

# **Walking on the Rim: Towards a Geography of Resentment**

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## **Declaration**

I declare that the work presented in my thesis is my own.

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## **Acknowledgements**

Firstly, I would like to thank my colleagues and friends at CUCR (Goldsmiths) for the lovely and supportive work environment they created there. Without their jokes, moans, lunch breaks and academic discussions this long journey would have been sterile and meaningless.

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## **Abstract**

My research seeks to understand the complexity of East Greenwich residents' affective reactions at the moment when this landscape was undergoing a dramatic and rapid change. I walked its riverside to the Dome while this was turned from a mostly dismissed and derelict industrial land to a residential area ready to host parts of the Olympic Games. My starting point is that a process of gentrification with symbolic and material displacement of working-class people and their social practices has been occurring. Throughout my fieldwork, I constantly seek to understand the emotional reactions to this pervasive urban change from local residents, workers, and occasional passers-by who I met during the last five years. I have done this with the aid of my always obsolete digital camera and my walking boots, and applying photo elicitation technique whenever it was possible. The unique combination of photographs, walks, and interviews helped me to unpack, from the lower ground perspective of local working-class residents, their affective reactions to this peculiar change. Such an emplaced and class-based struggle opens to what I call the 'geography of resentment'. My hypothesis is that this resentment is a form of reaction against the symbolic violence that gentrification brings. The vehicle through which resentment is expressed is a form of remembering very close to nostalgia, which I decouple from both 'imperial melancholia' and 'hierarchical belonging'. Rather, I contend that this is a form of affective class struggle fought at the level of the symbolic. A debate remains open about the extent to which such controversial form of affection maintains distance from political instrumentalisation and mainstream discourses of communitarian cohesion, while at the same time reflecting the paradoxes of urban change.

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Attached:

Cardullo P (2009) *Walking on the Rim: a Tale of Abjection*. London: Blurb.

Cardullo P (2011) *Walking on the Rim: Photos, Encounters, Objects*. London:  
Blurb.

## Introduction

My research seeks to understand the material and emotional changes happening to residents' practices, as a consequence of the recent renewal of East Greenwich Riverside. This small neighbourhood of clear working-class character is squeezed in between one of the largest regeneration attempts made in Britain, the Greenwich Peninsula Masterplan (with its focus on the O2 Arena), and the wealthy post-colonial landscape of its town centre, attraction for tourists from all over the world. At the moment of writing my thesis, Greenwich was included in the hosting boroughs of the Olympic Games and was also about to become a Royal Borough during the Diamond Jubilee. These two big events put an increasing pressure on the regeneration of the area and, inevitably, on its residential housing market.

I have been walking and photographing around this neighbourhood, and talking to people involved in the process of urban change for the last five years. In particular, I have been focussing my attention on the area of Lovell's Wharf, an ex-industrial site of growing historical interest, and on the contiguous riverside path, which was in the process of being replaced by a cycle/pedestrian route in time for the Olympic Games. When I first walked down the East Greenwich riverside, a few years ago, I was simply hooked. The scene unfolding before my eyes appeared as absolutely fascinating: a mix of dismissed industrial compounds, colourful graffiti adorning ex-warehouse walls, spontaneous riverside vegetation, and an amazing interaction of animals, objects, and people – kids, couples, workers, bikers, photographers, families – alongside the tortuous and narrow path. The landscape was uncanningly familiar to me, as a weird combination of signs recalling firstly a specific sense of aesthetics, a sort of fascination for ruins and derelict places, cultivated mostly during

my childhood in the South of Italy, and secondly previous experiences of working in small factories of the industrial North of Italy, while studying for my degree in Economics.

