stuart, and Jon Coaffee. "Art, gentrification and regeneration—from artist as pioneer to public arts." *European journal of housing policy*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2005, pp. 39-58.

<sup>501</sup> Baiba Tjarve, and Ieva Zemīte. "The Role of Cultural Activities in Community Development." *Acta Universitatis Agriculturae et Silviculturae Mendelianae Brunensis*, vol. 64, no. 6, 2016.



This chapter focuses on the image constructed and shaped by artists and its evolution over time. Artists are known to have played an important role in gentrified neighbourhoods, and there have been several studies in different countries and cities which have focused on artist-led gentrification, and how artists can usher in the process. A notable example is SoHo in New York, when artists seized the opportunity of cheap rents, lax regulations and large decaying industrial spaces in the 1960s and 1970s in Manhattan, transforming the neighbourhood. Their arrival led to massive urban changes followed by a sharp increase in house prices.<sup>502</sup> A similar case was perceived in the Boyle Heights neighbourhood of Los Angeles.<sup>503</sup> When artists migrated to the area, new art galleries opened, leading to a middle-class influx which played a major role in gentrification. In England, for example, specifically Gateshead in north-east England,<sup>504</sup> a study has shown that even though gentrification has been a positive factor in public policy discourse, the area has undergone art-led regeneration. Artists have favoured the area for its cheap rents and attractiveness, with public policies and capital following artists into their new localities, with a focus on developing cultural facilities and public arts, and promoting regeneration.

However, no studies have been conducted to clearly demonstrate how gentrification can affect artists or how artists perceive these urban changes. In Peckham, the relatively recent arrival of artists is not the only factor to have led to gentrification, but their influx can be viewed as one of the consequences of state-led gentrification. Regeneration in Peckham has improved cultural facilities and made the area not only attractive to white-collar residents but also to artists. A recently-published book, *Passport to Peckham*,<sup>505</sup> details the cultural history of the neighbourhood while also exploring the current artistic and cultural community that helped to reshape Peckham's image. The author admits that "[w]hat first attracted me to Peckham was the number of artists who have chosen to live there; they are many more at work here, as well as poets, photographers, writers, actors, craftspeople, than I have been able to meet or mention."<sup>506</sup> The author, as an architect and expert on planning and preservation, criticises the

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<sup>502</sup> Aaron Shkuda. "The Lofts of Soho." *The Lofts of SoHo*. University of Chicago Press, 2016.

<sup>503</sup> Julia M. Campbell. "Combatting Arts-Led Gentrification: A Case Study of Slanguage Studio." *Global Tides*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2021.

<sup>504</sup> Stuart Cameron, and Jon Coaffee. "Art, gentrification and regeneration—from artist as pioneer to public arts." *European journal of housing policy*, 5.1, 2005, pp. 39-58.

<sup>505</sup> Robert Hewison. *Passport to Peckham: Culture and Creativity in a London Village*. Goldsmiths Press, 2022.

<sup>506</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3.

challenges linked to urban regeneration and the process of gentrification for their impact on artists.

Even though the recent influx of artists is undeniable and can be linked to having exacerbated the gentrification process by attracting developers and policy-makers, it is important to acknowledge that art has long been an integral part of Peckham's identity. Gentrification has improved living conditions and brought artists to the area.

This chapter, ergo, scrutinises the history of art in the area through the emergence of its artistic hotspots and cultural hubs, and provides an account of the evolution of the image of the neighbourhood perceived by artists over time. It is also important to mention that art and artists in this case concern all artistic disciplines including painters, actors, designers, sitcom- and film-makers and photographers. By exploring these aspects, this chapter provides a comprehensive understanding of the link between art and artists, and the evolving image of the neighbourhood.

To understand the importance of art in Peckham, a study of the historical culture of the neighbourhood is required. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with twenty-two artists of different ages, working in different fields. To contact them I attended artistic events hosted by the South London Gallery on Peckham Road. I also met artists, and had open conversations with them, in Frank's Café, the rooftop venue known to be frequented by artists. The use of semi-structured interviews was deployed in order to garner their genuine thoughts and feelings, and how they perceived Peckham. Closed questions such as; 'Do you live or work in Peckham, or both?', and 'How long have you been in the area?' were asked in order to identify artists and their link to Peckham. Open questions relating to their work were also asked (Appendix 25) such as: "What is your art practice?" or "What do you think of the role art plays in the neighbourhood?" Other questions focused on how the artists perceive the neighbourhood, and its urban changes. Even though the list of questions was pre-prepared, there was no set order and the artists were uninterrupted, with freedom to fully answer the questions. It is worth mentioning that while some artists desired anonymity, others specifically requested that only their first names were used in this academic work.

An online survey was also created, with the link being sent to artists found both on social media, and on the Peckham Platform website<sup>507</sup> by email. Unfortunately, there was little interest in the survey which received insufficient replies to be included in this chapter.

Before examining artists' perspectives and how they see Peckham, it is important to understand how art is part of the neighbourhood's history. Accordingly, this chapter is divided into three sections: the first section illustrates the historic monuments and historical culture of the area, and how art was part of the neighbourhood's identity; the second section looks at newly-added art since 2000, and the newly-opened art galleries which contributed to attracting new artists; the third section deals with how artists see the neighbourhood, and how they participate in shaping the new image and reputation of Peckham.

## **8.1. Cultural Scene and Image in Peckham before 2000**

Historically, Peckham has been hosting art since the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.<sup>508</sup> In the late-nineteenth century, the impressive Crown Theatre opened in Peckham High Street. In 1911 it became a cinema, and in 1932 it became the first Gaumont Palace Cinema to open in London; the building has now been replaced by apartments.<sup>509</sup> Before World War One there were five cinemas in Rye Lane, including the Tower Cinema (with capacity for an audience of two-thousand people), which opened in 1914 before closing in 1956 owing to compulsory purchase for a planned road scheme.<sup>510</sup>

### **8.1.1. Artistic Heritage**

The number of galleries and artistic platforms has recently been increasing in the area. The South London Gallery is one of the best-known (and also the oldest), art galleries in the neighbourhood. This gallery was founded in the nineteenth-century by a philanthropist as the

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<sup>507</sup> Peckham Platform. "All Artists" <<https://www.peckhamplatform.com/who-we-are/all-artists/>> Accessed on 22 August 2022.

<sup>508</sup> Robert Hewison. *Passport to Peckham: Culture and Creativity in a London Village*. Goldsmiths Press, 2022, pp. 25

<sup>509</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 26.

<sup>510</sup> *Ibid.*

South London Fine Art Gallery, as an art gallery and a free library. It was closed during the two world-wars, and reopened in 1949.<sup>511</sup>

The gallery took the name South London Gallery ('SLG') in 1992, when it began presenting contemporary art and exhibiting international artists, developing a national and international reputation over the last two decades. The gallery has undergone renovation works in order to accommodate the new influx of visitors, being enhanced and extended in 2003. In 2010, a similar project was implemented to further expand the gallery adding new galleries, a café and a bookshop. In 2018, the SLG expanded into the former Peckham Road Fire Station which is considered one of the most historical buildings in the neighbourhood, and dates back to 1864. The Victorian gothic building was closed down and sold in the early 1920s, being inadequate to its new requirements. Another fire station was opened a few years later, and the old building housed the head office and a factory of Kennedy's, a local firm of butchers and sausage makers which was operational between the 1930s and 2007. In 2008, the Fire Station was sold at auction, remaining unoccupied until being donated to the South London Gallery in 2014. It has recently opened to the public as the SLG's second venue after having been restored in a design led by 6a architects, a British architectural practice.<sup>512</sup>

The gallery was funded by several charitable organisations including the Charles Hayward Foundation, the London Community Foundation, the Bridget Riley Art Foundation, the BBC Children in Need, and also by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the Mayor of London, the Arts Council England, and Southwark Council (which managed the gallery prior to 2003). Thereafter, it became an independent charitable trust managed by a Board of Trustees which consists of up to sixteen trustees with different skills and expertise (artists or experts in management), and three councillors nominated by the party they represent.<sup>513</sup>

During the last decade, the gallery became the main attraction to artists and visitors from Peckham and beyond. It also started to include the local community who were invited to its exhibitions by sending leaflets as free invitations to Peckham residents. The gallery has a year-round exhibition programme of both established and lesser-known artists, British and international. It offers workshops and artist-led projects as an opportunity for learning and

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<sup>511</sup> "SLG History." *South London Gallery*, 15 February 2021, <<https://www.southlondongallery.org/history-collections/slg-history/>> Accessed on 20 August 2022.

<sup>512</sup> "Fire Station." *South London Gallery*, 26 September 2018, <https://www.southlondongallery.org/history-collections/fire-station/>.> Accessed on 20 August 2022.

<sup>513</sup> "The SLG Board of Trustees." *South London Gallery*, 19 July 2022, <https://www.southlondongallery.org/staff-and-trustees/the-slg-board-of-trustees/>. Accessed on 20 August 2022.

participation. The gallery also provides guided tours throughout the area to showcase the heritage and uniqueness of the neighbourhood.

Music, particularly jazz, was also part of Peckham's artistic heritage. Another venue that attracted people to this working-class neighbourhood was the Peckham Pandemonium, a jazz spot launched in 1943 by George Webb, a British pianist known as the father of traditional jazz in Britain, and his band. Peckham, therefore, became known as a "Jazz Mecca"<sup>514</sup> that attracted many musicians including Humphrey Lyttleton, a well-known trumpeter and broadcaster of the 1950s, Wally Fawkes, a saxophonist (and cartoonist), among many others. The Peckham Pandemonium closed in the 1980s but was re-opened in 2013 at the Peckham Liberal Club as a private members venue, by Simon Beresford, a Peckham local and former jazz musician who moved to the area in 2010. He bought the club which was listed as a community asset.<sup>515</sup> Since then, the club has presented jazz nights by famous musicians, "... all at the top of the game, the very best in Britain and even in Europe."<sup>516</sup> A later jazz venue was the White Horse, now called the Old White Horse, in Rye Lane, a tavern built in the nineteenth-century, which became a jazz destination in the 1950s and 1960s. In the 1980s it became a meeting point for local clubs and artists,<sup>517</sup> before being transformed into a pub in 2014, with a weekend disco and dancefloor.

In the late 1980s and 1990s, however, Peckham's artistic reputation was replaced by a bad reputation linked to a rise in criminality, rough conditions, and poor public transport. Notably in 1996, the US Embassy red-flagged Peckham and two other areas in south London (Brixton and Lewisham) as dangerous areas that should be avoided by American tourists.<sup>518</sup> This reputation can be explained through government neglect, previously addressed in earlier chapters.

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<sup>514</sup> Robert Hewison. *Passport to Peckham: Culture and Creativity in a London Village*. Goldsmiths Press, 2022, pp. 75.

<sup>515</sup> The Peckham Peculiar. "Ace of Clubs: The Peckham Liberal Club." *The Peckham Peculiar*, 17 January 2014. <<https://peckhampeculiar.tumblr.com/post/105428476274/ace-of-clubs-the-peckham-liberal-club-an-article>.> Accessed 20 August 2022.

<sup>516</sup> Ljazzn. "Preview: Peckham Pandemonium, New Jazz Night at Peckham Liberal Club 25th June 2013." *London Jazz News*, 24 June 2013, <https://londonjazznews.com/2013/06/24/preview-peckham-pandemonium-new-jazz-night-at-peckham-liberal-club-25th-june-2013/>.> Accessed on 20 August 2022.

<sup>517</sup> Peckham Soul. "'Sounds Maps' – Music History of Peckham & Camberwell." *Peckham Soul*, 3 December 2016. <<https://www.peckhamsoul.co.uk/sounds-maps-music-history-of-peckham-camberwell/>.>

<sup>518</sup> Robert Hewison. *Passport to Peckham: Culture and Creativity in a London Village*. Goldsmiths Press, 2022, p. 39.

### 8.1.2. Peckham on Television: Early Image and Reputation

In addition to galleries and music, Peckham was also known through television owing to the notable sitcom, *Only Fools and Horses*. Launched on air in 1981, the sitcom was written by John Sullivan (1946-2011) and set in Peckham. The show evolves around the Trotter family's three main characters: two brothers and their grandfather, who live in a council flat in Peckham. It focuses on two main characters Del Boy, an ambitious if hapless and unsuccessful businessman, and his young brother Rodney, who are constantly struggling to make money and become millionaires. They eventually manage to become wealthy and leave the neighbourhood by the final season, but in the Christmas trilogy that was added and aired in the early 2000s the Trotter family loses its fortune and goes back to their former impoverished neighbourhood and way of life.

The show, on air between 1981 and 1996 (with a further three episodes added and aired between 2001 and 2003), was an enormous hit in Britain and was awarded several awards and recorded the highest UK audience, with particular episodes reaching more than 24 million viewers.<sup>519</sup> Some accolades included the Best BBC Sitcom (1997), and the Most Popular Comedy Series (2004), among many other awards. Also, in 2004, it was voted Britain's best sitcom through a poll organized by the BBC.

Through the characters, Peckham is represented as not only poor but also rough. The characters, as a representation of locals in the area, are shown struggling to earn money, resorting to scheming and conning by selling poor quality and illegal goods. The protagonist is depicted as a working-class Thatcherite when he exercised his right to buy his council flat that he would later sell at a profit, and tries his best to avoid the state, "which he regards as a nuisance."<sup>520</sup>

Ironically the show was not filmed in Peckham, with various episodes being recorded in places such as Islington and Bristol; the council flat was situated on the Bollo Road Estate in South Acton (in west London). The official reason was that Peckham was situated far away from the BBC's headquarters in West London, but may be better explained by the fact, "That by 1981

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<sup>519</sup> Huw Fullerton. "The BBC were "Embarrassed" by the Success of Only Fools and Horses" *Radio Times*, 30 September 2015. <<https://www.radiotimes.com/tv/comedy/the-bbc-were-embarrassed-by-the-success-of-only-fools-and-horses/>> Accessed 20 September 2022.

<sup>520</sup> Robert Hewison. *Passport to Peckham: Culture and Creativity in a London Village*. Goldsmiths Press, 2022, pp. 38-39.

the actual tower blocks of North Peckham had become too dangerous to work in.”<sup>521</sup> Therefore, the area was avoided but yet used as the setting of the comedy.

‘*Desmond’s*’ is another sitcom, this time actually filmed in Peckham by the writer and director Trix Warrell. The show was composed of 71 episodes and aired from 1989 to December 1994. This sitcom revolves around a grumpy barber from Guyana, the protagonist, whose barber shop his family (wife and four children) and other characters congregate. The show tackles humorously the cultural differences between the immigrant father and his British-born children and “true-to-life eccentricities.”<sup>522</sup> Contrary to other and previous representations of the black community on television, this sitcom shows how successful the protagonist’s children are in terms of education and employment; for example, the oldest son is an assistant bank manager, and both his daughter and youngest son were successful university students.

The show was scrutinised for its unique representation of the ordinary lives of black family members in the late 1980s and early 1990s. It came as a response to the way in which negative images and representations of immigrants and ethnic minorities were depicted in the media. It is considered one of the first shows that altered the image of blackness and the black identity in the UK by displaying black voices through the representation of the Afro-Caribbean community.<sup>523</sup> Unfortunately, the series ended when the lead character died in 1994. However, it is worth noting that while *Desmond’s* aimed to shed light on the Afro-Caribbean community within this context, its primary setting in a barbershop inadvertently narrowed its representation of Peckham. Besides being labelled rough, the area had been recognised for its afro barbershops.

To sum up, both these sitcoms, despite their differences, played an important role in television, and managed to shape and reshape the image of the neighbourhood. *Only Fools and Horses* showed the roughness, the poverty and struggles to change one’s life, while also playing a major role in shaping comedy for its special language, and the usage of particular words that were later added to the dictionary.<sup>524</sup> *Desmond’s* showed the uniqueness of the neighbourhood through its ethnic communities, and the tension not only between different classes but also intra-racial

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<sup>521</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>522</sup> Deirdre Osborne. “Black British Comedy: *Desmond’s* and the changing face of television.” *British TV comedies: Cultural concepts, contexts and controversies*, 2016, pp. 167-182.

<sup>523</sup> Sarita Malik. *Representing black Britain: Black and Asian images on television*. Sage, 2001, p. 101.

<sup>524</sup> Simon James, “The creative language of John Sullivan in *Only Fools and Horses*.” *Dostopno Prek*, 13 August 2016.

tensions between different generations;<sup>525</sup> however, it limited Peckham to its reputation, filled with Afro barbershops.

## 8.2. Art since 2000: Art and the Neighbourhood's Identity

2007 marks a turning point as several venues and cultural hubs opened and led Peckham to be the new destination for artists. These new spaces, ranging from galleries and to events, participated in reshaping the neighbourhood's reputation and attracted a new influx of artists; some were visitors, others chose Peckham to live in.

### 8.2.1. Art Galleries and Platforms

One of the most known galleries in neighbourhood is the *Hannah Barry Gallery*, which is the second most famous gallery, after the SLG. This gallery opened in 2007 in the Copeland Cultural Quarter based in the Bussey Building, by artist Hannah Barry who also founded Bold Tendencies, non-profit organisation based on the rooftop spaces at Peckham Multi-Storey Car Park also known as Frank's Café, the same year. The first exhibition was in February 2008, when it presented "New Worlds" where different sculptures, collages and paintings were exhibited.<sup>526</sup> The event took place over nine days and brought many artists to the neighbourhood. The gallery organises several artistic projects and invites both local and international artists. Bold Tendencies is not an actual gallery, but regularly organises projects in the public spaces of the rooftop of Frank's Café. It is a non-profit organisation and its aim is to support artists in creating projects linked to visual arts and artistic architecture. The organisation also hosts award winning and live events. In 2007, it launched its first sculpture project, attracted many artists and art lovers to the neighbourhood. The event has become "[...] an annual pilgrimage for anyone with an interest in cutting-edge contemporary art."<sup>527</sup>

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<sup>525</sup> Dierdre Osborne. "Black British Comedy: Desmond's and the changing face of television." January 2016, p. 168

<sup>526</sup> Peckham Vision. "Hannah Barry Gallery." *Peckham Vision*, <[https://www.peckhamvision.org/wiki/Hannah\\_Barry\\_Gallery#Many\\_Worlds\\_.2821st-28th\\_February\\_2008.29](https://www.peckhamvision.org/wiki/Hannah_Barry_Gallery#Many_Worlds_.2821st-28th_February_2008.29)> Accessed on 2 August 2022.

<sup>527</sup> Katherine Hudson. "An Art Lover's Guide to Peckham, London." *The Culture Trip*, 29 April 2014, <https://theculturetrip.com/europe/united-kingdom/england/london/articles/london-culture-guide-peckham-for-art-lovers/>. Accessed on 20 August 2022.



An iconic drama school, Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts (formerly known as Mountview Theatre School), is also located in Peckham. The school was founded in 1945, and officially opened in 1947 in north London, but was relocated to Peckham in September 2018 following a multi-million-pound construction project.<sup>528</sup> The space includes 22 teaching studios, music-practice rooms, and rooms which can be hired for rehearsals; the space is open to the public.

Another well-known social art organisation in the neighbourhood is *Peckham Platform*. This organisation was an initiative started by Camberwell College of Arts in 2009 called Peckham Space which is funded by both the Camberwell College of Art and the University of Arts London, with funding also provided by Southwark Council. In 2013, the platform was detached from the Camberwell College of Art and became a creative and educational charity, changing its name to Peckham Platform. The platform is a stand-alone gallery located in Peckham Square which is situated to the front of Peckham Library. Managed by Emily Druiff, a socially-engaged artist, it focuses on social art which creates artistic and engaging projects in partnership between artists and local residents. It presents artistic events, educational workshops and solo exhibitions of artists from all over the world, among other projects.

The Copeland Gallery is another notable artistic destination in Peckham, and is located at the Bussey Building minutes from Peckham Rye Station. Composed of different floors, the gallery opened in 2003. It offers art studios, workshops and multiple rooms with a large space that serves as a gallery. It also provides an exhibition space for painters, carpenters, and producers of textiles and ceramics. Finally, another gallery found in the area is Flat Time House, located in Bellenden Road. This gallery opened in 2008 as a contemporary art gallery with a programme of exhibitions and events. This space had previously been the studio home of artist John Latham (1921-2006), who was known as a conceptual artist.

The *Peckham Festival* is an annual art event organised in the same building. This tradition started in 2016, and is held each year by local artists, musicians, and local organisations who come together to showcase their work. The festival takes place over a weekend in September with a view to “celebrating creative and cultural Peckham. [it] exists to promote artists, makers,

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<sup>528</sup> Alex wood. “See the Brand New Mountview Academy in Peckham as It Nears the End of Construction.” *WhatsOnStage*, 20 August 2018, <[https://www.whatsonstage.com/london-theatre/news/mountview-academy-peckham-building\\_47433.html](https://www.whatsonstage.com/london-theatre/news/mountview-academy-peckham-building_47433.html)> Accessed on 2 August 2022.

creators, and community groups.”<sup>529</sup> The event has become a significant cultural event<sup>530</sup> that attracts a large number of visitors from across the city and has made Peckham well-known to a wider public.

### 8.2.2. Other Artist Hotspots and Rooftops

Besides galleries and art schools, the neighbourhood provides additional spaces and hotspots for artists and cultural events. Frank’s Café is a perfect example. It is mentioned several times in this study, owing to its emergence alongside changes to the area. Other cafés in the neighbourhood popular with artists are the Peckham Pelican Art Café (opened in 2013) and the CLF<sup>531</sup> Art Café. The latter hosts the artistic events of Bold Tendencies, with a clientele based on young people and art enthusiasts.

Peckham is also home to some of the most iconic murals in London.<sup>532</sup> The area around Rye Lane, in particular, is known for its vibrant street art scene. Some of these murals have been created by local street artists such as Mr. Cenz and Roo Abrook who have gained international recognition for their work.<sup>533</sup> In 2021, the mural was showcased at the London Mural Festival, an annual event first held in 2020 which presents large-scale murals in order to showcase the diversity and vibrancy of the London street art scene. The event has become a feature in the city’s cultural calendar.

These hotspots play an essential role in developing and shaping the new identity of the neighbourhood and have created a new atmosphere unique to the area that attracts new-comers, particularly from the artistic field, thereby creating a sense of community and belonging. These themes will be further developed in the following section.

These creative hubs have also contributed to a shift in image: from dangerous Peckham to cultural-hub Peckham. They have created a distinctive cultural identity, helped to reinforce the neighbourhood’s reputation as a desirable and trendy place to live and visit, and have also

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<sup>529</sup> “Celebrating Creative and Cultural Peckham.” *Peckham Festival*, 21 September 2022, <<https://www.peckhamfestival.org/>> Accessed 2 April 2023.

<sup>530</sup> Isabel Ramirez. “Peckham Festival Champions Sustainability This Weekend.” *Southwark News*, September 14, 2022. <<https://southwarknews.co.uk/news/culture/peckham-festival-champions-sustainability/>> Accessed on 2 April 2023.

<sup>531</sup> The name is abbreviated from Chronic Love Foundation Café

<sup>532</sup> Staff Reporter. “London Mural Festival Comes to Peckham.” *Southwark News*, 16 Novembre 2021, <<https://southwarknews.co.uk/news/culture/london-mural-festival-comes-to-peckham/>> Accessed 2 April 2023.

<sup>533</sup> *Ibid.*

contributed to its ongoing transformation. A sociological study in NY<sup>534</sup> has established that the artists and cultural producers who moved into a neighbourhood undergoing gentrification played a crucial role in creating a distinctive cultural identity. By creating a special environment, social networks, and cultural practices, they participated in ongoing and rapid urban redevelopment that later attracted new middle-class visitors and residents. In relation to Peckham, art is not the engine of gentrification, but has recently become a dominant feature, having contributed to shaping a new image of the neighbourhood.

### 8.3. Artists' Perspective of the Neighbourhood

As mentioned previously, this new cultural identity became an integral part of the neighbourhood. It is therefore essential to understand how artists see the neighbourhood, with their opinions having been gathered through interviews. Some of these interviews were conducted with artists who had recently moved into the area, others with those who have been living in Peckham for more than five years, and some who were raised (or had lived) in the neighbourhood for more than ten years. Through these interviews, a contrasting image of the neighbourhood was evidenced, with artists changing their point of view regarding Peckham once they had visited the area. For example, Paula, a painter, and one of the first artists interviewed on the rooftop of Peckham levels, has acknowledged that, "Moving to Peckham challenged [her] initial perception of it being a 'bad' area. [she] discovered a vibrant and diverse community, filled with creativity and resilience."<sup>535</sup> Paula, clearly, shows awareness of the two different images of the neighbourhood. There was also a focus on the new urban changes such as development products and cultural events, and how these changes improved the neighbourhood. Finally, when interviewing these artists, the feeling of attachment and of belonging to the neighbourhood was noticed. These expressed feelings stem from artists' recognition of the neighbourhood's unique character, their active involvement in its cultural scene, and their commitment to being part of its ongoing growth and development.

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<sup>534</sup> Sharon Zukin. "Loft Living as 'Historic Compromise' in the Urban Core: the New York experience." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, vol. 6, 1982, pp. 256-267.

<sup>535</sup> Paula. Interview with a Painter. Conducted by Habiba Jelali, 3 August 2022.