As the years went by and I moved to live in the neighbourhood, I witnessed a series of dramatic changes to this landscape: mostly demolition and new residential ventures, as part of a regeneration process of the area stretching from the Dome on the Peninsula to Greenwich town centre. As my interest grew as both a local resident and a working photographer, I walked along the riverside path and surrounding settings and I encountered numerous people, organizations, statutory bodies, archival collections, unexpected objects, industrial history experts and workers. They all showed me – in one way or another, sometimes in a contradictory manner – their discomfort, indignation, and resentment for the demolitions in progress. Or, conversely, they claimed the inevitability, positivity and profitability of such changes. Soon, it appeared to me, and to my lens, that not one simple representation would have been enough to bring to the fore the texture and complexity of such a landscape. Different interests and senses of place intertwined or conflicted. Tensions – between the 'old' industrial and the 'new' post-industrial landscape, on the one hand, and between local geographies and global trajectories of city change, on the other – seemed to me about to erupt at any time.

## **Conflicting Histories**

Just before sending my latest photobook to a remote printer, I decided to add a photograph right at the end of it (Cardullo 2011, 75). It depicts a tomb with a discrete inscription, a sign of an anchor. All we know from the photograph is that the dead must have had something to do with the sea. This would not be surprising for any



reader/viewer acquainted with the history and the current iconography of Greenwich. What is intruding is the simple fact that this photo was taken on a hill in a burial ground in a small park or, more accurately, in a small park created above a cemetery, in the neighbourhood of East Greenwich.<sup>1</sup>

I woke up in the middle of the night thinking about it, struck by an illumination. When it finally started getting lighter, I set off to take a series of inspired photographs. The park was deserted at that time and, despite having been there before (once I even interviewed a local resident in the tiny café there), it looked eerie as if the balance between the living and the dead had been temporarily turned in favour of the latter. This little park, hidden among Victorian terraces and Victorian trees is absolutely central to understanding the urban regeneration of 'maritime' Greenwich. It was established, so we learn from the little inscription on its side, in order to host the corpses of over 3000 seamen who fought at Trafalgar in the battle that 'established the naval supremacy of England'.

But this is only one part of the story. The skeletons, in fact, were moved there in 1867 when the original site of the very central Greenwich Hospital<sup>2</sup> was full and, moreover, it had to allow room for a railway tunnel on the newly built line from Kent to central London. Fifty years later these glorious skeletons were moved *again*. They had to make room for more current and wealthy dead, in what was a fast gentrifying neighbourhood on the slopes of the hills overlooking the unhealthy slums of the Greenwich docks. A double mass displacement.

While reading the inscriptions on the tombs my sociological imagination was

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1 East-Greenwich Pleasaunce.

2 Just to put this in context, Greenwich Hospital also owns the land on which the famous market and the Naval College are built. They organise charitable events there and profit enormously from the film industry. With Morden College, another charitable institution, they are considered to be responsible for the development of Greenwich and its Peninsula (Mills 1999).

overexcited. I couldn't help but starting thinking about the material aspects, figuring out the practicalities of such movements (carts, horses, teams of undertakers, wooden cases, planners, council meetings, and so on), but also less material affordances of such a large movement of ancient corpses. Their stench must have invaded the regal streets of – what is now known as – Greenwich Village. It surely mixed with more typical externalities from the docks, when winds rarely change their usual westerly direction.

Ironically, this cemetery is located just off the Trafalgar Road which leads into central Greenwich. I would argue that a neverending imperial melancholia<sup>3</sup> is palpably attached to its ruins, monuments, and artefacts. It spills over from shop windows and street names. Following this lead, I got increasingly interested in a symbol carved on the stern of the famous Cutty Sark, the 'Star of India', a badge of a chivalry founded by Queen Victoria to honour British officers who served in India as well as Indian princes. The Star of India is a small detail in an incredibly rich postcolonial landscape and stands as the perfect symbol of the intersection of class and 'race' in the history of Greenwich.<sup>4</sup> It speaks of movements of goods and indentured labour across global trajectories, of the fictional separation between 'home' and colony, and of 'lifestyle migration' of exclusive settlers on both parts of the world (Knowles et al. 2009; also Fisher 2006; Visram 2001). At the same time, as a renovated artefact for tourist consumption, it validly contributes to the perpetuation of the local and national imperial dream. The Star of India carries a double temporal dimension, as most objects I encountered. It is past material

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3 See the notorious critique by Gilroy, according to whom: 'the chronic, nagging pain of its [the Empire] absence feeds a melancholic attachment to the past' (Gilroy 2005).

4 On the intersections between the 'social' and the 'economic', as well as 'class' and 'race', see S. Hall's discussion (Hall 1980) and interview (Hall et al. 2009, 3). Here, in my argument, the cultural reproduction of 'Imperial Greenwich' is an aspect of and a stimulus to the classed reproduction of urban space (gentrification). 'In sum, the discourse of race, class and place are intertwined with each other. People and places thus become indistinguishable within a hierarchy of race and class distinction' (Tyler 2012, 24).

artefact, charged with the heavy burden of imperial legacy. It is also a symbol of present urban change, culturally charged with the theming of Greenwich as a 'renewed' and trendy place.

How do we deal with this apparent contradiction of removed death and fading traces – often invisible to the eye trained in thinking of Empire as something far away in time and place – on the one hand, and the overwhelming signs of the Royal Greenwich past – inscribed in memorial plaques, street names, stones, as well as in objects, souvenirs, shop windows – on the other? My contention is a take on history and cultural geography as something that can be radically resistant, contrary and alien. The driving idea behind this thesis is a focus on cultural displacement. One leading tenet is in fact that demographic movement tells us only part of the story of urban change. Other angles, such as the preservation, expropriation, taming, and theming of ethnic cultural signs and symbols are equally important and symptomatic of such changes.<sup>5</sup>

I am intruded by the ghost that stimulated my sociological imagination at the moment in which I realised that displacement can be, at the same time, a cultural and a material process. That is what ghosts do best, they haunt places and people sensitive to them and they return unexpected. As Avery Gordon so beautifully puts it:

*Being haunted draws us **affectively**, sometimes **against our will** and always a bit **magically**, into the structure of feeling of a reality we come to experience, not as cold knowledge, but as a transformative recognition. (Gordon 2008 my emphasis)*

Ideas that stay on the back of one's mind need time to be reworked and they might only sparkle in so-called 'eureka moments'. This in turn is never a sudden finding, I suggest. Rather, 'illumination' is something that needs to mature, often

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5 On the relationship between 'theming and taming' of global cities see Chang (Chang 2000).

unconsciously and slowly. I like to think of this as being unexpectedly haunted by my very familiar field or, to put it in slightly more elegant terms, by a ghost as an uncanny affordance of the city.<sup>6</sup>

Ghosts are quite obvious things. We can think of them as the banal fact that individuals are more than the sum of their immediate perceived experiences. That is, life is more complicated than it first appears (Gordon 2008). Life is entangled not just in a web of connections that sprawls to other beings, places, and objects (Thrift 2008). Life also contains all the traces, memories, affective reactions, that are linked to one's past as well as, powerfully, to other people's pasts. This entanglement of narratives breaks 'the gap between personal and social, public and private, objective and subjective' (Gordon 2008, 98).

Gordon's ideas are stimulating and partly fit with my quest for uncanny affections and unresolved memories. However, I am not completely satisfied by the epistemological framework deployed there. Walter Benjamin reminds us in the *Arcade Project* that 'to dwell means to leave traces' (Benjamin 1999). He was looking at the interior of the nineteenth century house, in particular at tapestry, furniture, upholstery, and velvet compass cases. However, I would argue that 'things', when normally regarded as trash, have simply lost their connections with the networks of practice of which they used to be part, with their use-value. Historic materialist's task is then to dig up these abandoned pieces – in form of spatial practices, fragments of experience, heritage of everyday life and work as they are concealed into artefacts, bodies and buildings<sup>7</sup> – and give them historical dignity. A task for which photography seems particularly suitable.

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6 City as a stage for myriads of complex interconnections of people, objects, memories, and places. City is also a place where forgetting and remembering co-exists in unexpected ways (see also Pile 2005).