### 8.3.1. Contrasted Image

As previously discussed on several occasions, Peckham had a long-standing reputation as an “unsafe neighbourhood and poor”. Recently, however, this image has been changing slightly: from a rough area to a vibrant, diverse and increasingly desirable place to visit and live in. The thriving arts and cultural scenes have contributed to a growing artistic community and hence created a new identity for the neighbourhood. This new image is perceived through several of the interviews conducted with artists. Indeed, when interviewing some of the artists, they confirmed that they had previously been prejudiced against the neighbourhood. For example, it is noticeable that the majority of the artists interviewed confirms having received a contrasting image of the area: before visiting Peckham, they had a preconception that the neighbourhood was still dangerous, yet upon visiting for the first time they did not feel unsafe – quite the contrary. For instance, one of the interviewees, Andrew, late 20s, who came to Peckham in 2015 to work in the South London Gallery as a part time employee, part time artist (he has now been both working and living in Peckham since late 2016), stated that, “I heard of Peckham as poor and rough, when I came for the first time, I have noticed that is very unique, but I have never felt uncomfortable or unsafe, on the contrary”.<sup>536</sup>

Other artists confirm the same feeling. David, who joined the gallery in 2019 for a full-time job (he lives in central London), confirms that, “The area is not like any other area in London, that’s for sure. But, when I first came to Peckham, I had already heard that it is a rough area, and I was a bit scared, but I visited the neighbourhood, I found that it is full of history.”<sup>537</sup> He further added, “Now, I actually enjoy the neighbourhood and I am even looking for a place to rent”. Another artist (late 30s) who moved to Peckham in 2014 also echoed similar sentiments. He expressed his feelings as follows:

When I first moved to Peckham, I was drawn to its vibrant artistic scene. The neighbourhood had this raw, authentic energy that inspires me. Over the years, I’ve witnessed the positive change [...] It is true that some places in the neighbourhood are more pleasant than others, but let’s set the record straight. Peckham is not what people think, it is an inspiring place.<sup>538</sup>

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<sup>536</sup> Andrew. Interview with an agent at the art gallery. Conducted by Habiba Jelali, 5 August 2022.

<sup>537</sup> David. Interview with an agent at the art gallery. Conducted by Habiba Jelali, 5 August 2022.

<sup>538</sup> Anonymous. Interview with a street artist. Conducted by Habiba Jelali, 3 August 2022.

It is highlighted that there is an awareness of the image perceived by outsiders. The artists interviewed acknowledge that Peckham has been associated with negative stereotypes and misconceptions from outside the neighbourhood. For example, when asked ‘*what did you think of the neighbourhood before visiting it?*’ similar answers were given portraying an image of “poor” “unsafe” “dangerous” or even “a place of struggle and hardship”,<sup>539</sup> later contrasted with an image of “vibrant” “diverse” “trendy” and “culturally rich neighbourhood” after visiting the area.

Another interviewee, an artist who grew up in the area, explains:

I grew up in Peckham, and this is my neighbourhood, and I love it. The area is not the same, that’s for sure, there were drastic changes, but I am so proud of Peckham of today and what it offers. A few years ago, no one would come to the area, because it was unsafe, which I understand... and when I was at uni, I would actually go to central and northern London to attend events, now cultural events are coming to Peckham, that is amazing. People are coming and exploring the area.<sup>540</sup>

This interviewee highlights the positive developments in the area, such as the increase in cultural offerings, which were not previously available in the neighbourhood. However, he also highlights that Peckham was once considered an undesirable and unsafe place to visit and live in when he says, “no one would come to the area.” By saying “because it was unsafe, which I understand...” shows that even for someone who grew up in the area, the image of his or her own neighbourhood evolved and changed from “unsafe” to “cultural” and “desirable”.

When asked “*from where did you get that image?*” most respondents said that “everyone used to say that” or “in the media, when we hear of Peckham, we mainly hear of problems and crimes”. For example,

Working here [in the South London Gallery] changed my viewpoint about Peckham, before that I have heard that it’s a rough area, like watching videos on YouTube and hearing from others... but working here changes everything because seeing places instead of reading the news or watching videos online make a difference.<sup>541</sup>

These themes have already been developed in the previous chapter. At a media level for example, the press played an important role in shaping and influencing public perception. In

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<sup>539</sup> Sarah. Interview with a painter. Conducted by Habiba Jelali, 3 August 2022.

<sup>540</sup> Anonymous. Interview with a film maker. Conducted by Habiba Jelali, 3 August 2022.

<sup>541</sup> David. Interview with an agent at the art gallery. Conducted by Habiba Jelali, 5 August 2022.

the case of Peckham, a negative image and reputation of the neighbourhood dominated for the first decade of the twenty-first century. Media coverage often focused on the social problems and challenges faced by the area. However, with the coinciding urban changes and the emergence of new facilities in the area, the image of Peckham has evolved.

Another significant aspect of Peckham's image is the neighbourhood's distinct identity. Throughout my conversations with various artists, the notions of "identity" and "uniqueness" emerged repeatedly, often mentioned multiple times within the same discussion. When asked what specifically attracted them to the area, aside from the vibrant artistic events and community, it was consistently Peckham's unparalleled uniqueness that captured their attention. One artist enthusiastically expressed, "Peckham's identity is like no other. It's this mix of cultures, histories and artistic expressions that creates an energy you won't find anywhere else."<sup>542</sup> Another artist echoed the same sentiment, stating, "Peckham has a personality all its own. You can see it the second you set foot in the area".<sup>543</sup> This statement further acknowledges that Peckham's uniqueness serves as a catalyst to contradicting the image conveyed by the press.

Yet another compelling reason for artists to choose Peckham as their creative hub was its affordability. Many acknowledged that Peckham remains a more affordable option compared to other neighbourhoods in London. One artist highlighted this aspect, stating that "Peckham with all it offers, is still cheaper compared to other neighbourhoods in London, I know many friends in the art field who moved to Peckham because it is affordable".<sup>544</sup> Another artist shared their experience, saying, "I moved to Peckham a few years ago because it was affordable. It gave me a chance to be part of the vibrant artistic community without the high living expenses of other London neighbourhoods".<sup>545</sup> However, it is important to highlight that this affordability is temporary as Peckham continues to undergo urban changes, attracting more attention and thereby increasing property prices and rises in living costs.

The presence of artists and the flourishing of the creative industries in a given area has been subject of interest in numerous studies, revealing a complex relationship with gentrification. One of its aspects is that their arrival can influence policy-making. As highlighted by Kunzmann, "[i]n the beginning of the twenty-first century, culture and creativity have become

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<sup>542</sup> Anonymous. Interview with a writer. Conducted by Habiba Jelali, 3 August 2022.

<sup>543</sup> Anonymous. Interview with an agent at the art gallery. Conducted by Habiba Jelali, 5 August 2022.

<sup>544</sup> Paula. Interview with a Painter. Conducted by Habiba Jelali, 3 August 2022.

<sup>545</sup> Anonymous. Interview with an art teacher. Conducted by Habiba Jelali, 3 August 2022.

key concepts on the agenda of city managers, development agents and planners, who are desperately searching for new foundations in development with dwindling city budgets.”<sup>546</sup> Policy-makers, development agents, and planners all see artists as catalysts for economic development. For instance, Southwark Council regularly funds cultural organisations such as South London Gallery, Peckham theatre, among others located in Peckham. It also provides grants to support cultural events. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that the relationship between artists, gentrification and policy-making is multifaceted and dynamic. While the presence of artists can contribute to the revitalisation of neglected areas thereby enhancing its image, it can also lead to rising property prices. In Peckham’s case, the presence of artists and their cultural activities have very likely played a significant role in aesthetically enhancing the neighbourhood, and brought new people. This will be further developed in the following subsection, where artists have highlighted that their community participated in “improving” Peckham’s image and shaping a new identity for the neighbourhood.

### **8.3.2. “Peckham is Changing for the Better”**

From the interviews relating to the neighbourhood, there was a notable emphasis on the positive urban changes taking place in the area, with the artists recognising and appreciating the transformation the neighbourhood is undergoing. For example, Jordan clearly stated:

I’ve been here for a while now, and I actually can say the neighbourhood is changing for the better, we now have better infrastructure, including renovated buildings. We have a wider variety of shops and businesses, and thriving art studios, galleries and creative spaces. Peckham is actually more pleasant.<sup>547</sup>

Some artists pointed to improvements in the physical infrastructure of the neighbourhood, with redevelopment projects and enhancement of public spaces seen as positive. For instance, one of the interviewees referred to the Peckham Coal Line<sup>548</sup> as a project that brought positive change to the neighbourhood:

I got to say the Peckham Coal Line is a game changer! It’s this awesome elevated park that transformed

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<sup>546</sup> Klaus R. Kunzmann. “Culture, creativity and spatial planning” pp.393.

<sup>547</sup> Jordan. Interview with an illustrator. Conducted by Habiba Jelali, 3 August 2022.

<sup>548</sup> The Peckham Coal Line was a community-led project that took place between 2014 and 2022 and led to the creating a new linear park and a direct link between two high streets: Queens Road Peckham and Rye Lane. The project created a large green space, new stores for new business and cycling connections.

an old railway into a green space. It's like our little slice of nature right in the heart of the city... I love going there to chill, take walks and soak up to peaceful vibes. It's also become a hub for the community, bringing people together and creating sense of belonging, plus it adds so much character to Peckham.

Andrew said that “The site behind the library has been turned into the well-known Mountview Academy, which brought creative people to the neighbourhood”.<sup>549</sup> He further adds, “The academy is really good, it offers a range of different classes, and they have this amazing bar on its roof top. It's called Skylight, and the view is stunning”.<sup>550</sup> Another artist I spoke to mentioned the Aylesham shopping centre<sup>551</sup> and how “It has been dull and uninviting... I've seen that there is a new project in the way, so there is hope that it could bring positive changes to Rye Lane”.<sup>552</sup> He further adds, “The revitalisation of the shopping centre could breathe new life into the area. It has the potential to transform Rye Lane into a more vibrant and dynamic hub.” This artist clearly expresses support for the revitalisation efforts, taking hope from the redevelopment project and its potential for positive change to the area.

Another significant observation was the focus on the artistic community and what it brought to the neighbourhood. When asked “*What is the good part of Peckham?*” or, “*What changed for the better in the area?*” many artists enthusiastically pointed out the emergence of the “vibrant artistic community” in Peckham. For instance, a painter said that, “The best part of Peckham is the incredible artistic community that has blossomed here. It's a melting pot of creativity, collaboration and inspiration”.<sup>553</sup> Another artist explained:

Do you know what's awesome about this neighbourhood? The artistic vibe! The artists here have brought so much life and excitement to the neighbourhood. It's like everywhere you look, there is a cool art exhibition, funky mural, or a live performance happening. The artistic community has made Peckham a hotspot for the creativity, attracting all kinds of cool folks who appreciate the art. It has created a buzz and a sense of excitement that wasn't here before. Now Peckham is known as this hip and happening place, and it's all thanks to the amazing artists who call it home.<sup>554</sup>

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<sup>549</sup> Andrew. Interview with an agent at the art gallery. Conducted by Habiba Jelali, 5 August 2022.

<sup>550</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>551</sup> The Aylesham Centre is a shopping centre situated in the heart of Peckham, occupying a large site (30,462 m<sup>2</sup>), between Hanover Park and Rye Lane. Opened in 1984 the site includes Morrison's supermarket, various retail outlets, the bus garage (2,000 m<sup>2</sup>), and a petrol Station (600 m<sup>2</sup>). In 2016, Southwark Council announced ~~and~~ that the entire site is to be demolished to build, predominantly, apartment blocks, with provision made for retail and dining units.

<sup>552</sup> Anonymous. Interview with an illustrator. Conducted by Habiba Jelali, 3 August 2022.

<sup>553</sup> Anonymous. Interview with a painter. Conducted by Habiba Jelali, 4 August 2022.

<sup>554</sup> Anonymous. Interview with an art teacher. Conducted by Habiba Jelali, 3 August 2022.



Another artist explained that “Art brought new people and new projects to the area and it created a large community, and communities like this help people with networking among other things but also changed *the reputation of the neighbourhood*”.<sup>555</sup> [*Italics mine.*] These artists who were interviewed shared a strong appreciation for the artistic community that has emerged in Peckham and brought change. They also recognised the invaluable role of this community in shaping the cultural fabric of Peckham and contributing to the creation of a new identity as a thriving creative hub. It was even emphasised that art had a significant impact on the neighbourhood’s reputation and, therefore, it shows a form of awareness that art is playing a major role in changing Peckham’s image.

Several studies have confirmed that artists play an important role in shaping and interpreting urban spaces. For example, a previous study <sup>556</sup> has shown that artists can have a multi-dimensional role in urban spaces, where artists have the ability to envision and shape the physical environment in a way that goes beyond mere aesthetics. They have the potential to create a space that encompasses various dimensions such as cultural, social and historical aspects. This study further highlights that artists and artist communities can further shape a new image and new reputation for urban spaces. In relation to Peckham, it can be applicable as Peckham’s image became linked to its artists’ community. One of the interviewees highlighted that:

The artists’ community, the food... the food is really good, restaurants and shops and its diversity... when you walk in Rye Lane, you can see people dancing on Reggae music, the nightlife, the different rooftops, and the special art events... they all bring something to Peckham.<sup>557</sup>

While artists play a significant role in shaping urban spaces, it is important to acknowledge that their perspective on urban improvements can be subjective and focused on the amenities and opportunities available to them. They may unintentionally or intentionally overlook the negative impact that urban changes can have on the working-class residents. For instance, during the interviews no one mentioned the term “gentrification” or its negative impact on the neighbourhood. There was only a focus on the positive change and improvements to the

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<sup>555</sup> Paula. Interview with a Painter. Conducted by Habiba Jelali, 3 August 2022.

<sup>556</sup> Aili Vahtrapuu, “The role of artists in urban regeneration. For a sensory approach to the city.” *Territoire en mouvement Revue de géographie et aménagement*, vol. 51, 2021.

<sup>557</sup> Anonymous. Interview with an art teacher. Conducted by Habiba Jelali, 3 August 2022.

neighbourhood. This can be explained by the artists' reluctance to be labelled as 'gentrifiers' themselves.

Gentrification is associated with the displacement of long-standing communities, which can generate a sense of guilt or unease among newcomers (in this case among artists) who are conscious of these issues. By explicitly avoiding mentioning gentrification, the artists may also be avoiding the potential for being perceived as being part of a process that can have detrimental effects on the existing community. One interview which caught my attention was with a writer who said that, "What is sad is that some of Peckham's previous charm is fading with all these rapid changes happening around."<sup>558</sup> He did not develop this idea further, and changed the topic of conversation. Another artist, when asked about the negative impact of these changes, answered, "Change is inevitable. It is an evolution. Peckham has evolved".<sup>559</sup> The other interviewees, when asked "*What is the worst part of the neighbourhood?*" they tackled noise and overcrowding, lack of green spaces, traffic congestion – yet no respondent mentioned 'gentrification'.

This avoidance of the term *gentrification* may also reflect a sensitivity among the artists to the complexities and challenges associated with urban changes. It highlights their awareness of the negative impact the process can have on the neighbourhood and how their narratives and experiences reflect a nuanced understanding of the neighbourhood's transformation. As gentrification may be a broader social and economic phenomenon associated with negative consequences, the artists' viewpoints may highlight their personal interactions, and that they do not want to see themselves as part of the process. It should be clear, though, that the absence of an explicit mention of gentrification does not indicate a lack of awareness as previously explained.

The artists recognised that these positive urban changes were instrumental in reshaping the image of Peckham. The neighbourhood was shedding its previous reputation and becoming known as a creative hub, a place where artists and cultural enthusiasts could thrive. Yet Peckham offers more than just affordable living or a thriving artistic scene for these artists: Peckham offers a sense of attachment and belonging.

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<sup>558</sup> Anonymous. Interview with a writer. Conducted by Habiba Jelali, 4 August 2022.

<sup>559</sup> Jordan. Interview with an illustrator. Conducted by Habiba Jelali, 3 August 2022.

### 8.3.3. Home and Belonging?

During the interviews, complex layers of the artists' relationships with Peckham were revealed, highlighting a deep sense of attachment and belonging. Throughout their narratives and experiences, they shed light on a major element that contributed to their sense of attachment: a strong community spirit. The artistic community plays a pivotal role in fostering a strong sense of belonging and identity among artists.

To understand why artists are attached to their communities, it is important to delve into the meaning of the sense of community. The definition is in itself dynamic and can evolve over time, and can be influenced by external factors such as social, cultural, economic and political changes. According to the framework given by David McMillan and David Chavis, the meaning of 'a sense of community' contains four elements:

The first element is membership. Membership is the feeling of belonging or of sharing a sense of personal relatedness. The second element is influence, a sense of mattering, of making a difference to a group and of the group mattering to its members. The third element is reinforcement: integration and fulfilment of needs. This is the feeling that members' needs will be met by the resources received through their membership in the group. The last element is shared emotional connection, the commitment and belief that members have shared and will share history, common places, time together, and similar experiences.<sup>560</sup>

The same framework can be applied to the artistic communities in Peckham. For example, the first element: *membership or sense of belonging*, is seen in interview responses by the artists highlighting their belonging to the neighbourhood while insisting on being part of a community. This can be also explained through the notion of "elective belonging" developed by Savage et al. in their book *Globalisation and Belonging*. According to Savage, "Elective belonging involves choosing a place to live amongst your own kind, with the result that having local friends becomes an endorsement of one's place of residence".<sup>561</sup> In the context of Peckham, "elective belonging" could be understood as artists intentionally choosing to live in Peckham owing to its unique characteristics. By electing to reside in Peckham they are actively seeking a place where they can connect with like-minded people and participate in the vibrant artistic scene. The second element, *influence*, can be perceived through their contribution which includes artistic events, and showcasing their work. The third element, *integration and*

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<sup>560</sup> David W. McMillan, and David M. Chavis. "Sense of community: A definition and theory." *Journal of community psychology*, 1986, vol. 14, no. 1, pp. 6-23.

<sup>561</sup> M. Savage, G. Bagnall, and B. Longhurst. "Globalization and belonging Sage." Sage Publications, 2005, p. 85.

*fulfilment of needs*, is seen through the resources and opportunities that the neighbourhood provides to this community. Lastly, the fourth element, *shared emotional connections*, is perceived through their shared experiences and networking. The artistic community in Peckham serves as a platform for artists to connect with each other, but also to connect with the area itself, where they have created a sense of ‘home’.

The notion of ‘home’ emerged repeatedly throughout the interviews. The neighbourhood of Peckham has become these artists’ home. It is worth mentioning though that ‘home’ is not just used as a physical space but rather as a state of being, a place where they feel a sense of comfort and belonging. As noted by Duyvendak, “To ‘feel at home’ is not a singular feeling but a plural and layered sentiment that travels from the individual household via the neighbourhood to the nation, and from the house to the workplace.”<sup>562</sup> By considering Peckham their home, artists have actively participated in shaping a new image and new identity for the neighbourhood. Their presence and contribution have had an impact on Peckham’s cultural landscape.

In summary, the notions of *community and homing* have played a significant role in shaping the new image of Peckham. The emergence of a vibrant artistic community has fostered a sense of belonging and enabled artists to create a shared space.

## **Conclusion**

To conclude, artists have played an important role in shaping a new cultural image of the neighbourhood. While art has always had a presence in Peckham, as seen in the first sub-section of this chapter, its prominence and influence have taken on new dimensions and fostered an appreciation for the neighbourhood. For example, Peckham’s art galleries such as the South London Gallery and the artistic hotspots, such as the Bussey Building, and Peckham Levels, have contributed to the area’s changing image. By providing affordable workspaces, exhibitions, and opportunities for artists, these hubs draw attention to the neighbourhood, and contribute to shaping a new Peckham identity.

On the one hand, this chapter has focused on the importance of art in Peckham, historically, and its impact in the evolution of the neighbourhood’s image, from having a bad reputation to

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<sup>562</sup> Jan Duyvendak. *The politics of home: Belonging and nostalgia in Europe and the United States*. Springer, 2011, p. 38.

being a cultural hub. On the other hand, it has showed how artists' perspectives of the area have evolved.

It is, however, worth pointing out that the link between the presence of artists in gentrified areas (or areas undergoing gentrification) and the process of gentrification is a debatable topic. As mentioned previously, extensive research has shown that the relationship between art and gentrification is complex and contentious. Nevertheless, whether directly linked to the presence of artists or not, the consequences of gentrification remain significant and multifaceted, warranting further exploration.

# Part IV

## The Consequences: Resistance and Displacement

As part of the gentrification process, social changes are taking place all over London, particularly in deprived neighbourhoods such as Peckham. Caused by the new lifestyle (with the emergence of new amenities and the urban changes) and an increase in smaller households,<sup>563</sup> the number of professionals and professional jobs is rapidly and noticeably increasing leading to a significant demand for housing in the central areas and therefore to the displacement of the lower-income residents, who are being priced out and displaced from the inner city.

Displacement of the working class in a gentrified neighbourhood is, in most cases, inevitable. According to Atkinson, “[g]entrification-induced displacement may occur when pressures on the housing market from affluent groups create inflated rents and prices which can push out the low paid or unpaid overtime.”<sup>564</sup> Conversely, this process has been portrayed in a positive light by local authorities and developers as these urban changes lead to a temporary mixed society, when in fact it has been shown to create societal frictions between the classes, leading to tension and polarization.

This tension, added to the fear of displacement, or the loss of neighbourhood identity, can sometimes lead to different forms of resistance and mobilisation, and the emergence of anti-gentrification movements. In Peckham, resistance has become more noticeable only recently through social media platforms such as *Twitter*, *Facebook*, and *YouTube*, as the process of

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<sup>563</sup> David Ley. “Alternative Explanations for Inner City Gentrification: A Canadian Assessment.” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, vol. 76, no. 4, December 1986, p. 522.

<sup>564</sup> Rowland Atkinson. “The Hidden Costs of Gentrification: Displacement in Central London.” *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*, December 2000, p. 307.

gentrification is still ongoing, and has only been lately discussed. It was started by individuals to reach unprofitable community group initiatives such as *Peckham Vision*.<sup>565</sup>

This part is divided into two chapters. The first chapter focuses on resistance and anti-gentrification movements, in gentrification literature, and Peckham. The second chapter examines direct and indirect displacement linked to gentrification generally (definition, impact on the displaced) while also considering individual and retail displacement specifically in Peckham.

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<sup>565</sup> Peckham Vision was founded by Eileen Conn, a local resident in 2006 as part of a campaign to save the Copeland Park.

# Chapter 9

## Resistance to Gentrification

As gentrification continues to unfold in various neighbourhoods, including Peckham, resistance movements against this phenomenon have emerged as a response to the perceived social injustice it brings. However, academic literature on gentrification, particularly in France, has traditionally given less attention to the forms of resistance, with a focus primarily centred on the process of gentrification itself. A few notable exceptions exist, such as the work of Marie-Pierre Vincent, PhD,<sup>566</sup> who studied resistance to gentrification in Hoxton/Shoreditch between 2008 and 2019. Vincent's research examined the multi-social dimension of resistance and its different representations: in the press, in the artistic field and the political sphere. Another study<sup>567</sup> by David Fée explored urban social movements that protested to obtain affordable and quality housing in both private and public sectors in London. The study reveals that these movements go back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in the UK but gained increased prominence in the British capital after the 2008 economic crisis. These examples highlight the limited yet significant research focusing on resistance to gentrification and its social implications. In the UK, notable studies conducted by Loretta Lees focused on resisting the process, particularly in London. For instance, one of her recent articles focused on the experience of one of the displacee from the Aylesbury Estate, and highlighted "the different dimensions of an individual's attempt to survive gentrification."<sup>568</sup>

This chapter aims to fill this gap by focusing specifically on anti-gentrification movements in Peckham. By examining the resistance strategies employed by community members, artists and local organisations. It highlights the experiences and perspectives of those involved in resisting gentrification and contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of the process and the social movements that oppose it in the context of Peckham.

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<sup>566</sup> Marie-Pierre Vincent. *Les Résistances à la gentrification et leurs représentations dans le quartier de Hoxton/Shoreditch à Londres de 2008 à 2019*. Diss. Sorbonne université, 2021.

<sup>567</sup> David Fée. "Logement et mobilisation collective à Londres : la naissance d'un mouvement social urbain?" *Observatoire de la société britannique*, no. 23, 2018, pp. 129-150.

<sup>568</sup> Loretta Lees, and Beverley Robinson. "Beverley's Story: Survivability on one of London's newest gentrification frontiers." *City*, vol. 25, no. 5-6, 2021, p. 591.