7 And the intersection of these (see Latham et al. 2004; also Lees 2002).

Photographs in fact can remind us of the materiality of reality and its sensuousness, its attachment to social practices and to layers of direct experience with place. A photograph is always about someone or something specific (Berger, cited in Becker 2002). Photographs can pick up the detail and set the broader context in which this and social life, in general, are embedded in (Knowles et al. 2004). In other words, photographs capture the existential trail left behind by a person met or something seen, the intangible memories of social encounters. A photograph, especially in its printed form of cultural artefact, can be *the interface* through which affect is produced and circulated.

It is the persistence of memories and their social grounding that makes haunting a rewarding work of imagination. In this sense, haunting helps building the living context in which 'things' happened to be. This context is 'the arena of culture, the imaginings, affective experiences, animated objects, marginal voices, narrative densities, and eccentric traces of power's presence', as Gordon (cited) puts it. But it is also the political-economic process of urban change, of the continuous making and re-making of places under advanced capitalism (Harvey 1978). The combination of hidden traces and neglected memories of past mundane practises – reworked through my photographic practice – allowed me to build a realistic scenario of the present affection of people dwelling along the river.

There are crucial moments when people I encountered re-evoked a multisensorial bond with the landscape. They brought forward the texture of this place, which is so difficult to render using only words. Thanks to my camera, I resume traces of a layered past on the shores of the river Thames which, once dug out, is almost overwhelming. Moreover, as any 'medium', my camera was doing the work of connecting to, or enhancing mine and my research participants' perception of, ghostly presences. Gordon explains this as an uncanny experience. Put simply,

*there is something there and you feel it strongly. It has a shape, an electric empiricity, but the evidence is barely visible, or highly symbolised. (Gordon 2008, 50)*

This 'electric empiricity' is exactly the rendering of the texture of a complex urban place. I aim to describe with words and photographs the special haptic bond that I was able to establish with the 'field' and participants. I try to achieve this by triangulating a photo elicitation technique, my research diary notes and a profound commitment to theoretical debates around the issues discussed throughout.

In the present section I narrated how the direct displacement of over 3000 skeletons of seamen that fought at Trafalgar managed to displace my own take on displacement. I also hinted at an intruding encounter with a historical artefact, the 'Star of India' which I analyse further in Chapter 5. The former is an example of how connections with past experiences can be easily forgotten, but they resurface unexpectedly. The latter is an example of how silences in historical narratives are constructed and maintained, while bolstering the celebration of our heritage. Amongst the many complexities and paradoxes of the city *in fieri*, there is an unresolved tension between the art of mastering silences on the legacy of British Empire, with its fading impact on the formation of the everyday from public memory,<sup>8</sup> and the huge effort put into play in places like Greenwich, as this is at the forefront of Jubilee and Olympic celebrations. The emphasis on these events is in fact on their 'multicultural' aspect. Exposing each 'bundle of silence' (Wemyss 2009) demands an interdisciplinary approach that mobilises a broad range of ethnographic, sociological, political and historical research. It requires 'a radically different way to look at those cartographies to which we have become accustomed' (Burton 1998, 8).

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8 See Tyler 2012.

## Research Questions: in the Field

While doing my fieldwork with long term local residents, I started wondering what really drove me to research this part of London? Moreover, why would this research be academically important?

The East Greenwich neighbourhood sits in between the postcolonial landscape of its more famous town centre (World Heritage under the UNESCO denomination since 1997) and one of the major regeneration projects in the UK. Just to give a sense of the huge effort put in place on the Peninsula which borders with the neighbourhood, I will streamline a few macroeconomic 'facts' about the regeneration plan.<sup>9</sup> North Greenwich is being transformed into 'a new 1.4 million square metre master planned community'.<sup>10</sup> By 2020 approximately 20,000 new residents and 24,000 workers will be accommodated in an area that spans from the Millennium Dome to Greenwich Millennium Village (approximately 190 acres) (Rooke et al. 2011, 14).<sup>11</sup> The motorway, which cuts through the borough and disappears towards north into the infamous Blackwall Tunnel, works as a physical boundary which exacerbates that sense of isolation of the postmodern project of a newly built Peninsula (the 'rim' as I called it). Interestingly for the purposes of my research and for my analysis of the private developers build gentrification, Greenwich with its eight miles has the longest