First, a conceptualization is needed to understand what resistance to gentrification means. According to Oxford's online dictionary, the term resistance means the "dislike of or opposition to a plan, an idea, etc.; the act of refusing to obey," or "a force that stops something moving or makes it move more slowly."<sup>569</sup> In the process of gentrification, "resistance" means to refuse to be displaced, to refuse rent increases, or to refuse new political plans. Resistance to gentrification can also mean protesting in order to obtain affordable and quality housing. In some radical but rare cases, resistance can be seen as a form of social mobilization and protest against urban regeneration policies or the opening of new (multinational) coffee shops and retail outlets that cater solely to the middle and upper-middle classes in a gentrified area. Attacks on the *Cereal Killer Café* in London in 2015 perfectly encapsulate this idea. In September 2015 this Shoreditch novelty cafe, which served bowls of cereal costing between £2.50 and £4.00, was attacked by anti-gentrification protesters opposed to the presence of hipsters and the effects of gentrification. By July 2020, this establishment ceased trading owing to the economic crisis linked to the prolonged lockdown implemented because of the pandemic.<sup>570</sup>

More specifically, the definition of resistance in the gentrification theory is linked to its scientific meaning. It is explained as "the practices of individuals and groups who attempt to stay put in the face of exclusionary, neoliberalising forces,"<sup>571</sup> as noted by Sarah Annunziata and Clara Rivas-Alonso, adding here that:

As much as resistance to gentrification can be collective, politically organized and visible, it can also be highly heterogenous, somehow contradictory and incoherent, reflecting the intimate conflicting feelings of individuals, deliberately invisible, unconscious and practised in solitude.<sup>572</sup>

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<sup>569</sup> "Resistance." Resistance Noun - Definition, Pictures, Pronunciation and Usage Notes | Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary at OxfordLearnersDictionaries.com  
<[www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/resistance?q=resistance%2B](http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/resistance?q=resistance%2B).> Accessed on 12 February 2021.

<sup>570</sup> James Mcallister. "Cereal Killer Café Closes Permanently." *Bighospitality.co.uk*, William Reed Business Media Ltd., 9 July 2020. <[www.bighospitality.co.uk/Article/2020/07/09/Cereal-Killer-Cafe-closes-permanently-in-London-Shoreditch-and-Camden](http://www.bighospitality.co.uk/Article/2020/07/09/Cereal-Killer-Cafe-closes-permanently-in-London-Shoreditch-and-Camden).> Accessed on 12 February, 2021.

<sup>571</sup> Sarah Annunziata, and Clara Rivas-Alonso. "Resisting Gentrification." *Handbook of Gentrification Studies*, Edward Elgar Publishing, 2018, p. 395.

<sup>572</sup> *Ibid.*

This definition highlights that resistance to gentrification is not always organised but arbitrary and unintentional. It can be visible through organized mobilization, or invisible as practised privately by individuals negatively impacted by processes of gentrification.

The mentioned study by Annunziata and Rivas-Alonso<sup>573</sup> has catalogued a specific set of practices as resistance to gentrification. The first step or form is through prevention, by adapting urban planning and housing policies that protect tenants from displacement. The second form is through delaying or anti-eviction and re-housing practices. This comes as a response in cases where no preventive solutions were presented. This is through legal channels, where tenants fight to delay or stop their eviction. The third form is through organized mobilization using awareness campaigns and developing counter-narratives in artistic and mediated events. Finally, the last form is through organised and informal squatting by individuals as an oppositional choice.

To provide a comprehensive and multi-faceted understanding of anti-gentrification movements and their impact on the community, a combination of a literature review (to frame the analysis) and interviews with individuals involved in the resistance to the process, and engagement with local initiatives were needed. An ethnographic approach was therefore needed in order to gain a profound understanding of the social and cultural context during interviews. According to the professor of sociology, Karen O'Reilly, this approach "pays attention to wider structures and the thoughts and feelings of agents, within the context of daily life and individual action."<sup>574</sup>

In the context of Peckham, interviews were conducted with individuals during my multiple visits to the neighbourhood, but also found on Facebook groups such as *Peckham SE:15*, *Peckham Only*, *I grew up in Peckham* and *Friends of Peckham Rye Park*. However, a lack of response from members of these groups was noted. This can be explained by the fact that the first schemes and urban projects implemented by the council that led to the demolition of several council estates and therefore the displacement of some residents go back more than twenty years. I managed as well to conduct an interview with the founder of one of the local initiative groups, *Peckham Vision*, Eileen Conn, who played a major role in resisting gentrification in the neighbourhood by fighting council decisions and saving buildings from demolition and being replaced by private housing blocks. Finally, an interview with an artist, George Okello, who created an art project, a documentary series about gentrification in the area,

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<sup>573</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>574</sup> Karen O'Reilly. *Ethnographic Methods*. Routledge, 2012, p. 10.

adds another layer of understanding. His artistic project provides a different perspective on the impact of gentrification and the role of art in raising awareness.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section explores the various forms of resistance to gentrification observed in London. It classifies resistance into three different forms: artistic activism, noticeable, but also highly questionable owing to the way it engages mainly with the middle and upper-middle classes; spontaneous or individual resistance demonstrated by discontented locals; and organized resistance led by local groups, associations, and sometimes academics. The second section focuses specifically on the neighbourhood of Peckham and examines the emergence of resistance that came as a response to the process. It sheds light on the individual resistance to the displacement that was perceived when some residents managed to stay in the neighbourhood despite the council's decision to demolish several council estates.<sup>575</sup> Additionally, it highlights the role of grassroots organisation in resisting the process. Finally, it highlights the role of art in spreading awareness about the process as a form of resistance.

### **9.1. Different Forms of Resistance to Gentrification in London**

As outlined earlier, anti-gentrification and resistance to gentrification movements are recent consequences of the overall process. In most cases, it is not organized or visible as it can be arbitrary and unintentional.<sup>576</sup> The visible form is through public resistance evidenced by resisting local politics that encourage private investment, policies that lead to the displacement of local people and rent increases, or resistance by means of art projects. The concept of resistance in response to gentrification is therefore not restricted to public actions<sup>577</sup> as artistic activism can also be considered a form of resistance. A less visible form is manifested through awareness and spontaneous or individual acts of resistance such as locals resisting displacement and choosing to stay in their neighbourhoods.

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<sup>575</sup> This was perceived during the process of decanting when *The Southwark Five-Estate Masterplan* implemented in the late 1990s in the neighbourhood, that led to the demolition of several council estates. Tenants were relocated or pushed out to facilitate for new developments and accommodate the influx of new residents, leading to a direct displacement of some of the residents. This will be further developed in the following chapter.

<sup>576</sup> Sarah Annunziata, and Clara Rivas-Alonso. "Resisting Gentrification." *Handbook of Gentrification Studies*, 2018, p. 395.

<sup>577</sup> Marie Pierre Vincent. "Representing the Anti-Gentrification Resistance: The Role of Two Artists in a Retail Market in London." *Art and Gentrification in the Changing Neoliberal Landscape*. Routledge. 2021, p. 94.

As London is one of the capital cities most affected by gentrification and is at the heart of private and foreign investment, various forms of resistance were perceived. During the last half-century, deprived neighbourhoods have transformed rapidly and extensively to accommodate middle and upper-middle-class residents, often displacing the working classes; some managed to resist and stay in their neighbourhoods, while others were displaced. In the face of such challenges, art activism has also emerged as a tool and a response to the process.

### 9.1.1. Art Activism

Art has a pivotal role in gentrification. It has been linked to the process in different ways. Several studies suggest that artists played the role of gentrifiers or “pre-gentrifiers.” As explained in the previous chapter, a number of research in gentrified areas in Canada (Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver), showed that artists can be agents of the process.<sup>578</sup> In this study, Ley defines gentrification as the process of transforming a poor area with limited property investments to a “state of commodification and reinvestment”<sup>579</sup> through artistic embellishment. He explains that cultural production has direct effects on economic capital. Artists, in valorising the space, participate in changing the aesthetic view of the area, attracting new capital and a new class to the neighbourhood, and therefore leading to gentrification. Another similar study in Hoxton, London,<sup>580</sup> shows that artists were the first wave of gentrifiers in the neighbourhood in the 1990s. Artists, attracted to the abandoned cheap warehouses and former workshops, created a new image and attracted reinvestment. More recently, artists have also been using their art as a tool to explain the process of gentrification which is now considered a form of activism.

According to Michael Shank, one of the previous directors of public affairs in *World Culture Open*,<sup>581</sup> and the founder and director of the International Forum on Communication and Culture, art is “transcendent,”<sup>582</sup> its role is to transcend and convey present issues to its audience, and to be a tool for social justice. In the context of gentrification, artists use their art

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<sup>578</sup> David Ley. “Artists, Aestheticization, and the Field of Gentrification.” *Urban Studies*, vol. 40, no. 12, 2003, p. 2527.

<sup>579</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>580</sup> Andrew Harris. “Art and Gentrification: Pursuing the Urban Pastoral in Hoxton, London.” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, vol. 37, no. 2, 2012, pp. 226–241., < [www.jstor.org/stable/41427943](http://www.jstor.org/stable/41427943).> Accessed 1 July 2016.

<sup>581</sup> *World Culture Open* is a global movement and a creative think tank.

<sup>582</sup> Michael Shank, and Howard Zinn. “Redefining the Movement: Art Activism.” *Seattle Journal for Social Justice*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2004.

to portray and raise awareness as a form of resistance and part of the anti-gentrification movement.

A recent study of two artistic projects in the London borough of Hackney demonstrates such projects are catalysts for the anti-gentrification movement.<sup>583</sup> This study shows two different projects: the first is called *Future Hackney*, and the second, *On Gentrification*. *Future Hackney* is a long-term community art project documenting social changes in East London through photography. It was launched in September 2018 and continues today. *On Gentrification* was an art exhibition of drawings of Ridley Road Market in nearby Dalston. This project aimed to show gentrification in traditional street markets in London. The exhibition housed in King's Cross ran for almost six months between October 2017 and March 2018. Both these projects use art as a tool of reflection, inviting the audience to perceive and understand the process of gentrification and is, therefore, a non-direct tool of resistance.

Other artistic projects with the same aim were presented elsewhere in London. In 2015, the Offsite Gallery in London exhibited a project entitled *Developer Up Yours*, by artist Gram Hilleard. The artist displayed postcards, (see Figures 1 and 2), about gentrified London, mocking the transformation and what London became. The gallery has closed permanently, but some postcards are available in an online article published by *The Guardian*<sup>584</sup> in 2015 to advertise the project.

Artistic activism can be indirect and a trigger for resistance. In the gentrification process, artistic activism does not resist displacement but can be effective in raising awareness of the issue. Once again it is important to highlight that this form of activism predominantly engages with middle-class and upper-middle-class audiences, thereby having limited influence owing to these groups already being viewed as “gentrifiers”.

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<sup>583</sup> Marie Pierre Vincent, “Representing the Anti-Gentrification Resistance: The Role of Two Artists in a Retail Market in London.” *Art and Gentrification in the Changing Neoliberal Landscape*. Routledge. 2021, p. 97.

<sup>584</sup> Kathryn Bromwich. “Developers, up Yours! Anti-Gentrification Postcards – in Pictures.” *The Guardian*, 25 April 2015, <[www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/gallery/2015/apr/25/developers-up-yours-gram-hilleards-anti-gentrification-postcards-in-pictures](http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/gallery/2015/apr/25/developers-up-yours-gram-hilleards-anti-gentrification-postcards-in-pictures)> Accessed on 2 July 2021.

**Figure 1 – Poundland Postcard**



**Source:** Bromwich, Kathryn. “Developers, up Yours! Anti-Gentrification Postcards – in Pictures.” *The Guardian*. April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2015. <[www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/gallery/2015/apr/25/developers-up-yours-gram-hilleards-anti-gentrification-postcards-in-pictures](http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/gallery/2015/apr/25/developers-up-yours-gram-hilleards-anti-gentrification-postcards-in-pictures)> Accessed on 2 July, 2021.

**Figure 2 – Soho The Bohemian Quarter Postcard**



**Source:** Bromwich, Kathryn. “Developers, up Yours! Anti-Gentrification Postcards – in Pictures.” *The Guardian*, 25 April 2015. <[www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/gallery/2015/apr/25/developers-up-yours-gram-hilleards-anti-gentrification-postcards-in-pictures](http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/gallery/2015/apr/25/developers-up-yours-gram-hilleards-anti-gentrification-postcards-in-pictures)> Accessed on 2 July 2021.

### 9.1.2. Organised Resistance

Other visible forms of resistance consist of organised movements, campaigns, organised demonstrations, etc. for instance, some organisations aim mainly to include the locals in political decisions, to make them aware of newly implemented policies, to limit privatisation and demolition of council housing, and to provide alternatives beneficial to the area without leading to the displacement of some of the locals. These local groups use petitions, host pop-ups and social events and organize stand-ups. Sometimes, they manage to work with the local authorities to provide solutions. Theoretically, the Neighbourhood Planning legislation introduced by the Coalition government under the Localism Act 2011, made local communities' involvement easier in planning in their own neighbourhoods as it "gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shape the development and growth of their local area."<sup>585</sup> However, the Neighbourhood Planning legislation has faced criticism. A previous study has indicated that "the communities which have been quickest to embrace localism and begin the process of Neighbourhood Planning are more likely to be in rural areas. The reasons for this are unclear. It may be, as some have argued, because they are wealthier than the average."<sup>586</sup> It was also concluded that some decisions were influenced by local elites.<sup>587</sup>

Despite these challenges, organised mobilisation remains a key component of the anti-gentrification observed in several neighbourhoods undergoing the process. In retail gentrification, this is perceived when local business owners mobilise themselves if threatened with displacement. For instance, this has been perceived in the Ridley Road Shopping Village, situated in the London Borough of Hackney. In October 2018, the market faced the imminent threat of shutdown. In response, campaigns led by shop owners, along with other local organisations, were mobilised to preserve the market as an integral part of the neighbourhood's identity.<sup>588</sup>

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<sup>585</sup> "Neighbourhood Planning." *Gov.UK*, <[www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2#what-is-neighbourhood-planning](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2#what-is-neighbourhood-planning)> Accessed 10 July 2023.

<sup>586</sup> John Sturzaker, and Dave Shaw. "Localism in practice: lessons from a pioneer neighbourhood plan in England." *Town Planning Review*, 2015, pp. 587-609.

<sup>587</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>588</sup> Marie-Pierre Vincent. "Action publique et gentrification commerciale : la régénération contestée d'un marché municipal à Londres." *Métropoles*, no. 31, 2022.

It is worth mentioning that these examples of resistance and alternatives are specific to each area, and to the advancement of the process of gentrification. In London for example, different practices are noticed in different gentrified areas.

Other organised strategies<sup>589</sup> to resist the lack of affordable housing and demolition in London were deployed such as organised protesting. A noticeable example is *March for Homes* in 2015, when an estimated 5,000 people gathered outside City Hall to denounce the lack of council housing and rent increases.<sup>590</sup> “Sleepover” protesting was also used as a technique to denounce demolition. For example, in March 2015, a sleepover protest led by the comedian Russel Brand<sup>591</sup> to protest against the redevelopment of the Sweets Way estate in north London attracted the media’s attention.

Campaigns such as *Focus E15*, located in Newham, are working to fight the Council’s eviction drive. This campaign was launched in September 2013<sup>592</sup> when a group of young mothers were served with eviction notices and threatened with being displaced outside of London because Newham Council cut funding to a hostel for young homeless people. *Focus E15*, whose slogan is, *Social Housing Not Social Cleansing*, still continues its work in finding solutions such as affordable housing, council housing for those in need, and campaigning for refurbishment instead of demolition.

Another campaign with similar objectives is the *Balfron Social Club*,<sup>593</sup> located in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. This campaign, which was launched in 2014, aims at fighting against council decisions and retaining at least 50% of social housing after regeneration programmes have taken place. This campaign is currently working on reclaiming social housing in the refurbished brutalist Balfron Tower, located in Poplar in East London. In partnership with the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, *Harca Poplar*, a housing and regeneration association based in east London, refurbished and converted the building into luxury

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<sup>589</sup> These strategies were highlighted in David Fée. "Logement et Mobilisation Collective à Londres : la Naissance d'un Mouvement Social Urbain?." *Observatoire de la Société Britannique*, no. 23, 2018, pp. 129-150.

<sup>590</sup> Mark Townsend, and Liam Kelly. “Thousands gather in London to protest against lack of affordable housing.” *The Guardian*, 31 January 2015. <<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/jan/31/hundreds-gather-london-march-for-homes-protest-city-hall-affordable-housing>.> Accessed 10 June 2023.

<sup>591</sup> Diane Taylor. “Sleepover protest led by Russel Brand draws 150 to Sweets Way Estate.” *The Guardian*, 19 March 2015. <<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/mar/19/sleepover-protest-led-by-russell-brand-draws-150-to-sweets-way-estate>.> Accessed 10 June 2023.

<sup>592</sup> Brenda Phillips. “Focus E15 about Us.” *Focus E15 Campaign*, 6 September 2015, <[www.focuse15.org/about/](http://www.focuse15.org/about/).> Accessed 17 July 2021.

<sup>593</sup> “Official Home Page Balfron Social Club.” *Balfron Social Club*. <[www.balfronsocialclub.org/](http://www.balfronsocialclub.org/).> Accessed on 2 June 2021.



apartments. The building will therefore be privatised in order to, “maximise funds for new homes [for previous tenants] elsewhere, and to pay for the tower’s renovation”.<sup>594</sup>

Many scholars, especially in London, have shifted their attention away from the process of gentrification itself and its impact on the working-class residents to resistance, aiming at finding solutions, preventing gentrification, but also resisting it. In New York, movements such as the *Movement for Justice in El Barrio*<sup>595</sup> emerged to fight back against displacement. In London, similar anti-gentrification movements led by scholars and community organizations began to emerge.

In 2014, the scholar Loretta Lees, known for her research on gentrification, collaborated with the London Tenants Federation<sup>596</sup>, Just Space<sup>597</sup>, and Southwark Notes Archive Group<sup>598</sup> publishing *Staying Put: Anti-Gentrification Handbook for Council Estates in London*,<sup>599</sup> supported by the Antipode Foundation, a scholar-activist project.

The handbook presents different cases and examples of local campaign groups and organizations promoting anti-gentrification measures and resisting council estate demolition. It aims to prevent gentrification as well as provide solutions and alternatives. The handbook is divided into three parts. The first part is a presentation and an explanation of terms and concepts such as “gentrification,” “regeneration in gentrification,” “the consultation con,” “the affordable housing con,” and “displacement.” This introduction aims to impart information and raise awareness of local authority housing estates, and the ways in which they are threatened with demolition caused by processes of gentrification disguised as regeneration. It provides examples of regenerated council housing such as the Heygate Estate, located in Walworth, which led to the displacement of residents without providing alternative accommodation on the

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<sup>594</sup> Judith Evans. “Inside the Tower Block Refurbished for Luxury Living.” *Financial Times*, 3 May 2019. <[www.ft.com/content/f4e7a2c6-5aa1-11e9-939a-341f5ada9d40](http://www.ft.com/content/f4e7a2c6-5aa1-11e9-939a-341f5ada9d40)> Accessed 2 July 2021.

<sup>595</sup> Jessica Davies, et al. “Participatory Democracy Drives Anti-Gentrification Movement in New York's El Barrio.” *Truthout*, 16 April 2016. <[www.truthout.org/articles/participatory-democracy-drives-anti-gentrification-movement-in-new-york-s-el-barrio/](http://www.truthout.org/articles/participatory-democracy-drives-anti-gentrification-movement-in-new-york-s-el-barrio/)> Accessed on 15 February 2021.

<sup>596</sup> *London Tenants Federation* was established in 2002 in London. It reunites different social housing tenants’ organizations with the aim to involve tenants in the production of housing and planning policies and influencing national housing ones.

<sup>597</sup> *Just Space* is a wide network based in London. It unites around 80 community groups and independent organizations.

<sup>598</sup> *Southwark Notes Archive Group* is a group of local people writing about regeneration and gentrification of the North Southwark area.

<sup>599</sup> Loretta Lees. “Stay Put: An Anti-Gentrification Handbook for Council Estates in London.” *Calverts co-operative*, June 2014. <<https://justspacelondon.files.wordpress.com/2014/06/staying-put-web-version.pdf>> Accessed 2 June 2021.

premises, or the Pepys Estate in Deptford which was sold to private investors resulting in replacing former council housing with luxury flats.

The second part of the handbook highlights early signs of gentrification: how locals can tell whether their neighbourhood is being gentrified, official avenues to keep abreast of developments, while encouraging local campaigns, from simply leafletting, using social media or forming local groups to stand against political decisions leading to areas being gentrified.

The third section addresses providing alternatives such as encouraging community planning so locals can put forward alternative projects and visions. Proposals include co-operative housing (controlled by local democratic organizations), community housing associations (created and run by the community), and refurbishment as an alternative to demolition and rebuilding.

The handbook, expressed in simple language, addresses all concerned parties and is free to download online. It targets community groups and individuals who live in areas threatened by gentrification, but also anyone interested in learning more about gentrification and alternative solutions, for example, local politicians and scholars.

## **9.2. Resistance in Peckham**

Even though the process of gentrification is not new in Peckham, as demolition of council housing and urban transformations started in the late 1990s, resistance to this phenomenon has not yet fully emerged, with the term “gentrification” only having been used by the media in relation to Peckham over the last 7 to 8 years. This late resistance to gentrification has recently become apparent mainly through the efforts of non-profit associations such as *Peckham Vision*, an organisation unaffiliated with any anti-gentrification movements, which is involved in council planning and decision-making and resists certain regeneration plans. Interestingly, no evidence of campaigns resisting local rent increases has come to light.

The notion of gentrification has become increasingly prevalent in the area over the last 5 years and is a term used by the local media in particular (as seen in chapter 7), local individuals, and artists. Yet no organized local form of resistance to gentrification is noted. The different forms discussed here are either spontaneous resistance led by a few former residents who refused to leave their council homes after the council decided on demolition, or through the efforts of *Peckham Vision* resisting some local regeneration plans, and finally the efforts of two artists who made a documentary raising awareness about gentrification in Peckham.

### 9.2.1. Individual Resistance in Peckham

This form of resistance is perceived when individuals refuse to accept local policies or regeneration programs that lead to the displacement of former residents, but as previously mentioned this is limited owing to the difficulty in tracing former residents of demolished council estates in the neighbourhood. For example, out of the sixteen former residents of the demolished council estates<sup>600</sup> found on Facebook groups, only two indicated that they resisted displacement, as seen in the previous chapter. The 72-year-old resident<sup>601</sup> managed to remain in the neighbourhood despite not being granted another council housing. Instead, he was allocated a tenancy with a private association. Another resident<sup>602</sup> who initially lived in North Peckham and later in Sumner Estate, refused a council proposal to relocate to a different area, like the aforementioned resident, secured a flat through a private association.

Other long-term residents met during my multiple visits (six people who have lived in the neighbourhood for over 30 years) when asked “How did they manage to stay in the neighbourhood despite the increasing housing prices and the urban and social transformations?” gave responses that went beyond mere financial considerations. Peckham represented more than a physical “home.” They expressed a profound emotional connection to their neighbourhood, stemming from years of personal experiences and shared ones with their community. For example, this 59-year-old resident who moved with her husband when she was 25 years old shared: “Peckham is our home. It’s where we raised our kids, experienced all sorts of ups and downs. but leaving? No, it’s not easy. It’s like we’ve planted ourselves here, can’t just get up and leave all that behind, you know what I mean?”<sup>603</sup>

However, because the data is limited to a small number of respondents this form of resistance cannot be substantiated even though its existence cannot be denied and forms part of the early stages of the process of resistance to gentrification.

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<sup>600</sup> As part of the *The Southwark Five-Estate Masterplan* implemented in the late 1990s in the neighbourhood, that led to the demolition of several council estates: North Peckham Estate, the Sumner Estate, The Willowbrook Estate, The Camden Estate and the Gloucester Grove estate.

<sup>601</sup> Respondent 4. Survey on Peckham Only, Facebook group, 15 March 2021.

<sup>602</sup> Respondent 5. Survey on Peckham SE15 Past and Present, Facebook group, 16 March 2021.

<sup>603</sup> A long-term Local Resident. Personal Interview in the Neighbourhood of Peckham. 5 August 2018.

### 9.2.2. Organised resistance in Peckham

In terms of grassroots organizations, *Peckham Vision* is one of the few that stand out in the area. It is a resident-led local association, i.e. a local community action group with only 26 members. Its members are individuals who live and work or own businesses in the area. During an interview conducted with its founder, Eileen Conn, said:

*Peckham Vision* is not a membership association. We don't represent anyone, we are only twenty-six, and there are only four of us who do the work and we are all middle class [...] By 2011, social media came along, and we had more than 2,500 people on our email list, we didn't need members, what we were doing, we were doing things and we needed to communicate with as many people as possible, and with social media, it was easier to communicate with people.<sup>604</sup>

Initially, local associations did not need members, but in 2017, when they were required to appear on the electoral register, local associations needed to have at least 21 members. Aimed at social change, *Peckham Vision* mediates between the local authority and residents negating any need for official members. According to its constitution published in 2013, “[i]ts vision is to support Peckham town centre as a thriving and sustainable social and commercial centre, and to contribute to packing, in being a good place for all in which to live, work and visit.”<sup>605</sup> Its focus is on council plans relating to Peckham town centre, Peckham Rye, Peckham High Street and Peckham Hill Street (see Figure 3).

*Peckham Vision* was founded and coordinated by Eileen Conn, an ex-Whitehall civil servant and long-term Peckham resident who bought a property in the area in 1973. Conn started campaigning in Southwark in the 1970s, first as a member of *Peckham Action Group*, and later by founding *Rye Lane and Action Station Group*, (her purpose was to improve the quality of life in the shopping area of Rye Lane and the railway station by creating a way for the locals to work with the council), and *Bellenden Residents Group* (another local community group focusing on Bellenden). Juggling different action groups, the founder eventually created *Peckham Vision* to unite local groups while maintaining the same objective, namely improving the quality of life in the area.

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<sup>604</sup> Eileen Conn. Personal Interview on Zoom. 7 July 2021.

<sup>605</sup> Management Board Members. *Peckham Vision Constitution*. 14 May 2013.

<[https://www.peckhamvision.org/wiki/images/1/1f/Peckham\\_Vision\\_Constitution\\_%28\\_Revised\\_23.5.14%29.pdf](https://www.peckhamvision.org/wiki/images/1/1f/Peckham_Vision_Constitution_%28_Revised_23.5.14%29.pdf)> Accessed on 2 June 2021.

Eileen Conn was named one of *The Planner* magazine’s Women of Influence in 2020 for her role with *Peckham Vision*, for protecting the heritage of the neighbourhood, her involvement in planning issues, and in encouraging local participation in planning politics. She also worked on the relationship between the police and the local authority with the community.

Figure 3 – Peckham Centre Town



**Source:** Peckham Vision. “Peckham Town Centre.” *Peckham Vision*, <[www.peckhamvision.org/wiki/Peckham\\_Town\\_Centre](http://www.peckhamvision.org/wiki/Peckham_Town_Centre)> Accessed on 2 June 2021

*Peckham Vision* is located at 135a Rye Lane, housed in a property donated by the owners of Copeland Park in the cultural part of Peckham, hosting pop-up events and providing information about the town centre. The organisation also has a studio in the Bussey Building which occasionally stages publicised events, the first of which took place in January 2006 when approximately 200 locals were invited and made aware of council proposals to demolish the Bussey Building and the Copeland Park site, transforming the plot into a tram depot. This event

led to a discussion about Peckham's future and the publication of their first blog article, "Local Communities Unaware of Council's Plans."<sup>606</sup> *Peckham Vision*'s primary objective was to promote and encourage citizen action, including people and making them aware of political decisions, thereby encouraging local engagement.

Also, in 2006, *Peckham Vision* started a campaign to oppose the Council's plan. Members engaged in council meetings; they launched a petition and convinced business owners to stand with them. By 2008, Transport for London (TfL) published a new report<sup>607</sup> indicating that Copeland Park was not entirely suitable for the tram depot plan, and that TfL would examine alternative sites, hence *Peckham Vision* succeeding in its campaign. Of note is that the decision to withdraw the plan was not taken by the Council, but by TfL itself, as they were collaborating on the project.

*Peckham Vision* has achieved numerous goals over the last 15 years. Besides saving the Bussey building in 2017, they managed to save the Peckham Multi-Storey building (where PeckhamPlex is located) from demolition, providing new leases to the existing businesses.

In 2012, the cinema was threatened with demolition. Southwark Council, as part of a new development program,<sup>608</sup> included the demolition of the former car park and the building where the cinema is located, in order to build a twenty-storey building. *Peckham Vision* launched a campaign objecting to the proposal, and an online petition attracted more than 4,500 signatures. In addition, thousands of letters were sent to Southwark Council. In 2017, just months before the planned opening of Peckham Levels, the five-year campaign succeeded. It led the Council to withdraw the plan, and leases were extended.<sup>609</sup>

An interview with a cinema employee revealed that they staunchly believed that, "this place was saved by the people of the neighbourhood, [...] the PeckhamPlex is an asset to the

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<sup>606</sup> Peckham Vision. "Local Community Unaware of Council's Plans." *Peckham Vision Blog*, January 2006, <[www.peckhamvision.org/blog/?m=200601](http://www.peckhamvision.org/blog/?m=200601)> Accessed on 2 June 2021.

<sup>607</sup> Transport for London. "Cross River Tram: Stage 4a Depot Report Technical Note 72." *Transport for London*, vol. 1, October 2008, <[https://www.peckhamvision.org/wiki/images/e/e7/09.04\\_depot\\_location\\_TN72\\_Stage\\_4a\\_Depot\\_Report\\_volume\\_1\\_v0.2\\_O275.pdf](https://www.peckhamvision.org/wiki/images/e/e7/09.04_depot_location_TN72_Stage_4a_Depot_Report_volume_1_v0.2_O275.pdf)> Accessed 9 July 2021.

<sup>608</sup> London Borough of Southwark. "Revitalise: Peckham and Nunhead Area Action Plan", February 2012, <<http://www.southwark.gov.uk/futurepeckham>> Accessed 11 June 2019.

<sup>609</sup> Peckham Vision. "Multi-Storey Car Park." *Multi-Storey Car Park - Peckham Vision*. <[www.peckhamvision.org/wiki/index.php?title=Multi-Storey\\_Car\\_Park&mobileaction=toggle\\_view\\_desktop#December\\_2017\\_Petition\\_to\\_stop\\_the\\_20\\_Storey\\_Tower\\_in\\_Peckham](http://www.peckhamvision.org/wiki/index.php?title=Multi-Storey_Car_Park&mobileaction=toggle_view_desktop#December_2017_Petition_to_stop_the_20_Storey_Tower_in_Peckham)> Accessed 1 March 2021.

neighbourhood, but also a part of Peckham's identity"<sup>610</sup> This cinema may have been saved from demolition, but other local facilities such as the Aylesham Centre have succumbed to new development plans and will soon be transformed into, predominantly, residential apartment blocks, and this is a further step towards gentrification, a process which almost invariably leads to the transformation of the local housing stock.

The multi-screen cinema is well-known in the area, among both locals and newcomers. It was described as one of the best cinemas in London, with its vintage or, run down, style, depending on perspective, showing all new films at an affordable flat rate of £5 per screening.

One local explained his answer to the question "how did you notice that your neighbourhood is becoming gentrified?" by saying,

[...] and then you notice, next store opens up, and Peckham cinema, that was really cheap is suddenly full of middle classes because they feel 'this is amazing, it is really cheap' and then no locals go there anymore because it is all sold out, and again that was taken from you... none of this is for the locals, none of this is for us [...].<sup>611</sup>

This interviewee revealed a feeling of spatial polarisation, where working-class workers are being replaced by the new arrivals. The interviewee shows, as well, awareness of how the locals are being pushed out from their local facilities. This cinema might not have gone through renovations as had the other projects, at least not yet, but it is one of the places that was very attractive to the new "locals" or clientele. In fact, The PeckhamPlex won the Love London Award launched by *TimeOut*, in both 2015 and 2016.<sup>612</sup> It is an award in recognition of the best-loved place (bar, café, restaurant, shop...etc.) in London and voted by Londoners. The PeckhamPlex won this award ahead of a chic and high-quality restaurant, *Pedler*, located on Peckham Rye, which opened in 2015, and which has an expensive and sophisticated menu.

Back to Peckham Vision, more recently, the name of this local community group has become indirectly associated with the anti-gentrification movement even though the organization never promoted itself as anti-gentrification, as evidenced by the fact that the founder did not believe

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<sup>610</sup> Anonymous. Interview with an employee at the Cinema. Conducted by Habiba Jelali at PeckhamPlex, 27 July 2018.

<sup>611</sup> Anonymous. Interview with a 23-year-old student born and raised in Peckham. Conducted by Habiba Jelali at the library, 5 August 2019.

<sup>612</sup> Time Out London. "Peckhamplex." *Time Out London*, 25 April 2018.  
<[www.timeout.com/london/cinemas/peckhamplex](http://www.timeout.com/london/cinemas/peckhamplex)> Accessed 1 March 2021.

gentrification could be halted and was inevitable both in Peckham and London more widely.<sup>613</sup>

Conn clarifies:

I actually never thought about gentrification in relation to Peckham until 2013/14, when I was interviewed on the television, and [the reporter] asked me a question about gentrification and I was intimidated because I thought it is a distraction, why bother with that! That made me think of the prices that were rising out of the norm that is only when I started thinking about it...But the kind of work that we are doing is important I wouldn't say stopping it (gentrification) or even slowing it down because the causes are so complex... but it is easy to encourage gentrification and very difficult or impossible to discourage it.<sup>614</sup>

The founder of the association stresses the complexity of the process and uses the term “irreversible” and the phrase “a major factor in the gentrification” when she recalls the climax of the urban and social changes in the neighbourhood which coincided with the arrival of the Overground. In fact, *Peckham Vision* launched a campaign in 2007 objecting to losing the rail link between London Bridge and Victoria which was to be replaced by the Overground, although their cause was ultimately unsuccessful.

*Peckham Vision* is currently working on several issues, yet focuses mainly on the Peckham Rye Station redevelopment project, and the Old Waiting Room and Staircase restoration. The first project relates to Southwark Council working with the Greater London Authority and Network Rail to transform and refurbish the square in front of the station.<sup>615</sup> The project has already led to the displacement of some local shops from the square. The project which commenced in 2016 was delayed by pandemic measures but remains ongoing with completion estimated for autumn 2021. The Old Waiting Room and Staircase Restoration project concerns the waiting room on the second floor of Peckham Rye railway station, constructed in the late nineteenth century. This space had been closed for more than 50 years until 2016 when Network Rail partnered with Benedict O’Looney Architects to restore the waiting room.<sup>616</sup>

As *Peckham Vision* is not a membership group there are no subscription fees collected and funding is achieved via donations. Conn explains that they spend between £2,000-£3,000 a year on printing promotional materials. She also states that *Peckham Vision* will not be the same

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<sup>613</sup> Eileen Conn. Personal Interview. 8 July, 2021.

<sup>614</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>615</sup> “Peckham Rye Station Square.” *Southwark Council*, 12 February 2021.

<[www.southwark.gov.uk/regeneration/peckham-and-nunhead/peckham-rye-station-square](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/regeneration/peckham-and-nunhead/peckham-rye-station-square)> Accessed 20 July 2021.

<sup>616</sup> Isabelle Aron. “The Old Waiting Room at Peckham Rye Station Is Re-Opening to the Public after 50 Years.” *Time Out London*. 16 June 2016, <[www.timeout.com/london/blog/the-old-waiting-room-at-peckham-rye-station-is-re-opening-to-the-public-after-50-years-061616](http://www.timeout.com/london/blog/the-old-waiting-room-at-peckham-rye-station-is-re-opening-to-the-public-after-50-years-061616)> Accessed 20 July 2021.



after lockdown since she is the only active member which has led to the workload becoming too demanding. She says: “I have tried to create a local group that is very active that focuses on the town centre because nobody else does including the council. I’ve tried for 11 years and I failed to get some kind of form of a working group in the centre to bring everybody with the council.”<sup>617</sup> Instead, the Council thwarted her efforts several times. Conn adds:

Peckham Vision will not return after the lockdown into anything like people think of it in the past. I doubt very much I will ever again do collective events, too much work, I don’t want to be doing that... Through all of this experience, I am much more focused on trying to change as it always was but the burden of running something like *Peckham Vision* is now really getting in my way of what I want to do, to change the system, which is got more difficult in this country with the government’s current planning reforms proposals which wiped out 95% of our current scope for getting engaged in planning.<sup>618</sup>

*Peckham Vision* has been very active and a major part of Peckham's life throughout the last decade and a half. It participated in many events and planning programs. Clearly, this local association stands against demolition with the founder fighting the Council every time a harmful regeneration program is proposed. Even though they do not win every cause, this group may be instrumental in “slowing the process”. Nevertheless, the group’s presence and involvement in the process of gentrification have been questioned. In 2016 during interviews I conducted with local residents as part of a field study, only 9 out of 26 residents knew what *Peckham Vision* was, while 5 out of 26 had heard of it but were not interested in finding out more; 12 had not heard of it at all.<sup>619</sup> Of note is that these 12 respondents are from ethnic minorities who have been living locally since the 1990s.

### 9.2.3. Art Activism in Peckham

Art Activism is not well perceived in Peckham, at least not yet, although the neighbourhood is known for its street art and cultural hubs. As seen in the previous chapter, individual artists even avoided the term “gentrification” when not mentioned, it was concluded that they did not want to be labelled as “gentrifiers.” No artistic project, either directly or indirectly identifiable with anti-gentrification, emerged until June 2018, when a local artist, Shane Duncan, a

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<sup>617</sup> Eileen Conn. Personal Interview. 8 July 2021.

<sup>618</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>619</sup> Study field, 26 people were questioned in different place in the neighbourhood, Peckham Library, Morisson, Poundland, and costa coffee. 27 February 2016.

filmmaker born and raised in Brixton, South London, shared a short *YouTube* video on gentrification in Peckham.

Duncan shared a series of four episodes about gentrification in three different areas: Brixton, Peckham, and Croydon. The first episode is entitled “This is Brixton”<sup>620</sup> published on 10 January 2018. The second video is entitled “This is Peckham”<sup>621</sup> shared online on 28 June 2018. The video shows people of different ages and from different ethnic minorities born and raised in Peckham, or who moved in years ago, describing their neighbourhood and the new urban changes. They use terms such as “gentrification,” or “regeneration,” and they show some fear for the future of the area, yet many mentioned their own responsibility to be involved in protecting its unique identity.

The third video<sup>622</sup> is similar but about urban changes in Croydon and was shared on 6 December 2018. The fourth video is entitled “This is the end”<sup>623</sup> and it is considered a bonus to the series, published a year after the first three episodes. It is about the Festival that was organized in the area, and reunited three singers from three different origins to represent the diversity in the district. Its purpose was to highlight and celebrate the multi-ethnic culture of these neighbourhoods. Gentrification often brings changes to the cultural and social fabric of an area, which results in the displacement of diverse communities, and the loss of its cultural identity. The organisation of this festival is an attempt to shed light on the multi-ethnic culture of these areas and represent a form of resistance against the homogenising effects of gentrification.

The second art project emerged when another local artist, photographer and filmmaker George Okello published a series of eight videos on his *YouTube* Channel as part of the *Peckham Documentary Project*. The 8 videos are 11 to 13 minutes in length, apart from one which lasts for an hour.

Peckham-based George Okello grew up in southeast London. He graduated from Brighton University and specialises in television production and media communication. As part of the community, and in response to rapid urban changes in his neighbourhood including the

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<sup>620</sup> Shane Duncan. “THIS IS BRIXTON - (s1, EP 1/4).” *YouTube*. 10 January 2018, <[www.youtube.com/watch?v=HwhSyxNQpTA&t=28s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HwhSyxNQpTA&t=28s)>. Accessed on 15 July 2021.

<sup>621</sup> Shane Duncan. “THIS IS PECKHAM - (s1, EP 2/4).” *YouTube*. 25 June 2018, <[www.youtube.com/watch?v=2XMU9XPdig8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2XMU9XPdig8)>. Accessed on 25 July 2021.

<sup>622</sup> Shane Duncan. “THIS IS CROYDON - (s1, EP 3/4).” *YouTube*, 6 December 2018, <[www.youtube.com/watch?v=4QjRCE\\_jQNY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4QjRCE_jQNY)>. Accessed on 15 July 2021.

<sup>623</sup> Shane Duncan. “THIS IS THE ENDS - (s1, EP 4/4).” *YouTube*. 29 October 2019, <[www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sxvqneo9uZ4&t=124s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sxvqneo9uZ4&t=124s)>. Accessed on 15 July 2021.

emergence of gentrification, he felt a need to work on this project. He aims to unravel the impact of these changes on the different communities and on the whole of Peckham. He also aims, aided by this series of films, to try to provide solutions to the process.

The first video in this series was published on August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020, and is entitled *Introducing Peckham Vision*.<sup>624</sup> The video is 11 minutes long. The artist interviews the founder of *Peckham Vision*, Eileen Conn, and another member of the local association, Corinne Turner, who discuss the important role the group plays in opposing Southwark Council's demolition plans, particularly the Bussey Building regeneration plans, that they succeeded in stopping.

The second video is entitled *Peckham Vision/An Answer to Gentrification*,<sup>625</sup> published on 16 August 2020, and is a continuation of the first instalment. Okello interviews the same two members of Peckham Vision to discuss their position on the process of gentrification, its impact on the area, and what future projects the organization has planned.

The third video entitled *The Invisibility of Black People in Peckham*,<sup>626</sup> was published on 17 August 2020. In this video, the artist interviews the founder of *gIRLS aBOUT pECKHAM*<sup>627</sup>, Nathalie Wo, one of its members, Kelechi Okafor, and Chidera Eggerue, aka *The Sunflower*, a writer and fashion blogger who grew up in Peckham. This episode, dedicated to Peckham girls from diverse ethnic minorities, illustrates the ways in which urban changes affect different communities in the area.

The fourth video, *We're Not Like Everyone Else - We're Peckham*<sup>628</sup>, is another three-person interview featuring Nicola Brierly, the founder of *Little Sister* a small independent vintage store located on Holdrons Arcade on Rye Lane, Tom Noble a barista at the *Old Spike Roastery*, and Kelechi Okafor, the owner of Kelechnekoff, a pole-dancing studio. This interview focused on the impact of gentrification on local businesses and the wider community.

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<sup>624</sup> George Okello. "Introducing Peckham Vision." *YouTube*, 15 August 2020. <[www.youtube.com/watch?v=61r7kQP5FkQ&t=1s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=61r7kQP5FkQ&t=1s)> Accessed 20 July 2021.

<sup>625</sup> George Okello. "Peckham Vision | An Answer to Gentrification." *YouTube*, 16 August 2020. <[www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lyj7QjpESbE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lyj7QjpESbE)> Accessed 20 July, 2021.

<sup>626</sup> George Okello. "The Invisibility of Black People in Peckham." *YouTube*, 17 August 2020. <[www.youtube.com/watch?v=OCxHEYXAmDY&t=4s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OCxHEYXAmDY&t=4s)> Accessed 20 July 2021.

<sup>627</sup> *gIRLS aBOUT pECKHAM* is a platform dedicated to showcase authentic stories about diversity and the different ethnic communities in the neighbourhood.

<sup>628</sup> George Okello. "We're Not like Everyone Else - We're Peckham." *YouTube*, 18 August 2020. <[www.youtube.com/watch?v=AOUhCEA0Vqs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AOUhCEA0Vqs)> Accessed 20 July 2021.

In the fifth and sixth videos, *Democracy in the Hands of the People*,<sup>629</sup> and *The Story of Peckham Townscape Heritage Initiative*,<sup>630</sup> the filmmaker goes back to the local association *Peckham Vision* to discuss the important role the local community can play during elections and the role played by the *Peckham Heritage Regeneration Partnership* in funding local projects.

The seventh episode of the documentary lasts for an hour, the longest in the series, and is a recorded Zoom meeting published on 21 August 2020. It is a Q&A session on Zoom, between Okello, Conn, and other friends, who discuss the documentary and the role played by local groups.

The eighth video<sup>631</sup> is entitled *The Peckham Documentary Pilot*, published on 22 August 2020. This last video is a presentation of the documentary series, exploring how the interviewees perceive the identity of their neighbourhood. Okello clarifies that the pilot was released way before, but kept in private aiming to gather people's opinions and feedback, before putting it officially online.<sup>632</sup>

In contrast to the views of *Peckham Vision*, this artist clearly used the term “gentrification,” and mentions that the purpose of his project is to find solutions to slow down these rapid urban and social changes and focuses on the importance of Peckham's identity in the context of its multi-ethnic communities. During the interview conducted with the artist, Okello reveals:

I was raised my whole life in Peckham, when I was in secondary school then I started working I had to travel and come back and I think between the age of secondary school, to college, then going to uni, I just gradually observed change in the area. Initially, it was quietly exciting. Coming back home, I would be seeing streets would be filled with people from different communities and social classes, and you can see the vibe at Peckham Rye Station, and then looking down, what is happening in here! Then I began to realise what kind of direction that people trying to push Peckham in, and I observed the difference between the day and the night, during the day, a noticeable black presence, but then in the evening, you see more of a white middle-class presence.

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<sup>629</sup>Okello George. “Democracy in the Hands of the People.” *YouTube*, 19 August 2020.  
<[www.youtube.com/watch?v=OpjI2R7JTl8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OpjI2R7JTl8).> Accessed 20 July 2021.

<sup>630</sup>Okello George. “The Story of the Peckham Townscape Heritage Initiative.” *YouTube*, 20 August 2020.  
<[www.youtube.com/watch?v=sCzKCir0a00](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sCzKCir0a00).> Accessed 20 July, 2021.

<sup>631</sup>Okello George. “The Peckham Documentary Pilot.” *YouTube*, 1 August 2020.  
<[www.youtube.com/watch?v=q-6WFzXEOvY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q-6WFzXEOvY).> Accessed 20 July 2021.

<sup>632</sup> Okello George. Personal Interview. 24 July 2021.

He adds “and I suppose as an art student I felt kind of between both communities, but I knew I had to make something eventually, I needed to do what I can do, to make these videos.”<sup>633</sup> Okello felt the need to work on showing his own perspective regarding gentrification.

The use of *YouTube* makes this form of art accessible to everyone and not limited to a particular class. This form may not have a direct impact on resisting gentrification but it is used as a tool to raise awareness. By using this accessible medium, artists can advocate for preservation and foster a sense of collective resistance against the impacts of gentrification.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, resistance has been categorised into three different forms: artistic activism against gentrification, noticeable, but also highly questionable owing to the way it engages mainly with the middle and upper-middle classes; individual resistance (spontaneous) by locals demonstrating their discontent; and organized resistance through local groups and associations. These examples of resistance are evident both in London as a whole and also specifically in Peckham. However, resistance in Peckham is not as apparent when compared to other gentrified areas. For instance, Action East End, an activist group campaigning for better housing, created a Google map<sup>634</sup> pinpointing all campaigns in London’s growing anti-gentrification movements. The map listed 53 movements, such as *Brixton Arches - Reclaim Brixton*<sup>635</sup> in Brixton or *Aylesbury Estate occupation*<sup>636</sup> in north Southwark, but none in Peckham. This confirms the low level of organised resistance in the area.

Having explored the various forms of resistance and their manifestations in Peckham, it is essential to delve deeper into a related, albeit darker facet of gentrification: Displacement. While resistance reflects a proactive stance against gentrification, displacement portrays the

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<sup>633</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>634</sup> Action East End. “Anti-Gentrification Movements in London.” *Google My Maps*, <[www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/viewer?mid=1leJhKFWQmwLwx4CJehVrvC-A0jo&ll=51.45823029862546%2C-0.0660959519043347&z=12](http://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/viewer?mid=1leJhKFWQmwLwx4CJehVrvC-A0jo&ll=51.45823029862546%2C-0.0660959519043347&z=12)> Accessed 11 July, 2023.

<sup>635</sup> Group fighting back against the broad effects of gentrification in Brixton, including at Brixton Arches and the new Town Hall development.

<sup>636</sup> Actions and occupations at the Aylesbury in protest over Southwark's planned demolition of the estate.

often unseen consequences that ripple beneath the urban fabric surface. The subsequent and last chapter will investigate the extent of displacement in Peckham.



# Chapter 10

## Gentrification-induced Displacement

In 2000, Atkinson studied the academic literature around the process of gentrification and concluded that the focus was more on houses value rather than the displaced. He concluded that there was insufficient research and literary reviews.<sup>637</sup> The lack of literature about displacement is linked to the difficulty of tracking the displaced. This is the case for research done in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but also applies to Moskowitz in 2010, who remarked that it is easier to notice the newcomers than the displaced:

But the reporting I'd seen on gentrification focused on the new things happening in these neighbourhoods—the high-end pizza joints and coffee shops, the hipsters, the fashion trends. In some ways that made sense: It is hard to report on a void, on something that's now missing. It is much easier to report in the new than on the displaced. But at the end of the day, that's what gentrification is: a void in a neighbourhood, in a city, in a culture.<sup>638</sup>

The arrival or emergence of a new middle-class in a popular neighbourhood is obviously more noticeable than the displaced, hence the focus on reasons for increased land value and development of the new urban spaces accompanying the new lifestyle, instead of examining the consequences faced by the invisible former residents. The concept of displacement has more recently become much used in academic fields, but mainly in contemporary geography to define any process leading to the violent or non-violent displacement of any social class.<sup>639</sup> The notion has become debatable and complex to define.

In the context of urban regeneration and gentrification, several studies have emerged recently that shed light on the experiences of the displaced population. Notably, Loretta Lees et al.'s recent study highlights the process of 'decanting' in London in the context of gentrification where local councillors and developers relocate existing tenants to make way for redevelopment

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<sup>637</sup> Rowland Atkinson. "Measuring gentrification and displacement in Greater London." *Urban studies*, vol. 37, n. 1, 2000, pp. 149-165, p. 308.

<sup>638</sup> Peter Moskowitz. *How to Kill a City: Gentrification, Inequality, and the Fight for the Neighbourhood*. Nation Books, 2018, pp. 14-15.

<sup>639</sup> Brickell and al. *Geographies of Forced Evictions: Dispossession, Violence, Resistance*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2017. Mentioned as well in Adam Elliott-Cooper, et al. "Moving beyond Marcuse: Gentrification, Displacement and the Violence of Un-Homing." *Progress in Human Geography*, vol. 44, no. 3, 2019.



projects. Lees and al., explain that “[f]or this to happen, local councils and developers have orchestrated a process euphemistically-termed ‘decanting’: existing tenants bid for properties elsewhere in the borough, or are moved against their will; private renters in leasehold properties are evicted, and leaseholders bought out via compulsory purchase, often at unfavourable rates.”<sup>640</sup>

In Peckham, the process of decanting was perceived when *The Southwark Five-Estate Masterplan* was implemented in the neighbourhood. Tenants were relocated or pushed out to facilitate for new developments and accommodate the influx of new residents, leading to a direct displacement of some of the residents. Another form of indirect displacement was also seen in the neighbourhood where some of the former residents had to leave because of the lack of affordability.