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9 See especially my first photobook (2009) which documents this huge effort of a 'community in the making' dealing with the symbolic aspects of a huge make-over as well as the material changes in the landscape. In particular, see the mapping of the area from a series of photographs: these zoom-in from the panoramic view of the Peninsula regeneration project (the vision of 'the whole' at page 12), to the computer generated impression of the build landscape (page 24), all the way to the fabricated pattern of pavement and tarmac (page 44) which contrasts with the previously dominating riverside marshes. In Certeau's terms, this series resembles the 'Fall of Icarus', from the 107<sup>th</sup> floor of the World Trade Centre to the daily practices of writing the textures of such a landscape. (De Certeau 1984)

10 *Our Vision*, Greenwich Peninsula Meridian Delta Limited.

11 Overall the Royal Borough of Greenwich has seen one of the sharpest increase of residential population (+18.7%), ranked 6<sup>th</sup> in London, since the last Census in 2001, mostly due to an increase in the stock of residential housing (source ONS).

embankment along the river Thames in London.<sup>12</sup> However, according to Index of Multiple Deprivation, areas of extreme deprivation in the borough are concentrated along the Thames waterfront.<sup>13</sup>

It is this geographical peculiarity of a mostly working-class neighbourhood which firstly struck me about East Greenwich. This is very visible and tangible, even before looking at macro indicators and statistics. I have seen this part of London irremediably changing in the last few years under the pressure of residential house inflation and of the 'new' cultural codes which I aim to analyse in the following chapters (3-5). In particular, in chapter 3 I will describe the 'field' from the perspective of walking through it and encountering people along the way. Some of these encounters were generative in the sense that inspired my next moves and readings. Others provided me with more structured interviews with photo-elicitation technique (about 6 of them).

East Greenwich is generally unknown to most city dwellers and tourists, who prefer the glamour of the newly built Greenwich Peninsula and the fashionable 'old-fashioned' shops of the city centre to decay, abandonment, and the rusty riverside path to the East. After all, as I was often told, that place stunk and was full of rubbish and graffiti. It was unsafe for children to play in. As I am also visually reminded by a plaque embossed on the wall of the central 'Trafalgar' pub, even Charles Dickens

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12 <http://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/services/lept/boroughmap/greenwich/>

13 Greenwich is a relatively deprived borough, with 62% of its 'Lower Super Output Areas' (LSOAs) in the bottom 30% of the country. Notably, Greenwich has an above average proportion of working age adults receiving out of work benefits. Moreover, this rate has increased quite quickly since 2007, in line with its neighbours in the outer east of London. Source:

<http://www.londonpovertyprofile.org.uk/indicators/boroughs/greenwich/>

According to statistics from the DWP, 'Greenwich is a borough of contrasts a major tourist destination with pockets of extreme deprivation. 10 out of the 17 wards in the borough show as the 10% most deprived in England. Greenwich is the 41st most deprived borough in England & Wales. Greenwich among the 10 boroughs in London with the lowest average incomes. However as stated there are strong disparities in income across the Borough. The number of residents with no qualifications is above the London average at 14.3%.' (Source DWP.gov.uk)



would venture no further than there before imagining his stories of EastEnders and London dockers.

Suddenly, I realised that my direct experience would be crucial in the formulation of my research questions to the extent that I was practising the art of dwelling in that partly untamed space. Not as a distracted and uncompromised flâneur, but as a local resident, a father, a photographer, and a sociologist. My participant observation in the field was in my very use of that public space. My discovery with my young son of objects and 'secret places' was just one of the social practices in place, a practice of social reproduction, along other material uses of the same landscape. That my walks became an instrument for encountering other dwellers – themselves busy working out that landscape from their own routines, leisure time, and activities – just added to the motivations of my research.