The methodology employed in this chapter for data collection encompasses a dual approach. The first involves an in-depth exploration of academic journals to understand the different notions of displacement and to contribute to the construction of a coherent conceptual framework; the latter explained by Adom and al. as an approach that “consists of concepts interconnected to explain the relationships between them and how researcher asserts to answer the research problem defined.”<sup>641</sup> The second approach involves qualitative research, predominantly centred around the analysis of interviews. These interviews were conducted through social media groups such as *Peckham SE:15*, *Peckham Only*, *I grew up in Peckham* and *Friends of Peckham Rye Park*. This engagement with online platforms allowed for direct interaction with former residents of the neighbourhood who have experienced displacement. A lack of response from members of these groups meant that only a few interviews were conducted. This may be because the first signs of state-led displacement go back more than twenty years with urban projects that led to the demolition of several council estates. Challenges relating to contacting displaced members of this working-class community can be explained to some extent both in terms of a lack of technological knowledge and engagement and the likelihood that this cohort is quite elderly, another factor in limited participation in *Facebook* groups. Interviews were also conducted during my several visits to the neighbourhood with

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<sup>640</sup> Loretta Lees, Adam Elliott Cooper, and Phil Hubbard. "Sold out? The right-to-buy, gentrification and working-class displacements in London." *The Sociological Review*, vol.68, no.6, 2020, pp.1354-1369.

<sup>641</sup> Dickson Adom, Emad Kamil Hussein, and Joe Adu Agyem. "Theoretical and conceptual framework: Mandatory ingredients of a quality research." *International journal of scientific research*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2018, p. 440.

passers-by, and in many facilities such as the Peckham Library, Peckham Rye Park and Morrison, among other places.

In order to understand the impact of gentrification, this chapter is divided into four subsections. The first subsection defines the notion of displacement and tackles its impact on the working-class residents (un-homing). The second subsection sheds light on the displacement caused by gentrification in London. The third subsection tackles displacement in Peckham, focusing on the residents who used to live in council housing and had to move because of regeneration schemes but also shows how some of the residents are priced out. Finally, the fourth subsection focuses on retail displacement in the neighbourhood.

## **10.1. The Notion of Displacement and its Impact**

### **10.1.1. The Notion of Displacement in the Process of Gentrification**

According to the Oxford online dictionary, the term means, “the act of forcing somebody or something away from their home or position.”<sup>642</sup> This definition implicitly connotes violence and a negative impact. According to urban scholars, the term “displacement” is used in many fields including geography, urbanism, and sociology and has always been present in the process of gentrification. Ruth Glass describes displacement as part of the process and the very definition of gentrification, “Once this process of ‘gentrification’ starts in a district, *it goes until all or most of the original working-class occupiers are displaced*, and the whole social character of the district is changed.”<sup>643</sup> [*italics mine.*]

Gentrification and displacement go hand in hand, already defined as such in the 1960s, and it is still the case today, a process that takes different forms (and sometimes different names) but can be broadly explained in terms of traditional working-class areas attracting reinvestment after a long period of disinvestment, leading to urban transformation and attracting middle and upper-middle-class residents. Drastic changes to the economic and physical landscape of the

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<sup>642</sup> “Displacement.” Displacement Noun - Definition, Pictures, Pronunciation and Usage Notes | Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary at OxfordLearnersDictionaries.com, <[www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/displacement?q=displacement](http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/displacement?q=displacement)> Accessed on 2 May 2021.

<sup>643</sup> Ruth Glass, *London: Aspects of Change*, London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1964. pp. xvii-xix.

urban community undergoing gentrification cause a shift in class structure that leads to the displacement of the original lower-income population.

As mentioned previously, displacement is treated and considered by many scholars as the inevitable result and a negative impact of gentrification. According to Morris, “[i]n most instances, the displacement of long-established households is due to gentrification which in sum involves a mainly working-class area becoming sought after by the middle and upper classes and the land values increasing substantially as a result.”<sup>644</sup> In this context, the term has been defined as people forced to leave because of rent increases. Multiple definitions provided by scholars include a violent context: eviction and force. According to Elizabeth C. Delmelle et al., “[e]victions can be considered a form of direct displacement that occurs when a tenant is unable to afford increased rent, at one example; it is a type of involuntary move.”<sup>645</sup> Only recently, a few researchers have defined and explained displacement as a non-violent way. Therefore, the meaning of the term extends beyond eviction and can be further explained through the concept of “un-homing”: the feeling of no longer belonging to a neighbourhood. Elliott-Cooper, et al., develop this theme and conclude:

Displacement is not just about direct replacement of poorer by wealthy groups; it also involves forms of social, economic and cultural transitions which alienate established populations. This can entail forms of slow violence, which render particular neighbourhoods less hospitable and accommodating to established residents, as well as direct and forceful acts of expropriation which vulnerable and precarious seem least able to cope with.<sup>646</sup>

Accordingly, a classification of two types of displacement is needed: direct and indirect displacement. Direct displacement is seen in the process of evictions and forcing out residents. Several studies have shown that this type of displacement, known as Rachmanism,<sup>647</sup> is caused by harassment and violence (from landowners or developers), or through rent increases, or buying out previous owners. It can also be linked to particular policies, such as planned shrinkage (neglecting and minimising government intervention in certain communities),<sup>648</sup>

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<sup>644</sup> Alan Morris. *Gentrification and Displacement: The Forced Relocation of Public Housing Tenants in Inner Sydney*. Springer Briefs in Sociology, 2019, pp. 17.

<sup>645</sup> Elizabeth C. Delmelle, Isabelle Nilsson, and Alexander Bryant. "Investigating transit-induced displacement using eviction data." *Housing Policy Debate*, vol. 31, no. 2, 2021, p. 327

<sup>646</sup> Adam Elliott-Cooper, et al. "Moving beyond Marcuse: Gentrification, Displacement and the Violence of Un-Homing." *Progress in Human Geography*, vol. 44, no. 3, 2019, p.13.

<sup>647</sup> Rachmanism refers to the exploitative practices of unscrupulous landlords or property owners, named after Peter Ruchman, a notorious figure in the housing market in London during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>648</sup> For further explanation check Manuel B. Aalbers. "Do Maps Make Geography? Part 1: Redlining, planned shrinkage, and the places of decline." *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies*, vol. 3, no. 4, 2014, pp. 525-556.

deindustrialization, urban renewal or policies favouring gentrification.<sup>649</sup> In state-led gentrification, displacement has been linked directly to policies and political strategies such as the demolition of social housing, forcing residents out and displacing them elsewhere. In fact, the areas which succumbed to the greatest demolition of council housing (to be replaced by private housing stock), were the areas most targeted by the drivers of gentrification. For instance, in the borough of Southwark, several estates located in deprived neighbourhoods were demolished leading to the displacement of their residents, and the gentrification of these areas. One example is the Heygate estate, located in Elephant and Castle that was sold to the international developer Lendlease for £50.<sup>650</sup> In order to move and relocate the tenants, the council used several tactics for them out. For instance, for one tenant who refused to move out, “[t]he council resorted to Rachmann like tactics to get this leaseholder out, turning off his gas and electricity, and barricading in the near empty estate.”<sup>651</sup> They also spent more than £44 million to move more than 3000 tenants and leaseholders out.

Indirect displacement is perceived when the area in question does not provide access to affordable housing and lacks social housing, thereby excluding the working class. It is also perceived when the previous residents “choose” to leave because of the feeling of “un-homing” or of no longer belonging, which Atkinson describes as, “the alienation of displacement.”<sup>652</sup> These feelings of displacement are linked to the newly urban, social, and economic changes in the area, such as the newly-arrived middle class, the emergence of new shops, and the renovation and rehabilitation of public spaces, leading to residents vulnerable to displacement “choosing” to move away. Atkinson elaborates:

These feelings could be located in new faces, in changing social histories and in the physical traces and marks of the streetscape and its facilities that appeared to change or were erased as waves of investments flowed into the neighbourhood. In analysing the narratives of displaced, we can see how many already felt out of place and a sense of loss and defamiliarization, even before they were finally forced to leave the neighbourhood.<sup>653</sup>

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<sup>649</sup> Mindy Thomson et al. “Serial Forced Displacement in American Cities, 1916-2010.” *Journal of Urban Health: Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine*, vol. 88, no. 3, 2011, p. 381.

<sup>650</sup> Loretta Lees. “The death of sustainable communities in London?” in: R. Imrie & L. Lees (Eds) *Sustainable London? The Future of a Global City*. Policy Press, 2014, pp. 149–172.

<sup>651</sup> Loretta Lees, and Hannah White. “The social cleansing of London council estates: everyday experiences of ‘accumulative dispossession’.” *Housing Studies*, vol.35, no.10, 2020, p.1170.

<sup>652</sup> Rowland Atkinson. “Losing one’s place: Narratives of neighbourhood change, market injustice and symbolic displacement.” *Housing, Theory and Society*, vol. 32, no. 4, 2015, pp. 373-388, p. 377.

<sup>653</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 385.

This type of displacement has therefore been implemented before any physical displacement takes place. Davidson calls it “symbolic dislocation and defamiliarization.”<sup>654</sup> It is explained through the feeling of being displaced without actual displacement.

The people who are threatened with displacement are mainly working class of different ages, including the elderly who move away after retiring. Some residents are evicted because they lack the means to pay their rent. A study in the late 1990s focusing on Camden, a gentrified district of north London, found that more than 30% of tenants who were ‘bought out’, harassed and induced to leave, were elderly.<sup>655</sup> A similar study in Brussels from the early twenty-first century found the displaced were mainly among the elderly, those with less education, and single parents.<sup>656</sup> Displacement can also affect young couples or low-income families who cannot afford to rent or buy a larger space, and who look for cheaper alternatives elsewhere, while also impacting on single people whose parents live in gentrified areas.

Displacement caused by gentrification has created debate and controversy. Some studies have suggested that displacement can be voluntary and not linked to the process of gentrification, claiming that lacking the exact number of displaced residents makes it difficult or impossible to conclude that displacement is due to gentrification, and could instead be linked to other factors.<sup>657</sup> In other research, displacement is only considered as a market logic.<sup>658</sup> Some would go still further, such as Jacob Vigdor, professor of public policy and governance, who defines displacement and gentrification as a positive urban and economic solution that decreases poverty and provides increased job opportunities, thanks to the influx of the new, wealthier residents.<sup>659</sup>

Such studies are limited in scope, dealing only with specific neighbourhoods. Failing to track the displaced, these studies are unable to prove their theories, while the process of displacement that is perceived in a neighbourhood undergoing gentrification cannot be denied. In relation to

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<sup>654</sup> Mark Davidson. "Displacement, space and dwelling: Placing gentrification debate." *Ethics Place and Environment*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2009, pp. 219-234.

<sup>655</sup> Rowland Atkinson. "The Hidden Costs of Gentrification: Displacement in Central London." *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*, Kluwer Academic Publishers, December 2000, p. 318.

<sup>656</sup> Mathieu Van Crielingen. "Moving In/out of Brussels' Historical Core in the early 2000's: Migration and the Effects of Gentrification." *Urban Studies*, vol. 46, no. 4, pp. 825-848.

<sup>657</sup> Lance Freeman. "Displacement or Succession? Residential Mobility in Gentrifying Neighbourhoods." *Urban Affairs Review*, 2005, p. 465.

<sup>658</sup> NK Bloomly "The properties of spaces: History, geography and gentrification." *Urban Geography*, vol. 18, no. 4, pp. 286-295, mentioned as well in Atkinson 2000, pp. 319.

<sup>659</sup> Jacob Vigdor. "Does Gentrification Harm the Poor?." *Brookings-Wharton Papers on Urban Affairs*, 2002, pp. 134-135.

voluntary displacement Sandra Newman et al. points out that, “low-income households who experience extremely large rent increases may technically ‘choose’ to move, but the likelihood that they had any real alternative is very small.”<sup>660</sup> Displacement is therefore not a choice and becomes inevitable when gentrification takes place.

### 10.1.2. Homing and Un-homing: Displacement’s impact

As previously explained, displacement does not only describe the forced movement or relocation of residents outside of their neighbourhood but is also explained through the feeling of alienation that comes before (or even without) physical displacement. Being displaced, physically or psychologically, owing in large part to rent increases, economic and urban changes, and reinvestment in an area, impacts both the displaced and the neighbourhood itself. Thus, an individual’s mental health (anxiety, depression, etc.) can be negatively affected, while the wider community loses its identity and social diversity, and homelessness inevitably increases.

A major impact on the displaced is the feeling of being “un-homed”, conceptualised by those scholars to whom “un-homing” is physical, emotional and psychological displacement.<sup>661</sup> Un-homing is to lose one’s place attachment and is linked and shaped through individual experiences and factors such as longevity of residence and social ties in the area.<sup>662</sup> Losing this attachment causes deep emotional effects on the targeted residents.

A recent study by Loretta Lees on the emotional and psychological impacts on London’s regeneration and displacement has shown showed that “[s]ome individuals may be ‘resilient’ and may even seize re-homing as an opportunity to improve their lives, but others will experience anxiety, loss, and even depression, as they see their ‘lifeworld’ transformed.”<sup>663</sup>

This anxiety is also caused by losing the sense of community. Displacement, direct or indirect, has an impact on both the displaced residents as well as the identity of the neighbourhood. With

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<sup>660</sup> Sandra J. Newman, and Michael S. Owen. “Residential Displacement: Extent, Nature and Effects,” *SPSSI Journals.* *Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues*, John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 14 Apr, 2010, p. 137.

<sup>661</sup> Adam Elliott-Cooper, et al. “Moving beyond Marcuse: Gentrification, Displacement and the Violence of Un-Homing.” *Progress in Human Geography*, vol. 44, no. 3, 2019, p. 7.

<sup>662</sup> Alan Morris. “Gentrification and Displacement: The Forced Relocation of Public Housing Tenants in Inner Sydney”. *Springer Briefs in Sociology*, 2019, p. 71.

<sup>663</sup> Loretta Lees, and Phil Hubbard. "The emotional and psychological impacts of London’s ‘new’ urban renewal." *Journal of Urban Regeneration & Renewal*, vol. 13, no. 3, 2020, p. 242.

the demographic changes, many have to – or “decide” to – leave, weakening community ties and thereby influencing the dynamics of the gentrified neighbourhood.

Another consequence of gentrification-induced displacement is the increase in the rate of homelessness, caused by the increased rent prices and the lack of affordable housing; some studies show that “[t]he causes of homelessness also vary significantly; however, gentrification has been identified as one of the major catalysts leading to homelessness.”<sup>664</sup>

## 10.2. Displacement in London

In London studies have shown that, in the 1980s, almost 40% of the working class left their newly gentrified neighbourhoods in London.<sup>665</sup> The causes are linked to the continuous increase of house prices and the lack of affordable property, and so it is also linked to the process of gentrification. Academics have shown that London, and inner-city London in particular, has been the target of gentrification processes since the 1960s.

A research study<sup>666</sup> has examined gentrification-induced displacement in Greater London between 2001 and 2011, and has concluded that the neighbourhoods experiencing ongoing gentrification are traditionally working-class areas. The study combines six indicators (household income, the median of housing prices, social and private renters, non-white population, the percentage of people with higher education and housing affordability) in forms of maps, taken from the *Office of National Statistics (ONS)*, *Greater London Authority (GLA)* and *Land Registry Data*, and collected in a report by professors from University College London, University of California and University of Westminster, as part of a study to detect gentrification, show ongoing gentrification and displacement in London between 2001 and 2011.<sup>667</sup>

The study reveals the areas at risk of gentrification, where lower-income residents are threatened with displacement, located mainly in Inner London, and that ongoing displacement is apparent in both inner-city south London and outer London indicating that the large non-white population reside in the cheapest areas of the inner city. This majority of this cohort are

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<sup>664</sup> Brynn Russel. “Gentrification and Homelessness.” *Communique*. vol. 47 no8, pp24-25, June 2019.

<sup>665</sup> Rowland Atkinson. “The Hidden Costs of Gentrification: Displacement in Central London.” *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*. Vol.15, no.4. 2000, pp.318.

<sup>666</sup> Yuerong Zhang, et al. “Visualising Urban Gentrification and Displacement in Greater London.” *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, vol. 52, no. 5, August 2020, pp. 819–824.

<sup>667</sup> *Ibid.*

renters and the most affordable housing is located at the south and south-east peripheries of inner London.

A recent study<sup>668</sup> has examined the impact of estate redevelopment and gentrification on the relocation patterns of residents from 45 council-owned estates in the Greater London Authority (GLA) area, focusing on the period between 1998 and 2014. The study reveals a clear trend of forced moves resulting from estate ‘regeneration’. Statistically, a significant difference between the “unregenerated” council estates and the regenerated ones regarding the distribution of moves was perceived. The study also shows that some of the displaced move a considerable distance away from their original homes, while others which is an important number of the displaced are relocated to marginally more deprived areas in close proximity.

In the London Borough of Southwark, which includes Peckham, and according to the data published by the *Greater London Authority (GLA)* concerning the average household income in London, its boroughs and wards for the years 2001/2 and 2012/13,<sup>669</sup> an increase of both median and mean income can be perceived. In 2001/2, the map reveals £31,770 as the average household income in the whole borough of Southwark (figure 1), compared to £35,236 in London (figure 3). In 2012/13, data shows an average of £48,000 (figure 2), an increase of approximately 50% in ten years, compared to £51,770 in London (figure 4). Recent statistics revealed an average salary was £53,500<sup>670</sup> in Southwark for 2022, contrasted with an average salary of £57,400 in London for the same year.<sup>671</sup>

These figures suggest a notable socio-economic transformation within the borough of Southwark, but also the British capital, reflecting an overall rise in income levels. Such changes can be attributed to various factors, including the influx of new residents with higher incomes, and the effects of gentrification (displacement of lower-income residents included).

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<sup>668</sup> Loretta Lees, et al. “Quantifying state-led gentrification in London: Using linked consumer and administrative records to trace displacement from council estates.” *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, vol. 55, no. 4, 2023, pp. 810–827.

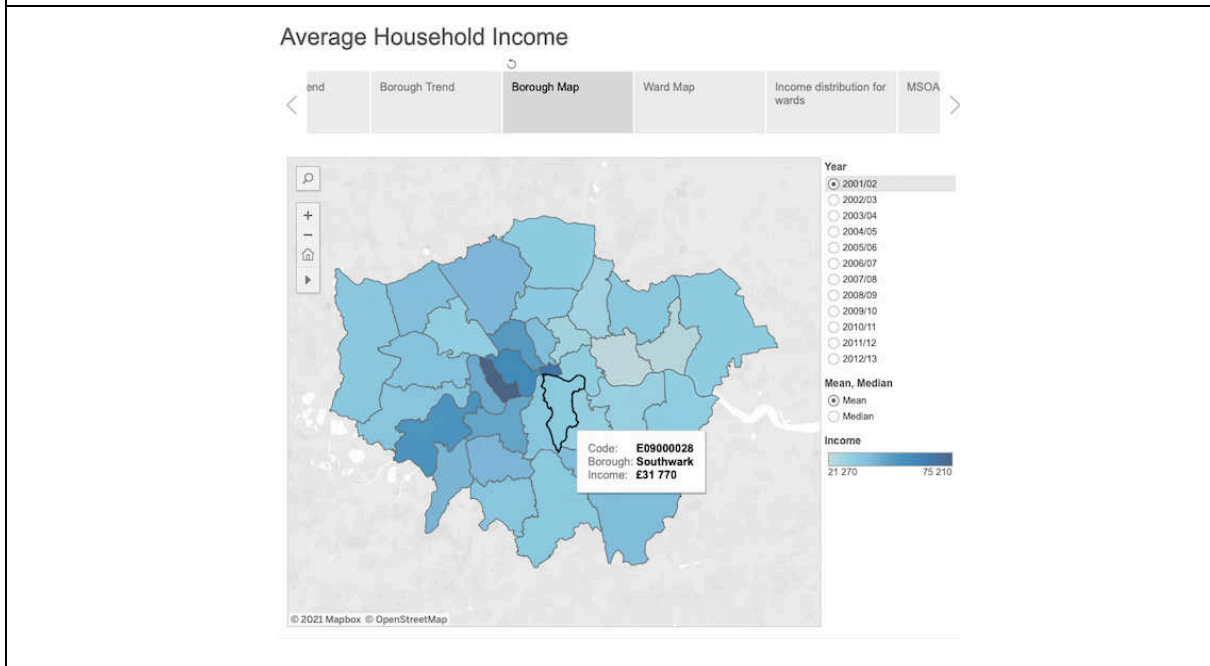
<sup>669</sup> GLA. “GLA Household Income Estimates- London Datastore”. *London Datastore News*, published in 2014. <<https://data.london.gov.uk/blog/gla-household-income-estimates/>> Accessed 2 March 2021.

<sup>670</sup> Plumplot. “South East London Average Salary Comparison.” *Plumplot*, October 2022, <<https://www.plumplot.co.uk/South-East-London-salary-and-unemployment.html#:~:text=The%20average%20salary%20is%20ranging,£40.0k%20in%202022.>> Accessed 29 July 2023.

<sup>671</sup> Plumplot. “London Average Salary Comparison.” *Plumplot*, October 2022, <<https://www.plumplot.co.uk/London-salary-and-unemployment.html#:~:text=The%20average%20salary%20in%20London,job%20for%20over%2012%20mont hs.>> Accessed 29 July 2023.

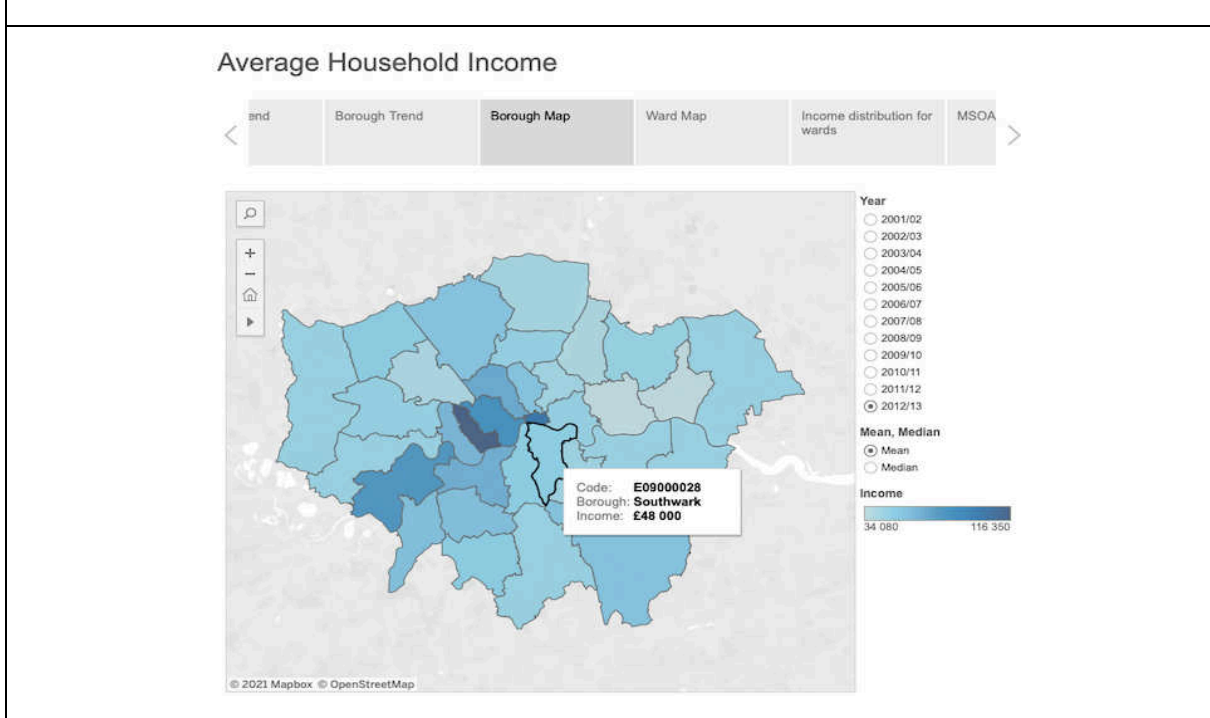


Figure 1 - Average Household Income in the Borough of Southwark in the Year 2001/2



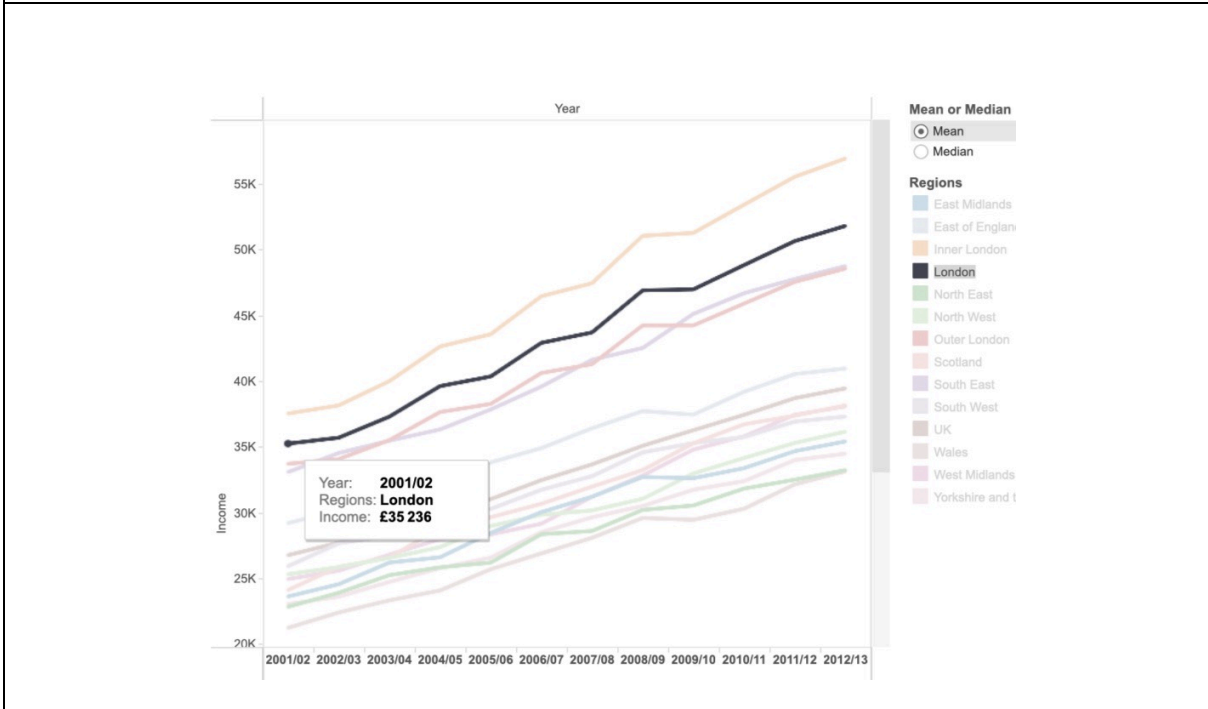
Source: GLA. "GLA Household Income Estimates- London Datastore". *London Datastore News*, published in 2014. <<https://data.london.gov.uk/blog/gla-household-income-estimates/>> Accessed 2 March 2021.

Figure 2 - Average Household Income in the Borough of Southwark in the Year 2012/13



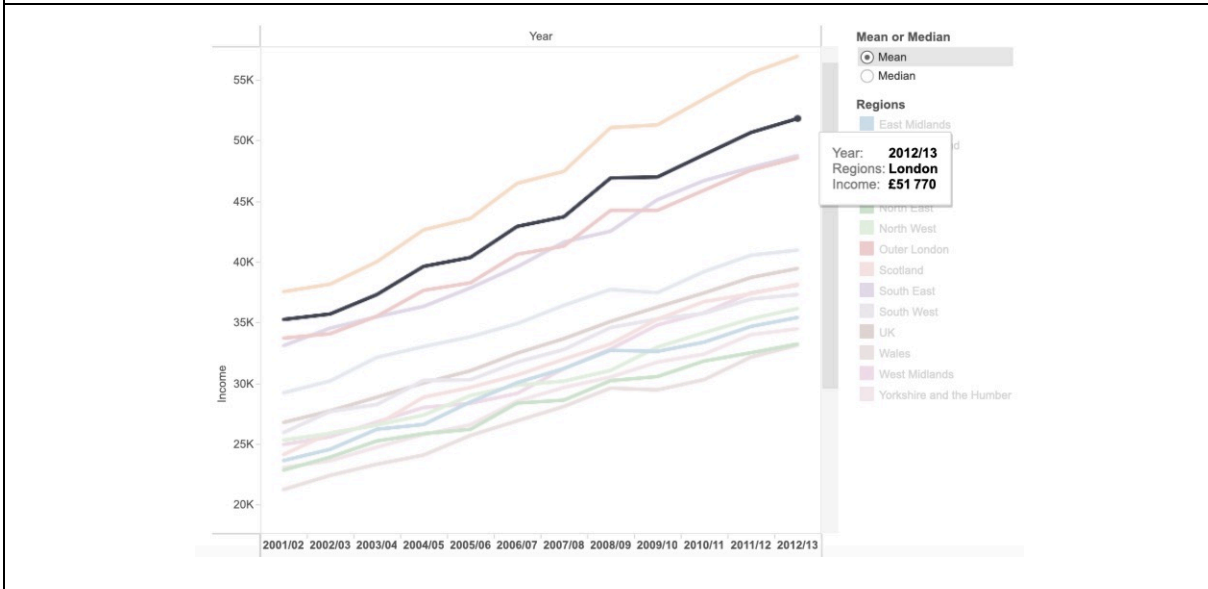
Source: GLA. "GLA Household Income Estimates- London Datastore". *London Datastore News*, published in 2014. <<https://data.london.gov.uk/blog/gla-household-income-estimates/>> Accessed 2 March 2021.

Figure 3 - Average Household Income in London in the Year 2001/02



Source: GLA. “GLA Household Income Estimates- London Datastore”. *London Datastore News*, published in 2014. <<https://data.london.gov.uk/blog/gla-household-income-estimates/>> Accessed 2 March 2021

Figure 4 - Average Household Income in London in the Year 2012/13



Source: GLA. “GLA Household Income Estimates- London Datastore”. *London Datastore News*, published in 2014. <<https://data.london.gov.uk/blog/gla-household-income-estimates/>> Accessed 2 March 2021

In addition to the socio-economic shifts and rising household incomes, another crucial factor contributing to the displacement is the soaring house prices. In 2021, the ONS published its new house price data report<sup>672</sup> indicating a 5.3% increase in the capital in January of that year as compared to the previous year, with slow growth and stagnation in April and May of 2020, explained by the lockdown caused by the pandemic. The report also indicates that the average house price in London in January 2021 was £501,320 compared to £287,983 in January 2011, an almost 80% rise in just ten years. The skyrocketed housing prices make it increasingly challenging for individuals and families with low-income to stay in the capital. The widening gap between income levels and property prices, therefore, contributes to the indirect displacement of the lower-income population.

As we shall see Peckham, an area of Southwark in inner London, was also the target for displacement, becoming noticeable lately amid rapid urban and social changes. Yet displacement is not a recent phenomenon in this area. Earlier displaced residents became apparent in the late 1990s and early 2000s, with *The Southwark Five-Estate Masterplan* to demolish several council estates in the area.

### 10.3. Displacement in Peckham: The Working-Class Displacement

As explained before, *the Southwark Five-Estate Master Plan* was an urban project intended to rehabilitate and improve housing by limiting its density. It led to the demolition of several public housing estates: Sumner Estate (used to be located in Peckham High Street), Willowbrook Estate (used to be situated not far from Sumner Road), Camden Estate (opposite Harris Peckham Academy), Gloucester Grove Estate (fronting Burgess Park), North Peckham Estate (used to be located not far from where the Peckham Library is today). This scheme led to a reduction of social housing, and therefore, to the displacement of their previous residents. For instance, “North Peckham [was] the best documented and – the most notorious – it [was] often taken to represent the Five Estates regeneration as a whole. It was the largest of the five – 65 five-storey blocks in all on a 40-acre site, comprising 1444 homes.”<sup>673</sup>

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<sup>672</sup> The ONS, “UK House Price Index: January 2021.” Office for Home Statistics. January 2021, <<https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/housepriceindex/january2021>> Accessed on 2 March 2021.

<sup>673</sup> Municipal Dreams. “The Five Estates, Peckham Part 1: ‘Planning is for People.’” Municipal Dreams in Housing, 11 October 2016, <<https://municipaldreams.wordpress.com/2016/10/11/the-five-estates-peckham-part-one/>> Accessed on 2 March 2021.

Through numerous visits to the neighbourhood, I had encountered extensive discussions regarding these estates with long-term residents. However, it has been difficult to locate residents who lived in Peckham during the relevant period, and who remained in the area for the twenty following years. Attempts were therefore made to contact residents who lived on these council housing estates via various Facebook groups.<sup>674</sup> The overall response to the survey was poor, yielding only sixteen replies: twelve are elderly (aged 65+), one is 60 years old (at the moment of the interview), and another in his late 50s, one is 38 years old (who used to live with her parents when the regeneration plans were launched), and one other respondent whose grandparents lived had to move out of their home. Two households out of sixteen managed to stay in Peckham. The other households were displaced to Nunhead, Lewisham, Bromley, and Kennington, and others were displaced outside London (Kent, Salisbury, and Essex).

For instance, this 65-year-old former resident had to leave Peckham and move with her family to Kennington:

I lived on the Gloucester Grove Estate one of the five regenerated... we had to move in 2000... didn't get to stay in Peckham wound up in Kennington but Peckham is home to me... lived in, on there from 1975-2000, had good friends and neighbours all community joined in, glad my children were brought up on the Estate, they had freedom and fun and everybody knew all the kids so there was always someone keeping an eye out, unfortunately not like that anymore ... I definitely miss it.<sup>675</sup>

This former local expressed a sense of nostalgia and attachment to Peckham as her home. She mentioned living there for twenty-five years, and highlighted the strong bonds she had with her neighbours and the sense of community they shared. However, she ultimately “had to move” to Kennington, a district in the borough of Lambeth. She further explained that the decision to leave was motivated by the neglect and deterioration of the estate. Recognising that finding alternative housing would take time, she and her “family made the difficult choice to relocate.”<sup>676</sup>

Another former resident, aged 76, who lived in several estates in Peckham, tells his story:

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<sup>674</sup> The question that was published in the group of both Peckham Only and Peckham SE15, was: “[...] I'm looking for people who used to live in one of the Five Estates that were regenerated in the early 2000s and if you know someone who was priced out [...]” the post was published in 2 March, and it received 32 commentaries in total in two days, with 19 people lived in one the Five Estates, and were themselves displaced.

<sup>675</sup> Respondent 1. Survey on Peckham Only, Facebook group. 15 March 2021

<sup>676</sup> *Ibid.*

I lived in Linden Grove, then moved to Sumner Estate and then to Willowbrooke Estate. My nan lived on Gloucester Estate, I spent the first 30/35 years of my life living in Peckham, and the prices went up crazy, a lot of people were priced out after regenerated prices. I think today an average 1 bed flat is around 325k/400k. I myself moved out with my wife to Salisbury, but we definitely miss Peckham.<sup>677</sup>

This former inhabitant of the area “chose” to leave Peckham and London in the early 2000s, as the prices started to increase, and he felt that he was not the only one.

Another former resident aged 60,<sup>678</sup> explained that “my husband and I were both born in Peckham. Married in 1994 and had two children, needed more space but could not find anything at all. We moved to Kent. Glad now, because my husband was a firefighter so had to drive back to Islington but we had to leave a large family.” Struggling to find a large space, they decided to leave London altogether and moved to Kent. Looking back, she expresses a sense of gratitude because moving to Kent was more convenient to her family, yet leaving behind their extended family (who lived in Peckham) was a difficult decision.

The disruption of community ties and place attachments is one of the impacts of the process of gentrification. According to Manzo et al., place attachment in social housing sites plays a crucial role in creating well-functioning communities, as it creates bonds of mutual support with neighbours who share similar experiences and challenges, and redevelopment schemes that lead to the displacement of these residents can therefore lead to the disruption of their emotional bond with their place.<sup>679</sup>

Even though many had to leave, some residents of these estates managed to stay in the neighbourhood. One resident, aged 72, who still lives in Peckham today, indicated that she had circumstances that helped her remain in the area. She states:

It was very much my wish to stay in Peckham, though at first, I was told I wasn't going to be able to. I wanted to stay as a tenant with the council but there was no choice, just allocated a tenancy with one of the housing associations involved. My family are long term Peckham, from my great grandparents down to my kids (now grown and left Peckham, though). Many people chose to leave, but plenty of others chose to stay. Most of those who wanted to stay had to be moved elsewhere at first to wait until properties were built and ready for them. I'm afraid I don't know the proportions, though I imagine the statistics must be in a report somewhere. [...] I only got the offer of a housing association flat here after I was mugged at knifepoint in the lift of my block, most other tenants had moved by then, so they agreed to move me and

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<sup>677</sup> Respondent 2. Survey on Peckham Only, Facebook group. 15 March 2021.

<sup>678</sup> Respondent 3. Survey on Peckham Only, Facebook group. 15 March 2021.

<sup>679</sup> Lynne C. Manzo, Rachel G. Kleit, and Dawn Couch. ““Moving three times is like having your house on fire once”: The experience of place and impending displacement among public housing residents.” *Urban studies*, vol. 45, no. 9, 2008, pp. 1855-1878.

find me somewhere close by which they did.<sup>680</sup>

Her strong attachment to the neighbourhood made her resist this indirect displacement. She managed to remain in Peckham, even though she was initially informed that it might not be possible. She was not granted another council housing but rather allocated a tenancy with a private association. Therefore, despite the widespread displacement experienced by residents of the council estates, some managed to resist and remain in the neighbourhood. For instance, another Peckham resident<sup>681</sup>, aged 74, who resisted displacement indicates:

I lived on two of the five estates, North Peckham from 1972 and Sumner from 1985; because of the 'regeneration'. I had to fight to prevent myself from being moved away from Peckham. I won and I still live here. The 'regeneration' was justified to us in terms of the area was too densely populated. I still live here in a housing association flat, with no choice of staying with the council. All they have done for the past twenty years is build and build and build filling in every bit of open land. My children do not still live in Peckham, nor would they wish to, though two still live fairly close, one a homeowner now and the other, a key worker married to a key worker and their children eventually managed to get a housing association tenancy. My son moved right out, he had a very difficult time as a young teenager on North Peckham, got mugged and threatened with knives and guns so many times. I'm willing to bet that the density round here now is greater than it was 25 years ago. One big difference is the tenure, of course, the idea being that a mixed community would magically deal with what was seen as all the negative aspects attributed to social housing [...] I really believe that the housing situation is caused by greed and politics, funding is not available for real social rented, and the properties being built are not suitable either.

This resident shows her awareness of the process of gentrification, even though she does not mention the term. She resisted by refusing the council's new housing proposal and managed to stay in the neighbourhood in a Housing Association flat. She adds with regrets that:

The *Five Estates* project took away the infrastructure which gave us some hope and a chance to support each other in communities, for instance, open spaces in and around the estates, football pitches and so on, playgroups, Pitt Street Settlement, the adventure playground, tenants' halls etc., very little left.<sup>682</sup>

This resident's observation highlights the broader understanding that the physical changes brought about by the Five Estate project go beyond surface-level improvements and can have profound social consequences. For example, in this case, the consequence of this transformation is a disruption of the social fabric that once provided a sense of belonging and support for long-

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<sup>680</sup> Respondent 4. Survey on Peckham Only, Facebook group. 15 March 2021.

<sup>681</sup> Respondent 5. Survey on Peckham SE15 Past and Present, Facebook group. 16 March 2021.

<sup>682</sup> *Ibid.*

time residents. As physical facilities, spaces and resources play an essential role in fostering social connections.

While some residents may feel a strong attachment to their community and resist displacement, others may have different reasons for welcoming the move. These reasons can vary from personal preferences to seeking better housing conditions, improved amenities, or a desire for a change in their living environment. For example, this resident, aged 70, who moved to East Dulwich, south-east London, and south Peckham:

By 1995, we were told about the five estates plan and Camden was one of them. We were not the first people to be decanted. As time went on and people moved off, the place became more and more ghostly in appearance and feel. Someone set fire to one of the empty neighbouring properties and I called the fire brigade as a result. We were really looking forward to getting away from there. The offer of new accommodation came in - I had asked to be rehoused in East Dulwich - I was offered a three-bedroom house close to Morrison's in Peckham which I viewed and turned down. I was offered a couple of flats in Camberwell but stuck out for East Dulwich. I wrote and told the council that my sister lived in this area and would be able to help me with my children, as I was a single parent. In their haste to get us out, they took me to court. I did some homework of my own by viewing a three-bedroom Victorian semi that was still in the hands of the council's builders. So officially, I hadn't been allowed to view it. The builders let me in and told me that they had been given a specific date by which they had to finish their work then hand back the property. Armed with the knowledge, I attended court and humiliated the council's representative as he admitted that I knew more about the new property than he did... Anyway, we moved here and that was 25 years ago in March. Still here, still more than happy to be out of Peckham!<sup>683</sup>

Even though this resident left Peckham to move to an adjacent area, he acknowledges the lifestyle challenges on these estates that caused him to move, as well as the hurdles and struggles he faced in order to be rehoused by the council. He also emphasises on the fact that his decision to leave Peckham was driven by personal factors such as the resident's previous negative experience in the neighbourhood (a break in to his house), and the desire to provide a better environment for his children, who he in fact mentioned they did not feel comfortable in the area.

Another household that chose to leave when the Council announced the demolition of the North Peckham Estate, this 68-year-old former resident tells us that: "we moved when the council announced the regeneration program and due to certain people where we lived making our lives hell. Now we live in Essex, best thing we ever did."<sup>684</sup> Here, harassment may not be linked to the process, but it shows that this household was given the "choice" to move elsewhere. It is,

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<sup>683</sup> Respondent 6. Survey on Peckham SE15 Past and Present, Facebook group. 16 March 2021.

<sup>684</sup> Respondent 8. Survey on Peckham SE15 Past and Present, Facebook group. 16 March 2021.

therefore, important to recognise that residents' experiences and reactions to gentrification diverse and influence by various factors such as individual circumstances, preferences, and perceptions of the changing neighbourhood.

Similarly, one of the youngest interviewees<sup>685</sup> explained that “[her] nan and grandad moved from Peckham because they were knocking the estate down, they owned [their house] and got a decent amount considering [her] great grandad paid peanuts for it.” This statement suggests that her grandparents likely took advantage of the Right to Buy policy, which allowed council tenants to purchase their homes at a discounted price, but they were eventually forced to leave due to the demolition of the estate.

She further explained that “they [the grandparents] moved to Walworth Road after living at Knottingley House for fifty-odd years together after my great-grandad passed the flat on to my grandad. My grandad was planning to sign it over to my mum, obviously the council had other plans.”<sup>686</sup> It should be noted that the district of Walworth, located in South London but north Peckham, was and is still known for its high violent crime rate, just like Peckham. She also highlighted the fact that her grandad was happy with this decision and “he was one of the last ones to leave as he did not want to accept the first offer the council had offered as my great grandad has bought the property.”<sup>687</sup>

This former resident also had to leave Peckham in 2009. She left her parental home in 2001 to live in rented accommodation in Peckham Road, and when she decided to buy a property, she “*moved to Kent as the property price is cheaper for what you get.*”<sup>688</sup> [italics mine] This decision highlights how some of the residents are unable to afford purchasing property and remaining in Peckham, ultimately leading to their displacement as they are priced out of the neighbourhood.

Displacement in Peckham is, therefore, continuous, and linked to both urban regeneration schemes (in this case to the demolition of several council estates), but also by the exacerbating house prices of the private sector. This resident represents many who lived with their parents but could not afford a place in the area on reaching adulthood. Children of former and current residents have been, and continue to be, priced out for the last two decades.

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<sup>685</sup> Respondent 7. Survey on Peckham Only, Facebook group. 15 March 2021.

<sup>686</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>687</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>688</sup> *Ibid.*



This interviewee,<sup>689</sup> who managed to stay in Peckham as per her wishes, explained that her children had wanted to leave when they were old enough. She explains that “my children left home as late teenagers, one to buy her own flat in Bermondsey, one to rent a room in Dulwich and my son left to live in the country. None of them wanted to live in Peckham”. This can be explained by the bad reputation Peckham had, linked to high unemployment and crime rates. As explained in the previous chapters and particularly in chapter seven, over the years, Peckham has faced socio-economic struggles that have contributed to its reputation as an area of social deprivation and insecurity. This perception, fuelled by media portrayals accounts, can influence the perceptions and decisions of residents, particularly younger generations seeking safer and more prosperous environments.

In general, it seems that many residents in areas undergoing gentrification processes are aware that their children cannot afford the houses or flats that they once managed to buy and are therefore being pushed out. This is exemplified by another former Peckham inhabitant of the late 1990s who managed to buy a house in neighbouring Nunhead, situated east of Peckham Rye. When asked whether he knows of anyone being “priced out” of the area, he replied: “My kids... I bought a house in Nunhead 25 years ago for £60k. Now valued at £700k. There is no way my kids, at my age then, could afford to buy that house now. That’s what priced out means.”<sup>690</sup> In general, it seems that many residents in areas undergoing gentrification processes are aware that their children cannot afford the houses or flats that they once managed to buy and are therefore being pushed out.

Other forms of displacement are related to economic opportunity. Some home owners chose to sell up. A long-term resident gave this response to the same question (above), namely, whether they knew anyone who had been priced out of the area during the last twenty years:<sup>691</sup>

I don’t know anyone that moved away because they were priced out. Plenty moved out to better themselves in the 1980s and 1990s, and the people that have moved out more recently have cashed in due to the property boom. One friend of mine sold up for almost a million pounds, two years ago. That house cost him £47,000.

In summary, these results show two different points of view. Some residents, particularly the ones who lived in council housing, were saddened by leaving the area, others were happy to

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<sup>689</sup> Respondent 4. Survey on Peckham Only, Facebook group. 15 March 2021.

<sup>690</sup> Respondent 9. Survey on Peckham Only, Facebook group. 15 March 2021.

<sup>691</sup> Respondent 10. Survey on Peckham Only, Facebook group. 15 March 2021.

leave as they were “harassed” or because of the image and reputation of the neighbourhood in the public eye. These two perspectives, particularly the first one, show the extent to which former locals were aware of the process of gentrification in its earliest guises together with its impact (displacement and social cleansing), their eagerness to remain in or leave the area, and therefore, their attachment to Peckham. It is, however, important to bear in mind the possible bias contained in these responses. Some of the long-term former residents may be working class, but they are white British, in an area long known for its ethnic diversity. According to the GLA population data released in 2001,<sup>692</sup> the ward of Peckham (where the *Five Estates* were located), consisted of only 25% white British (of a total population of 11,381, compared to 29% in 2011, from a population of 14,493),<sup>693</sup> 5% other white, and with 70% of the population represented by ethnic groups (Black African, Black Caribbean, Chinese, other Asian, and mixed). Contrast these figures with the Peckham Rye ward, which houses the main shopping area, which consisted of almost 59% of white British in 2011, from a total population of 11,248. The latest statistics has showed 28,3% of a white population and 71.7% belonging to other ethnic groups<sup>694</sup> in the ward of Peckham in 2021.<sup>695</sup> In Peckham Rye ward for the same year, the white population accounts for 61%.<sup>696</sup> This further highlights that Peckham Rye ward, where Bellenden Road is situated, and which represents the commercial centre of Peckham is less diverse than the northern parts of Peckham, which are known to be less affluent.

#### 10.4. Retail Displacement and Replacement in Peckham

Only recently have studies began focusing on this form of displacement, partly explicable in terms of the difficulties of locating previous local business owners, even though ‘retail displacement’ is one of the most obvious forms of displacement in the gentrification process. In Peckham, ‘retail displacement’ is prominent and visible due to the area’s rich history of local

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<sup>692</sup> GLA. “Ethnic group by ward 2001.” *Office for national statistics*, <<https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset?tag=wards&q=>> Accessed on 12 February 2021.

<sup>693</sup> Official Labour market Statistics. “Peckham Ward as in 2001: Local Area Report.” *Office for National Statistics*, published in 2011, <<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/localarea?compare=E05000546>> Accessed on 12 February 2021.

<sup>694</sup> Asian population: 10%, Black population: 46,8%, Arab population: 1%, Mixed/multiple ethnic group: 7.3%, and Other ethnic group: 6.7%.

<sup>695</sup> City Population. “Population in Peckham Ward.” *City Population*, 8 April 2023, <[https://www.citypopulation.de/en/uk/london/wards/southwark/E05011110\\_peckham/](https://www.citypopulation.de/en/uk/london/wards/southwark/E05011110_peckham/)> Accessed on 29 July 2023.

<sup>696</sup> City Population. “Population in Peckham Rye Ward.” *City Population*, 8 April 2023, <[https://www.citypopulation.de/en/uk/london/wards/southwark/E05011111\\_peckham\\_rye/](https://www.citypopulation.de/en/uk/london/wards/southwark/E05011111_peckham_rye/)> Accessed 29 July 2023.

businesses and vibrant community life. The process of gentrification has led to significant changes in the retail landscape (see chapter five), making this form of displacement noticeable in the area.

For the current research being undertaken, attempts were made to trace owners of closed businesses through online search, media platforms, and networking, which includes engaging in conversations with local residents and businesses in the neighbourhood. Interviews conducted during several field studies in Peckham between 2016- 2021 asked, “*What do you miss the most in the neighbourhood of Peckham?*” Most interviewees described a shop, bar or restaurant, linked to their memories, that no longer exists.

One local who has been living in Peckham for more than 30 years, and chooses to remain, indicated that:

So much of what made Peckham great has gone. So many pubs shut, so many people can't afford their rents here, council housing gone for richer residents and not the original Peckhamites. Gentrification is sneaking in via posher Dulwich. Too many coffee shops now and unaffordable food.<sup>697</sup>

Many mentioned the *R&B Video Shop*, formerly housed in Meeting House Lane, in the north part of the area, which closed down around 2007, now an art gallery opened by two artists in 2016. Others mentioned bargain shops such as Woolworths that closed down in 2008. These brief examples highlight the changing retail landscape and the impact of gentrification on local businesses in the neighbourhood.