My research questions are therefore situated, generated by the day-to-day direct experience of the 'field'. This interaction with place is what I want to reproduce in my photobooks. In turn, theoretical underpinnings gave me the lens to see through the myriads of material encounters and symbols in a new and critical way. In this work, I focus on social practices and uses of the public space of the riverside, on the backdrop of the sudden and dramatic change that this part of London is undergoing on the eve of the Olympics. I investigate its accessibility and the uses put in place by people dwelling along its shores, mostly working-class residents I met. More specifically, I search and unveil the emotional reactions to urban change that have been generated from those daily material alterations; a geography of affect of East Greenwich which is intertwined with a mix of material and cultural elements.

Answering to the second set of questions, then – what might be the academic relevance of this research – also involves answering a question on the 'ethos' that

motivated it in the first place. That is, I need also to enquire to what extent this 'necessary' change of the urban scape has anything to do with a reclaiming of inner-city space by more affluent home buyers, what is usually referred to as 'gentrification'. Consequently, I look into the possibility that an alteration of the physical urban landscape is also a mirror of wider and deeper changes in attitude towards the urban working-class population and the use values they put into their inner-city neighbourhoods. A scenario brought, at a much wider scale, by global and advanced financial capitalism, of which gentrification is only 'the knife-edge neighbourhood-based manifestation' (Hackworth 2007, 149).

I maintain that my visual exploration of this neighbourhood, at the moment of its dramatic transition into a post-industrial and gentrified city, could say something about the displacement of inner-city working-class residents and the use-values they attach to a place. It will also open wider connections on the matrix of global power relations of neoliberal ideology, which has also created, for instance, opportunity to replace public space with the entrepreneurial privatized landscape of the present. Or, to put it another way, I want to ask for whom is the 'new' East-Greenwich being built; what sense of place and values does this transformation imply; to what extent is the right of access to the public space of the city compromised; and, conversely, who loses from this process?

There is a sense in which the machine of regeneration has been mystifying a crude gentrification process which starts with the 'tabula rasa' of some of the pre-existing built environment, and slowly proceeds with replacement of buildings, practices, values, cultural codes, senses of place and of aesthetics. That is to say that there is a relationship, made of conflicting impressions and memories, between the way in which place is constructed and the way in which place is lived. Lees calls it the 'geography of gentrification' (Lees 2000), which has two movements of Lefebvrian

memory (Lefebvre 1991).

On the one hand, my participants gave me a wealth of local knowledge, stories and fragments of past experiences which mix objects washed ashore by the river, rusty ruins and wreckage of previous working practices with the general sense of the huge transformation this part of London is undergoing. Something about which those people seem to be only bystanders, caught in-between events over which they have very little control. On the other hand, this geography is concerned with the process of planning, drawing, and imagining the spaces of the city to be. During my fieldwork I had the clear sense in which the planning process is still very much a hidden mechanism. Despite the rhetoric of participation and consultation, which has been recently seen as being in place and happening in 'dialogic terms' (Evans et al. 2009), planning often happens beyond people's possibility of intervention.

For example, the Labour councillor for East Greenwich, Mary Mills, made the following points about the planning mechanism:

*M:...that process is something that goes on among professionals not among people like me....*

*Q: ...but you are not a common resident...*

*M: No, but it really really does, because, you know – legally – you know, an application, a planning application doesn't exist until it comes towards the council, you know, the old days still of LDDC, and there is no knowledge to the public and the councillors, who have no knowledge of that, till it arrives in the public domain...but the same thing would have gone on in the 80s, in the old days of the LDDC. I mean, that...that background process is hidden from everybody except from professionals involved in it.*

In particular, I was struck by her insistence about the functioning of this mechanism in the same way as for the LDDC,<sup>14</sup> whose deliberate policy was to take away from

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14 London Docklands Development Corporation.

councils any decision-making power. In this respect, Syral's site manager in charge of the demolition process, Scott Benson, told me a story of what happens behind the scene of the development process of the largest industrial site in the area:

*Q: Was there any chance to keep part of it, any part of the industrial site?*

*S: hmm, no, no...the agreement we had with the landlord was to clear the site.*

*Q: and the landlord is...*

*S: Morden College. So, basically, they don't seem to be very interested in any of the remaining...So we were instructed to clear.*