One former resident, whose parents still live in Peckham, moved away in 2009 owing to unaffordable housing. She says:

I miss all the decent stores before I left Peckham, unfortunately, all the big stores had been replaced by small shops and smelly stalls, it made me feel sick sometimes, it's a shame because from when I was little my mum took us shopping there, especially Christmas when there were Santa Claus in the street, lights and trees, last time I was there you might see a few trees with bits of ribbon on that was about it.<sup>698</sup>

Another local, contacted through a *Facebook* group, writes:

I miss when Peckham felt real and wasn't overrun with yuppie kids. The divide between the real community and the new people with money is becoming greater and greater. *Gentrification* has run rampant and left the real Peckham community behind. Property in Peckham is 50% more expensive than equivalent areas. It's tough for me to see how the yoga studios and rooftop bars serve anyone but their

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<sup>697</sup> A local resident. Personal Interview in the neighbourhood of Peckham. 3 august, 2018.

<sup>698</sup> Respondent 7. Survey on Peckham Only, Facebook group. 15 March 2021.

rich owners lining their pockets further.<sup>699</sup> [Italics mine]

When asked about previous shops that they miss in the neighbourhood, the term gentrification emerges in the interviews. It shows that gentrification is not just an abstract economic trend but something tangible and deeply personal, linked to people's memories, emotions and everyday experiences. The stories shared by residents, both old and new, portray a vivid picture of a community grappling with change. Nostalgic memories of local shops, bars, and community gathering spaces are intertwined with feelings of loss, exclusion, and disconnection.

Another local mentioned the festivals, in Peckham Rye Park, she said: "I miss all the free festivals at Rye Park. It's ironic that they were cancelled *because the new residents of the area complained about the noise*, but it's OK to have their events where tickets cost £30 knowing that a lot of regular people can't afford it, thus excluding them."<sup>700</sup> [Italics mine] Festivals may not be considered equivalent to retail stores, but they can be economically beneficial for a neighbourhood.

Retail displacement makes the locals more aware of the process of gentrification in their neighbourhood, as it affects their habits and their lifestyle. It is easily perceived when replaced by other stores. Some would argue that these changes and displacements (of both households and retail shops) are linked to changes in job structure: a decrease in skilled trades and an increase in professional-managerial roles. However, recent changes in employment structures are not "natural evolution,"<sup>701</sup> but is linked with relocating industry outside of the capital, and through deliberate planning policies, that prioritise certain kinds of development over others.

In this context, for instance, putting an end to festivals or encouraging new trendy retail shops reflects a reshaping of the area's identity and culture. The process of gentrification does not only alter the physical landscape but also challenges the inclusiveness and accessibility that once defined the community. It underscores the importance of considering not just economic benefits but also social equity and cultural preservation in urban planning and development.

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<sup>699</sup> Respondent 11. Survey on Peckham Only, Facebook group. 15 March 2021.

<sup>700</sup> Respondent 12. Survey on Peckham Only, Facebook group. 15 March 2021.

<sup>701</sup> Anne Clerval. "Displacement: Cause and consequence of Gentrification." *Urban Geography*, vol. 42, no. 8, 2021, p. 3.

## Conclusion

In Peckham, two forms of displacement were evident. The first was direct displacement, which occurred primarily in the late 1990s and early 2000s. This displacement was particularly noticeable in relation to council housing and the implementation of *The Southwark Five-Estate Master plan* which had a significant impact on the residents of the estates. The second form was indirect and exclusionary displacement, driven by the increasing unaffordability of the area. As property prices rose, the lower-income population was priced out.

Displacement has been integral to gentrification since the 1960s. Some scholars have indicated that not all forms of gentrification lead to displacement, such as ‘new-build gentrification.’<sup>702</sup> Others would argue that even with this form of gentrification, a form of “indirect” displacement or “exclusionary displacement” is perceived.<sup>703</sup> Middle-class workers are likely to be excluded from the area as property will not be affordable.

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<sup>702</sup> New-build gentrification define the process of new-build residential on brownfield land for the middle and upper middle-class in the centre of cities.

<sup>703</sup> Mark Davidson, and Loretta Lees. “New-Build ‘Gentrification’ and London’s Riverside Renaissance.” *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, vol. 37, no. 7, 2005, p. 1170.

# Conclusion

The urban landscape of Peckham, like many other areas in London, has experienced significant change over the past 25 years, a transformation that has intensified particularly in the last decade. The aim of this research was to unravel the complexities of these transitions, spotlighting the forces driving gentrification in Peckham. The first finding of this thesis is that Peckham is undergoing the process of gentrification. In applying the four recommendations of Chris Hamnett's integrated theory,<sup>704</sup> Peckham satisfies them all. First, the neighbourhood is suitable for the process. It had been neglected and deprived which made it suitable for investment and revitalisation. Second, the affordability of the area attracted gentrifiers: primarily middle and upper-middle class individuals and households unable to afford property in central London. Third, Peckham's attractiveness to these gentrifiers can be attributed to its convenient location, accessibility, housing affordability and cultural diversity. Finally, Peckham's preserved authenticity coupled with the introduction of new amenities has contributed to the overall improvement of the neighbourhood, hence attracting newcomers.

By investigating the effects of urban policies in the process of gentrification, this study confirms that policies implemented between 1997 and 2022 at three different levels (national, regional and local) played a significant role in shaping gentrification both in London, and specifically in Peckham. Projects and programmes, aesthetically enhanced the targeted neighbourhoods, and sought to improve housing conditions in these areas by working with private investors, and encouraging privatisation. This led to a reduction in the capacity of social housing, creating inequality between social classes. This is demonstrated by projects that led to the demolition of council estates which were replaced by private blocks of housing stock. A prime example of this phenomenon can be seen in Peckham through *Southwark's Five Estates Peckham Masterplan*, which led to the demolition of a major part of the council housing stock in the area.

Although the programmes implemented lean towards a sustainable vision, and advocate for the preservation of the area's identity and social inclusion, these numerous projects are hastening the process of gentrification, as they attract investors, developers, and new residents, leading to

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<sup>704</sup> Chris Hamnett. "The Blind Men and the Elephant: The Explanation of Gentrification." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, vol. 16, no. 2, 1991, p. 175.

the rise in property value. The increasing cost of housing in Peckham has, therefore, led to social inequalities, with some residents being priced out of their neighbourhoods and forced to move further away to find affordable accommodation. Various governments have, therefore, failed to create mixed communities, instead causing the displacement of working-class residents. Taken together, these findings suggest that Peckham is going through state-led gentrification, where policies and initiatives at various levels of government have played a significant role, leading to a radical transformation of the neighbourhood, through changes in its physical landscape, housing stock, and social dynamics.

The gentrification of Peckham, like in many other gentrified neighbourhoods, is typically the result of various urban changes and production factors that contribute to its transformation. The urban changes were led by policies, but other factors can be linked to it, such as the role of the press and art in the neighbourhood, leading to an increase in residential property prices and therefore a lack of affordability. Hence, this study provided an overview of how the media, in this context the written press, played a major role in shaping the image of the neighbourhood, which shifted from being depicted as a dangerous and rough neighbourhood to one which was trendy and attractive. The results of this close study of the different media publications have also shown that the portrayal of the process of gentrification evolved in itself. For instance, in the early 2000s, the *Guardian* presented a mixed coverage of the district, with negative coverage dominating. It showed how Peckham was a rough area, with gentrification being presented as a solution for the middle class and their “urban idyll.”<sup>705</sup> Later, this image evolved and the narrative began to shift, reflecting a more nuanced portrayal of Peckham

When addressing the complex issue of gentrification, it was crucial to recognise and examine its impacts. Therefore, one of the primary objectives of this research was to assess the impacts of gentrification on Peckham, particularly in relation to its effects on the lower-income class residing in the area. The results confirmed that two forms of displacement were perceived: direct and indirect. Direct displacement was prominently observed during the late 1990s and early 2000s, primarily affecting residents of council housing estates. This displacement was particularly noticeable as a result of *Southwark’s Five-Estate Masterplan*, which significantly impacted the affected council estate residents. The indirect displacement was driven by the

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<sup>705</sup> G. Hoskins, and A. Tallon. “Promoting the “urban idyll””: Policies for city centre living.” In C Johnstone & M Whitehead (Eds.), *New Horizons in British urban policy: Perspectives on new Labour’s urban renaissance*. Ashgate Publishing, 2004, pp. 25-40.

increasing unaffordability of the area. As property prices soared, the lower-income population found themselves unable to afford the rising costs, ultimately being forced out of the area. In addition to the displacement, resistance emerged as a response to the process. However, it is still not very apparent when compared to other gentrified areas.

In summary, as the process of gentrification is complex and multifaceted, a thorough study of its different aspects in Peckham was required. In order to achieve this, the study examined different interconnected factors that led to urban changes in the neighbourhood. After examining the major role played by urban policies implemented from 1997 to 2022 by national governments, the Greater London Authority (GLA), and the local Southwark Council, and how it influenced Peckham's trajectory (physical and social changes), the study established the link between these policies and the process of gentrification. Besides the influence of urban policies, this thesis revealed the symbiotic relationship between the neighbourhood's changing landscape and its portrayal in the media and art, as the narrative about Peckham underwent a transformation, evolving from stigmatised, perilous locale to a vibrant, cultural hub. Finally, this study examined the process of gentrification's impact on the long-term residents and concluded that these rapid changes had led to the displacement of some of these former residents.

The aim of this study was to contribute to our understanding of the complex phenomenon of gentrification and the role of policies in shaping its outcomes. Peckham in this context served as a case study that shed light on the dynamics and impacts of gentrification within this neighbourhood. By analysing the various levels of government policies and initiatives that have influenced Peckham's gentrification, this research highlighted the intersection of socio-political factors and market forces in shaping urban landscapes.

The current findings add to a growing body of literature on the process of gentrification and its outcomes. The gentrification of Peckham is particularly significant due to its historical and cultural context. As historically an area characterised by socio-economic struggles and deprivation, this made it a compelling site for observing the effects of gentrification on marginalised communities. The transformation of Peckham sheds light on the broader issues of inequality, displacement, and the changing social fabric of neighbourhoods undergoing gentrification in London.

Considerably more work will need to be carried out to determine the evolution of the process of gentrification in Peckham, even though the process is in its fourth stage, a stage where



transformations, social diversity and growing tensions between the new middle class residents and the long-term working-class residents are visible, as explained by Phillip L. Clay.<sup>706</sup> However, this stage does not signify the end of the process. Peckham has experienced the progression through different stages of gentrification, yet it still retains a distinct characteristic of social diversity. Despite the changes brought about by the process, there is still a noticeable presence of social diversity within the neighbourhood. The process is yet to reach its culmination as history has shown in many gentrified settings worldwide that gentrification can, ironically, pave the way for a homogenisation (the displacement of the original inhabitants). The area is also poised on the cusp of further transformation: the coming years will be definitive in shaping the ultimate outcome of this urban evolution, necessitating continued observation and analysis

In addition, while this research covered substantial ground, it is imperative to acknowledge that due to the intricate nature of gentrification, there are still numerous sub-themes and nuances that remain unexplored. These untouched areas present rich opportunities for future research, ensuring that the study of gentrification remains an ever-evolving field.

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<sup>706</sup> Phillip L. Clay. "The Mature Revitalized Neighbourhood: Emerging Issues in Gentrification." In Lees, Loretta, et al. *The Gentrification Reader*, 2010, pp. 37-38.

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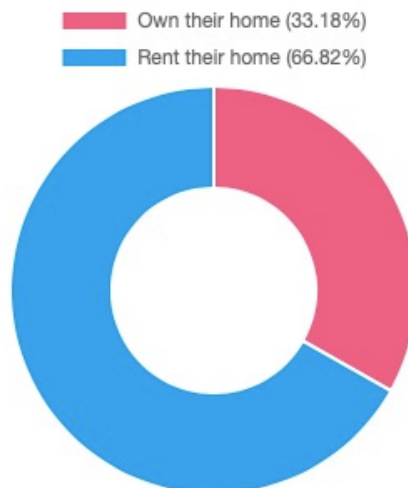
# Appendices

## Appendix 1 – Population in Peckham Ward in 2001, 2011, and 2021

Name	Status	Population Census 2001-04-29	Population Census 2011-03-27	Population Census 2021-03-21		
Peckham	Ward	11,262	14,493	14,785		
<b>Peckham</b>						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>14,785</b> Population [2021] – Census</li> <li>◦ <b>0.8591 km<sup>2</sup></b> Area</li> <li>● <b>17,210/km<sup>2</sup></b> Population Density [2021]</li> <li>● <b>0.20%</b> Annual Population Change [2011 → 2021]</li> </ul>						
						
London	Region	7,172,091	8,173,941	8,799,728		

Source: The UK Office for National Statistics, found in “Peckham Ward in London.” City Population, <[https://www.citypopulation.de/en/uk/london/wards/southwark/E05011110\\_peckham/](https://www.citypopulation.de/en/uk/london/wards/southwark/E05011110_peckham/)> Accessed 25 July 2023.

## Appendix 2 – How many Residents Own or Rent their Home in Peckham and Southwark?



Source: “Socio-economic Statistics for Peckham, Southwark.” *livehere*, <[https://www.ilivehere.co.uk/statistics-peckham-southwark-29814.html#google\\_vignette](https://www.ilivehere.co.uk/statistics-peckham-southwark-29814.html#google_vignette)> Accessed 25 July 2023.

### Appendix 3 – Peckham, Occupation of the Residents in 2001

Year	Occupation	Percentage
2001	Elementary	19.83 %
2001	Administrative and secretarial	14.00 %
2001	Associate professional and technical	13.50 %
2001	Professionals	10.49 %
2001	Caring, leisure and other service	10.36 %
2001	Managers, directors and senior officials	9.57 %
2001	Sales and customer service	8.79 %
2001	Skilled Trades	7.72 %
2001	Process, plant and machine operatives	5.73 %

Source: "Peckham, Southwark: Ward Level Demographics Composition Covering The Last Two Census." *Vinsight*, <<https://vinsights.co.uk/CensusWard/E05000546>.> Accessed 25 July 2023.

### Appendix 4 – Peckham, Occupation of the Residents in 2011

Year	Occupation	Percentage
2011	Elementary	18.70 %
2011	Professionals	16.34 %
2011	Caring, leisure and other service	12.99 %
2011	Associate professional and technical	12.07 %
2011	Administrative and secretarial	10.60 %
2011	Sales and customer service	9.81 %
2011	Skilled Trades	8.56 %
2011	Managers, directors and senior officials	6.19 %
2011	Process, plant and machine operatives	4.75 %

Source: "Peckham, Southwark: Ward Level Demographics Composition Covering The Last Two Census." *Vinsight*, <<https://vinsights.co.uk/CensusWard/E05000546>.> Accessed 25 July 2023.

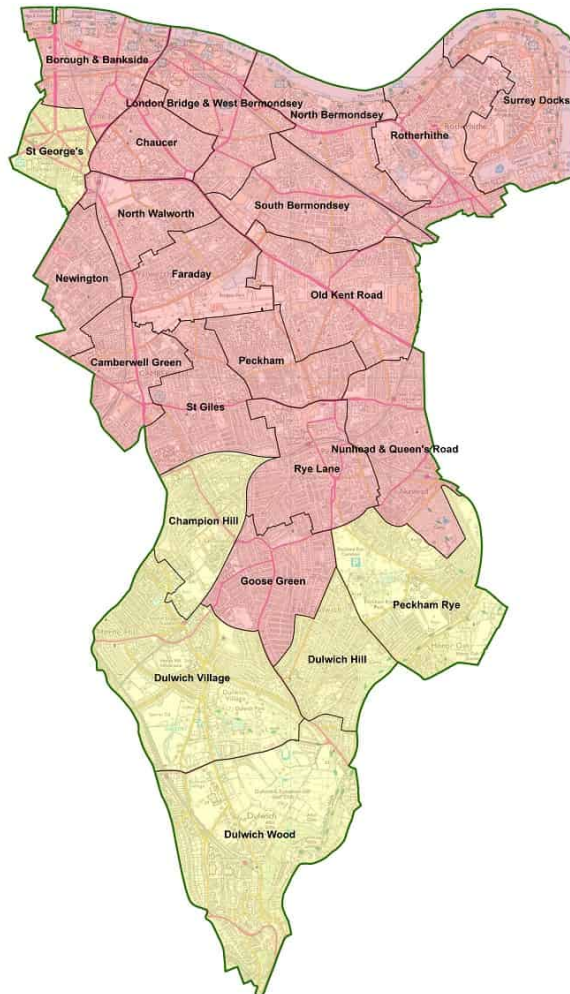
## Appendix 5 – Peckham: Population, Geographical Area Density, 2001 and 2011

Year	Population	Male Residents	Female Residents	Ward Area (sq km)	Desnity (per sq km)
2011	14,720	49%	51%	0,87	16,900
2001	11,381	47%	53%	0,87	13,100

\*E = Estimated Population

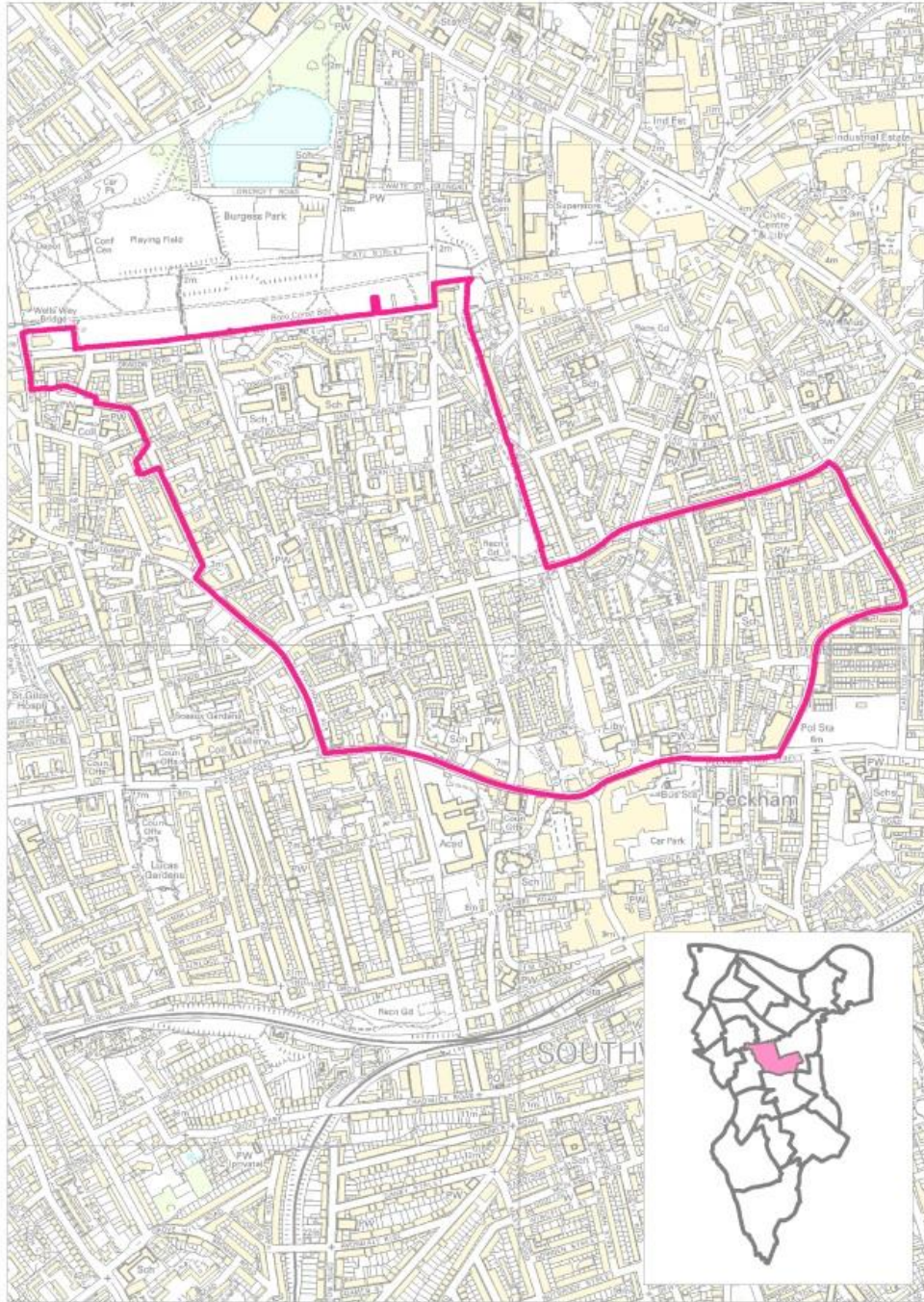
Source: "Peckham, Southwark : Ward Level Demographics Composition Covering The Last Two Census." *VInsight*, <<https://vinsights.co.uk/CensusWard/E05000546>.> Accessed 25 July 2023.

## Appendix 6 - Southwark Council Wards since 2018



Source: Local Government Boundary Commission of England, 2018.

## Appendix 7 - Map of Peckham Ward



**Source:** Crown copyright and database rights 2017, Ordnance Survey (0)100019252, Southwark Ward Profiles, Southwark Council: London, 2017.

**Appendix 8 – Race and Ethnicity in Southwark, London and England**

<b>2011 Census</b>	<b>Southwark</b>	<b>London</b>	<b>England</b>
All usual residents	288,283	8,173,941	53,012,456
White British	114,534 39.7%	3,669,284 44.9%	42,279,236 79.8%
Irish	6,222 2.2%	175,974 2.2%	517,001 1.0%
Gypsy or Irish Traveller	263 0.1%	8,196 0.1%	54,895 0.1%
Other White	35,330 12.3%	1,033,981 12.6%	2,430,010 4.6%
White and Black Caribbean	5,677 2.0%	119,425 1.5%	415,616 0.8%
White and Black African	3,687 1.3%	65,479 0.8%	161,550 0.3%
White and Asian	3,003 1.0%	101,500 1.2%	332,708 0.6%
Other Mixed	5,411 1.9%	118,875 1.5%	283,005 0.5%
Indian	5,819 2.0%	542,857 6.6%	1,395,702 2.6%
Pakistani	1,623 0.6%	223,797 2.7%	1,112,282 2.1%
Bangladeshi	3,912 1.4%	222,127 2.7%	436,514 0.8%
Chinese	8,074 2.8%	124,250 1.5%	379,503 0.7%
Other Asian	7,764 2.7%	398,515 4.9%	819,402 1.5%
Black African	47,413 16.4%	573,931 7.0%	977,741 1.8%
Black Caribbean	17,974 6.2%	344,597 4.2%	591,016 1.1%
Other Black	12,124 4.2%	170,112 2.1%	277,857 0.5%
Arab	2,440 0.8%	106,020 1.3%	220,985 0.4%
Any other ethnic group	7,013	175,021	327,433

2.4%

2.1%

0.6%

Source: Southwark Council. Public Sector Equality Duty: Race and ethnicity." Southwark Council, <<https://www.southwark.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/equality-and-diversity/public-sector-equality-duty?chapter=8>> Accessed 26 July 2022.

### Appendix 9 - Guide to Local Authority Responsibility for Major Services in England.

	Shire Areas			Metropolitan Areas	London	
	Unitaries	County Councils	District Councils	Metropolitan Districts	London Boroughs	GLA
Education	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Highways	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Transport planning	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Passenger transport	✓	✓		✓		✓
Social care	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Housing	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Libraries	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Leisure and recreation	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Environmental health	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Waste collection	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Waste disposal	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Planning applications	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Strategic planning	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Local taxation collection	✓		✓	✓	✓	

Source: Local Government Group. "Local Government Structure Overview." October 2010. Local Government Association Analysis and Research. <<https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/local-government-structur-634.pdf>>

**Appendix 10 – Photograph of the Area behind Peckham Library where Montview Academy was Constructed in 2018**



**Source:** photographs taken by phone in 2 March 2016



**Appendix 11 – A Photograph of the Retail Shop Blue Ink before its Replacement with Costa Café**



**Source:** The Peckham Peculiar. "Costa Coffee submits Plans for Peckham Branch." The Peckham Peculiar, 12 May 2016, <<https://peckhampeculiar.tumblr.com/post/144242983809/costa-coffee-submits-plans-for-peckham-branch>> Accessed 20 July 2023.

**Appendix 12 – A Photograph that Shows Costa Café which Replaced the Retail Shop Blue Ink**



**Source:** photographs taken by phone on 28 July 2017.

**Appendix 13 – A Photograph of the Entrance of Aylesham Centre on Rye Lane**



**Source:** photographs taken by phone on 28 July 2017.

**Appendix 14 – A Billboard on Peckham Rye Lane with Pictures of the Road**



**Source:** photograph taken by phone on 4 March 2016.

Appendix 15 – A Flyer distributed by SLG to the Locals to Encourage Visiting the Gallery, Summer 2022



Hi Neighbour!

Did you know that the South London Gallery is your local art gallery and is only a mile or even less, from your door? We are a free gallery showing some of the world's most exciting art exhibitions. We also have gardens to visit, a lovely café, plus free events and activities for everyone, including families. Come and see us.

Bring this postcard along and enjoy **free tea or coffee for 2 people\*** in our Crane's Kitchen café (for postcard holders only).