*Q: Have you had any direct contact with Morden College?*

*S: No, we never had any contact with them directly. We only deal indirectly through their agent which is a [legal] company called Gerald Eve: we haven't had any contact with them for a long time, probably 6-7 months.*

When Mary Mills talks about the process as 'something' that is hidden, she probably thinks about something very similar to the way in which this large and old industrial site, rooted in the memories of both workers and dwellers, is initially dealt with by a team of professionals, 'fund managers, investment specialists, financial and research analysts, asset managers and planning and development surveyors'. These professionals' evaluation involves the optimization of the client's portfolio and its 'balance between risk, returns and industry forecasts' (from their website).<sup>15</sup>

Another example of how this process works, at a more local level, comes from a long-term older resident, who said:

*J: I am not very pleased with these builders, because they knocked down a small railing just on the other side down there. They matched the railings of the harbour-master's house, with the metal pin on the top, and all the excavation with those machines, disturbed these railings. So, I asked them if they could repair them 'cos they had broken them, and I have the photographs actually of the heavy machines laying against the railings, and you can see they dug a few bits. But they have*

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15 'The Morden college's portfolio was spread across a range of sectors without there being a direct alignment between risk, returns and industry forecasts. We implemented a disposal programme for the 'immediate disposal' assets' (ibidem).

*denied everything and they said they haven't ripped and refused to repair them. Which I thought that it was a cheat, cos they would cost a couple of thousand pounds to do it, they have got all the machinery...*

*Q: Did you speak to them, actually?*

*J: I did, I went to the man in charge there. He said he would have asked his superiors. I imagined it was difficult for me to get hold of them, but I did. Then when I called him again, I asked if he had been to his superiors and he said no, they wouldn't refer. It was appalling, yes.*

In my view, the strength of this passage is when juxtaposed against the previous extract, about Morley College. This elderly resident's talk risks sounding even ingenuous when measured against the narrative of achievement of the current pre-Olympic regeneration. That narrative in fact does not seem to leave much space for those individuals caught in the process to have their say, except via expensive and complicated legal procedures (see Raco 2012).

Urban displacement induced by gentrification is a complex and multifaceted process which impacts on different people in a variety of ways and at different time. It is rarely just a physical or spatial phenomenon, as direct as landlords evicting tenants and demolitions of buildings with a high concentration of poverty. Rather, displacement has a phenomenological dimension, that is, it concerns the sphere of personal and collective sensorial experience with place. Taking this standpoint, my research maps a process of slow but inexorable 'pressure of displacement' (Marcuse 1985) in the neighbourhood of East Greenwich. My starting point is that this neighbourhood has been affected by a mix of 'new-build' and more traditional gentrification. I bring to the fore a geography of shops, relationships, houses, social practices, which has given way to 'something' different.

If this is the case, what implication does displacement have for the production of class affection? And how can displacement be made visible? If it leaves behind a

trail of material traces, performances, and memories, to what extent does symbolic displacement actually happen?

Here, the trope of the ghost as a 'social figure' (Gordon 2008) always imbued with historicity and subjectivity, with personal experience and remembering, is useful. In order to bring 'ghostly matters' back it is crucial to talk about people's experience of displacement. Displacement definition needs to be broadened to include its phenomenological dimension. This is its everyday grain from the lower ground perspective of working-class people affected. Answering to the second set of research questions – academic relevance and personal ethos – is then about rendering displacement visible. This reveals what public rhetoric has increasingly rendered a 'phantom'. Displaced working-class people have been forgotten rather than gone away (Slater 2008; Watt 2008). Or rather, there has been a growing number of academic research focussing on gentrifiers' practices, in what Wacquant calls the ultimate paradox of the 'gentrification of gentrification' (Wacquant 2008).