*\*Offer valid until 30 September 2022*

**SLG**

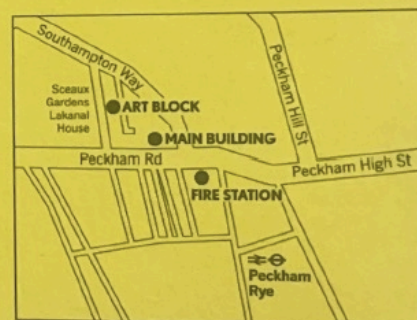
South London Gallery

Main Building  
65–67 Peckham Road, London SE5 8UH

Fire Station  
82 Peckham Road, London SE15 5LQ

T. 020 7703 6120  
E. mail@southlondongallery.org  
southlondongallery.org

Twitter: @SLG\_artupdates  
Instagram: @southlondongallery



Supported by public funding from  
ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND

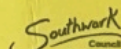


Photo: Andy Slagg, 2021

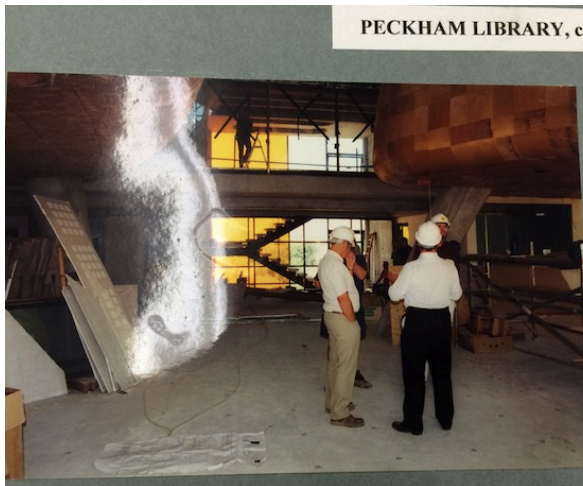
Source: A flyer distributed to the locals in their mail box, given to me by one of Peckham residents, July 2022.

**Appendix 16 – Lightning Designed and Manufactured by local artists during the Bellenden Renewal Scheme**



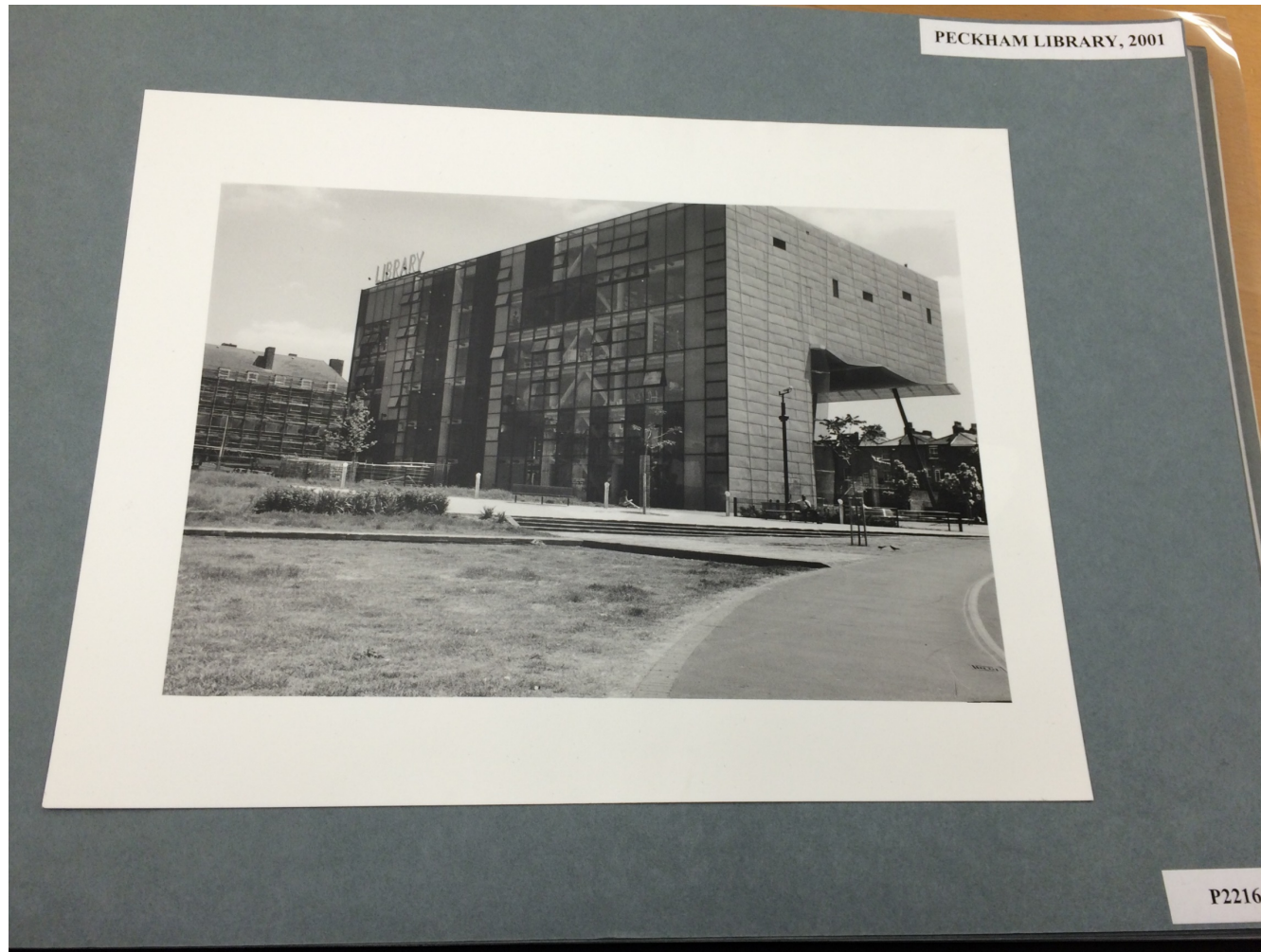
**Source:** Photograph on the left taken by Andy Lee, the photograph on the right taken by Paul Sutters, shared by Phillips, Tom. "Bellenden Renewal Scheme: Rima light."< <https://www.tomphillips.co.uk/works/works-in-situ/item/94-bellenden-renewal-scheme-rima#>> Accessed 3 August 2023.

**Appendix 18 – Photographs of Peckham Library During Constructions**



**Source:** Photographs taken in 1999 and found in Southwark Archives on 5 March 2016.

Appendix 17 – a Photograph of Peckham Library Taken in 2001



Source: Photographs taken in 2001 and found in Southwark Archives on 5 March 2016.

Appendix 18 – a Photograph of Peckham Pulse Next to the Library Taken in 2011



Source: Photographs taken in 2001 and found in Southwark Archives on 5 March 2016.

**Appendix 19 - A Private house on Costa street, Two Minutes Away from Bellenden Road SE15, and Is Included in Bellenden Village**



Source: Photograph taken on 18 January 2022.

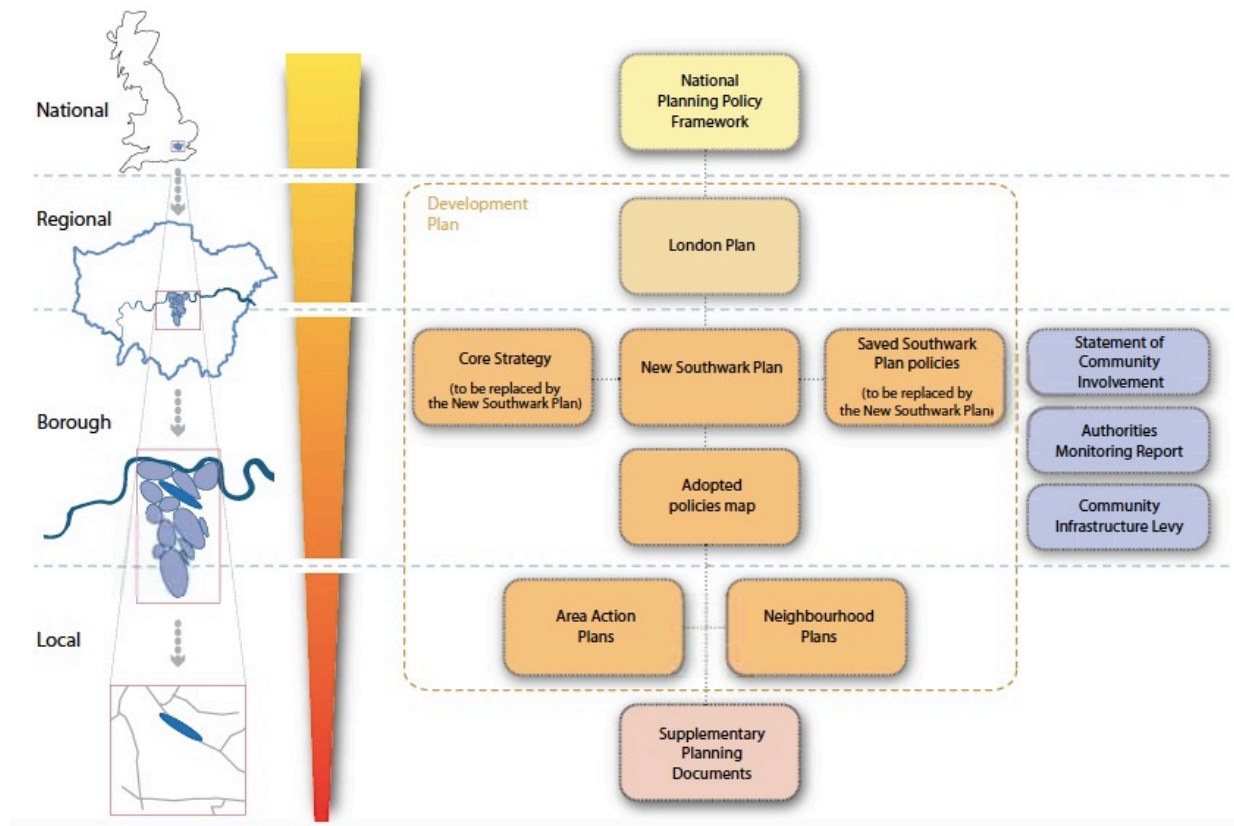
**Appendix 20 - Two Attached Private Houses on Lyndhurst Way, a Side Street Away from Rye Lane SE15, and Included in Bellenden Village**



Source: Photograph taken on 18 January 2022.

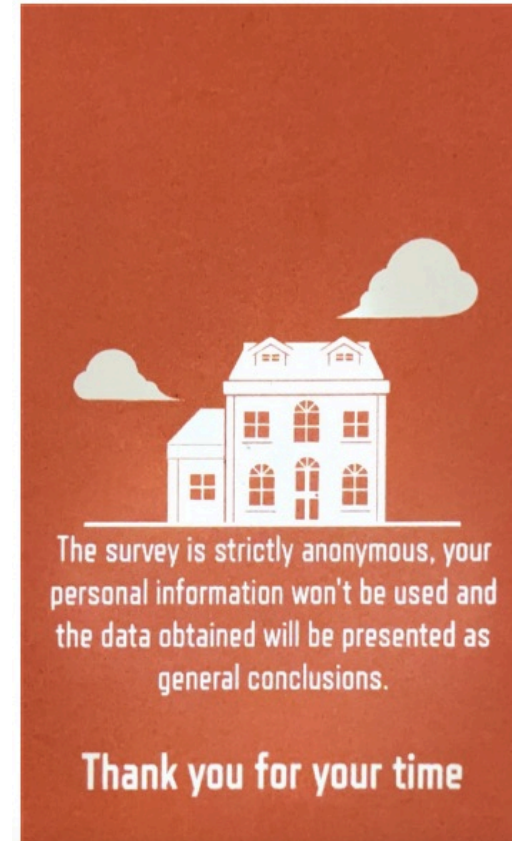


## Appendix 21 - The Inter-Relationships between Spatial Scale and the Local Plan



Source: Southwark Council. Peckham and Nunhead Area Action Plan. Southwark Council, November 2014, p. 16.

Appendix 22 – A Flyer Distributed to the Locals for a Survey Online



**Source:** the fliers printed in February 2016 and distributed during the different visits to the neighbourhood

**Appendix 23 – The Questions of the Online Survey Conducted by Habiba Jelali and Posted in January 2016**

## Living in Peckham, London

This study is for a PhD research paper. It targets only the residents of Peckham. Answering this survey will help me to analyse urban transformations in the area and will facilitate finding results. Your personal information won't be given nor used in my writings.

Université Sorbonne Nouvelle Paris 3  
ED 625

LAB CREW

\*\*\* Your personal info will not be public; your names and last names will be deleted and only the final results will be taken into account.

Any personal details will be deleted after this study.

For any further details please contact me on  
habiba.jallali@sorbonne-nouvelle.fr

Thank you!

Name

Address (Only the street or road name)

Age

Gender

Male  
Female  
other

Nationality

Civil Status

Single  
married  
divorced  
widowed

Employment Status: Are you currently ...?

Employed for wages  
self-employed  
student  
out of work/ looking for work  
out of work/ Not currently looking for work  
a homemaker  
Military  
Retired  
unable to work

**1** There is no data to be displayed for this item.

**2** What do you do for living?

**3** where do you work?

**4** Are you ... ?

a tenant

a landlord or homeowner

**5** For how long have you been living in Peckham?

less than 2 years

2 to 5 years

5 to 10 years

more than 10 years

**6** Where do you come from? and where did you live before?

**7** Are there parts of the Borough of Southwark that are better than Peckham, in your opinion?

**8** How much do you pay per month for rent? or how much did you pay to buy it?

**9** Why did you move to Peckham?

**10** How is your actual place? How many rooms do you have? and how many square meters?

**11** Did you do some renovations in your place?

yes

No

**12** if yes, what did you change? the painting? the electricity? ...etc. and how much did it cost you?

**13** What sort of image do you think outsiders have of Peckham?

**14** How does Peckham compare with other parts of London as a place to live?

**15** What are the good things about Peckham?

**16** What are the bad things about it?

**17** Is Peckham changing for better or worse? Why?

**18** Is Peckham pleasant to look at?

Yes  
No

**19** Is accommodation difficult to get in Peckham?

Yes  
No

**20** What do you think of house prices in this area?

**21** Is there enough open spaces? Parks? Local facilities? Sports facilities? ...etc.

Yes  
No

**22** what is public transport like in Peckham?

**23** What kind of transportation do you take?

**24** Where do you do your main shopping? Is it cheap?

**25** Do you think that job opportunities in this area are improving or getting worse?

**26** What do you think about Education in this area?

**27** What do you think about medical services?

**28** Do you intend to stay in Peckham? If no, where and why?

Source: The Survey online since January 2016

<<https://app.freeonlinesurveys.com/1804555/>>

## Appendix 24 - Survey Answered by Four Locals in 2016

### Gentrification in Peckham, London

This study is for a PhD research paper. It is anonymous, and it targets only the residents of Peckham. Answering this survey will help me to analyse the process of gentrification in the area and will facilitate finding results.

Name

-  
-  
-  
-

Address (Only the street or road name)

Rye Lane  
Fenwick Road

Age

35  
34  
36  
19

Gender



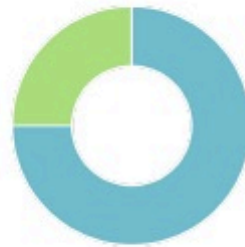
50% (2)  
Male

50% (2)  
Female

0%  
other

(4)  
Responses

Civil Status



75% (3)  
Single

25% (1)  
married

0%  
divorced

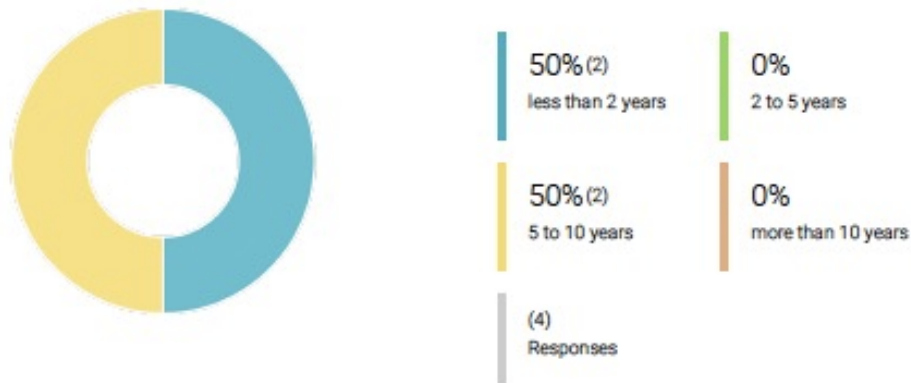
0%  
widowed

(4)  
Responses

### 1 What do you do for living?

consultant  
Freelance writer  
Sales

## 2 For how long have you been living in Peckham?



## 3 Where do you come from? and where did you live before?

Previously lived for 6 years in between Brixton and Herne Hill

London, before Peckham, Elephant and Castle

Uk

Egypt. Cambridge

## 4 Are there parts of the Borough of Southwark that are better than Peckham, in your opinion?

why? still discovering Southwark, but prefer areas that are not too gentrified just yet

where? Nunhead, Camberwell; East Dulwich bit too yummy mummy by now...

## 5 Why did you move to Peckham?

Was in shared flat, wanted something for myself in SE London, this shared ownership flat came up and I liked it. So no deliberate

choice for Peckham, but do like it!

Found a nice shared house that was cheap

It's closer to work

## 6 What sort of image do you think outsiders have of Peckham?

Walking on Rye Lane & High St: bit rough. Walking on Bellenden Rd etc: gentrified.

Used to be Del Boy, now hipster

Some say it's not safe others say it's busy.

## How does Peckham compare with other parts of London 7 as a place to live?

Not as much of village/community feel as I had in Herne Hill, but am still exploring. Great transport links, lots to explore - liking it!

It's lovely, I come from Greenford in zone 4 and Peckham is the nicest place I've lived

Needs to have a better security system. However it's as a general life it much cheaper than other parts of London.

## 8 What are the good things about Peckham?

Still lots of 'original' people around, unlike Brixton, they haven't been priced out - yet...

Nice people, green spaces, good mix of shops, good pubs, Peckhamplex!

Some people, and probably shopping markets.

## 9 What are the bad things about it?

Fear that it will get gentrified very quickly now, pushing the 'original' people out, turning it into yet another Brixton morphing into

Clapham.

Chains coming into the area, very expensive places coming into the area

Parts of it is not clean which reflects a bad image Peckham as a whole.

## 10 Is Peckham changing for better or worse? Why?

I think so far for the better, but as in Brixton the tipping point to for worse could be reached very quickly...

Gentrification is inevitable (especially without government support/defending of commercial/private rents etc) but I hope that the area can retain most of what makes it special

Gettin better

It's still the same

**11** Is Peckham pleasant to look at?



**12** Is accommodation difficult to get in Peckham?

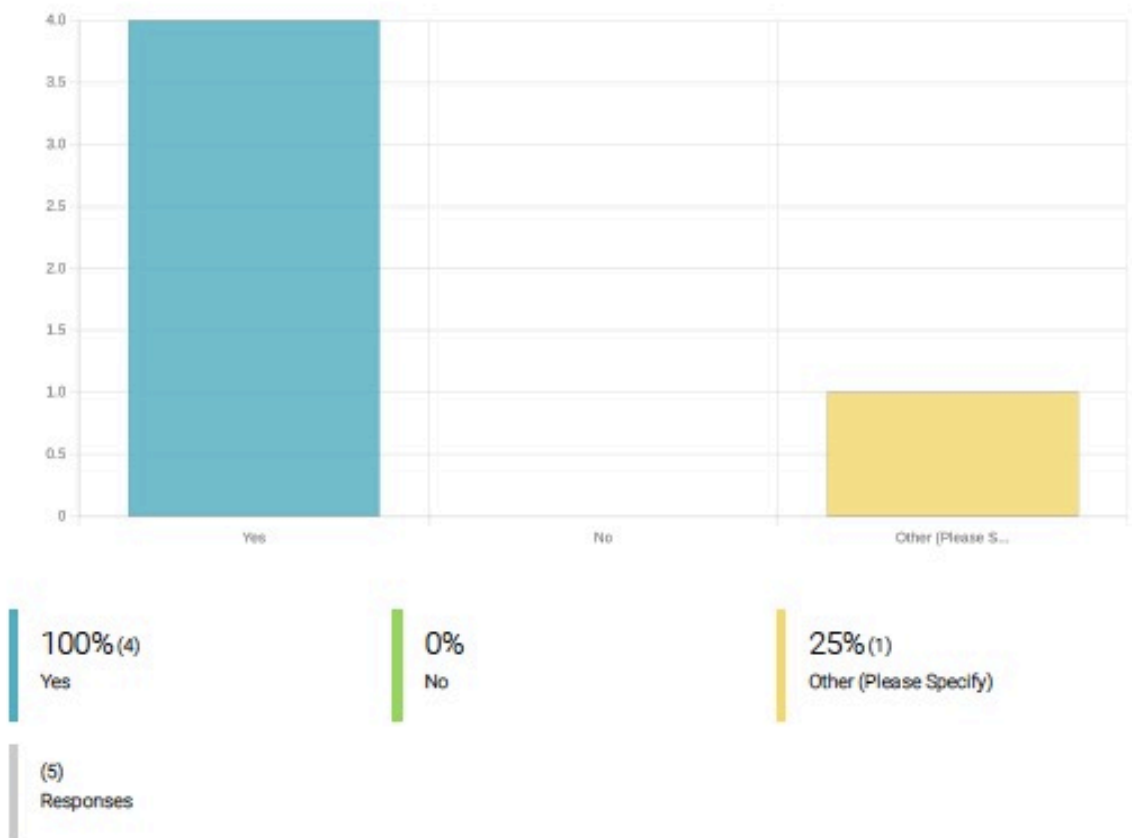


**13** What do you think of house prices in this area?

My 1bed (shared ownership) was on market for £300k - which is absurd.  
Absolutely nuts, but I guess in line with the rest of London  
Same as every where  
Affordable



**14** Is there enough open spaces ? Parks? Local facilities? Sports facilities? ...etc.



Am near Rye Common, otherwise would be missing green spaces. No opinion yet on other facilities

**15** what is public transport like in Peckham?

\*if\* the trains are running on time it's fantastic, as we're on 4 lines. But that's rarely the case...

- Really good
- Good but unreliable
- Very good.

**16** Where do you do your main shopping? Is it cheap?

Fruit & veg try to buy at market stalls. Rest Asda/Morrisson.  
Asda, Tesco, Khans. Yes, there's a really good choice of local shops  
Oxford Circus. However, home goods from Peckham.

**17** Do you think that job opportunities in this area are improving or getting worse?



### 18 What do you think about Education in this area?

Don't know, same with job opportunities (work in city)  
I don't know, I don't have any children.  
Could be better.

### 19 What do you think about medical services?

Quite few GP surgeries around, don't know about other services  
Not great? It's hard to find a GP and they're oversubscribed  
Average

### 20 Do you intend to stay in Peckham? If no, where and why?

For near to medium future, depending on Brexit: yes.  
I would like to stay, hopefully I can afford to.  
Yes. It's getting much nicer  
No, Most likely Victoria. It's a Relaxed area and much more hygienic.

Source: A survey online <<https://freeonlinesurveys.com/s/MS6Ljrdl.>>

## Appendix 25 – Questions Asked to Artists in Peckham as Part of Semi-Structured Interviews

Closed questions such as;

- 'Do you live or work in Peckham, or both?'
- 'How long have you been in the area?'

Open questions relating to their work were also asked such as:

- What is your art practice?
- What does the neighbourhood offer artists?
- How does the area impact on your work?
- What do you think of the role art plays in the neighbourhood?

Other questions focused on how the artists perceive the neighbourhood, and its urban changes:

- why did you choose this area in particular? - what are the best parts of Peckham?
- What are the worst parts?
- If you wanted to change the neighbourhood what would you change?
- How do you compare it with other parts of London as a place to live? Or work?

# Index

## B

Bellenden Road, 58, 62, 186, 209, 210, 218.

Bellenden Road Regeneration scheme, 166, 177, 178.

## D

Displacement, 22, 23, 24, 32, 288, 290, 294, 285, 300, 308.

## E

Elections

General election 78, 79, 92.

Regional election 105, 105.

## G

Gentrification

Definition, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25.

Ruth Glass's definition, 20, 21.

Debates, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29.

Super-gentrification, 23.

Clay's model, 23, 315.

GLA,

Structure, 101, 102.

Mayor 102, 103, 104.

Assembly 104, 105.

## H

Housing Crisis, 38, 50, 124, 156.

## L

Library

Peckham Library, 173, 174, 175.

Lottery Fund, 168, 233.

## N

New Deal for Communities, 88.

## O

Olympic Games, 116.

## P

Political leaders

Tony Blair 19, 32, 35, 52, 76, 78, 80, 89.

Margaret Thatcher, 48.

John Major, 42, 51, 78.

Sadiq Khan, 104, 109, 126, 129.

Boris Johnson, 113, 123.

Ken Livingstone, 104, 109, 111,  
113, 128.

#### Political Parties

New Labour 32, 79, 80, 154.

Conservative Party, 51, 78, 92, 96.

#### R

Regeneration, 32, 40, 41, 154.

Right to buy, 95, 96, 247, 305.

Resistance, 153, 225, 266, 268, 270, 288.

Rye Lane, 55, 57, 61, 62, 71, 72, 180, 256.

#### W

World City, 106, 107.