On the other hand, given the above hypothesis of cultural displacement, it is important for me to enquire *how* this displacement actually happens, *how* it can be rendered visible, and *what kind* of emotional configuration it carries within. In other words, I am looking for an affective classed reaction to urban change. My thesis contention is that the narratives of practices and of ways of being that I collected from my participants' remembering are a form of recognition of their own symbolic and material displacement. By recognising and opposing the 'symbolic violence' (Bourdieu et al. 2002) of such forms of displacement, that is, by becoming aware of and rejecting the hegemonic lifestyle and related dispositions that 'new' middle-classes bolster, my key participants demonstrate a form of class consciousness (Jameson in Derrida et al. 2008; Skeggs 1997).

## Thesis Map

In Chapter 1, I review and offer more critical reflections on the current debates on class and urban change. I maintain in fact that these two processes need to be discussed together.<sup>16</sup> More recently though, scholars have underplayed the class dimension of urban change when addressing gentrification. This sort of amnesia has been framed as the 'eviction of the critical perspective' from recent debates on the requalification of urban areas (Slater 2006). Others, including government agencies, admit that a process of 'gentrification' is in place, essentially because of the private residential market and house inflation dynamics. It is therefore inevitable. However, they also suggest that this is beneficial. They explain the 'trickle down effects' of gentrification, in terms of 'critical mass' for better services (Silverman et al. 2006), enhanced lifestyle, wider fiscal base, and a more general sense of 'civitas', that is, of cities becoming better places 'where people want to live'.<sup>17</sup> As Lees reminds us, 'gentrification is in effect being promoted by the Urban Task Force [DETR 1999] as the blueprint for a civilized city life' (Lees 2000, 391). Chapter 1 seeks to problematise the sense that, in this model of gentrification, socially excluded groups and undeserving working-class families will receive benefits from urban change, once in contact with supposedly more virtuous citizens.

Chapter 2 looks at critiques of photographic practice, with a reflexive understanding of its social underpinnings and development. I elaborate on the notion of 'realism' I deploy and why I prefer photo elicitation as a proactive intervention in the discipline, on the photographer and on the research participants. I cannot stress enough the

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16 Wacquant argues that the class dynamics is 'at the very heart' of gentrification, '*ex definitionis*' (Wacquant 2008, 199).

17 Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 'Communities Plan' (*Sustainable Communities: Building for the future*) 2003.

importance that conducting a photographic enquiry has had for the collection of 'data' and their analysis, to the extent that method almost becomes a leitmotiv in a critical practice-based research and an issue in itself to be investigated. My fieldwork was partly done by way of using my own photographs as an entry point into the emotional configuration of East Greenwich residents. Whenever possible, I showed participants my own photobooks or plates from a previous exhibition, and I had conversations about and through them (photo elicitation).

In Chapter 3, I narrate the way in which I encountered people and objects that constituted my 'field' during the last five years, and how these encounters suggested signs of a brewing resentment. This chapter gives contextual nuance to the lives of the participants whose excerpts I chose to analyse in depth. I argue that it is the alchemical combination of gentrification, encounters, memories and photography which brings the field alive and makes resentment manifest.

People I have encountered and occasionally photographed or interviewed along the riverside of East Greenwich have mobilised, at different stages, spaces of emotions that are somehow linked with their remembering of a not so distant past. I argue that it is more useful to frame it as an 'active nostalgia'. This remembering is, in fact, intrinsically connected with – since it is generated by – their dissatisfaction with urban change. It is a manifestation of their resentment towards gentrification.

In the final two chapters, 4 and 5, I argue that this nostalgia is not just a romantic remembering, 'the way things used to be'; it is rather a reaction towards the symbolic violence which comes with their displacement. I maintain that nostalgia takes on an active role in the everyday experience of place amongst the people I encountered.

By unpacking emotions generated by encounters, I find a 'geography of resentment'



as a way of resisting gentrification. This is a form of class struggle fought at the level of people's symbolic, material and affective topographies. That is, at the moment of re-creating their city, with its meanings and feelings.<sup>18</sup> But also at the moment they re-adjust their material practices to the changing landscape. Thinking in terms of emotional geography opens room for an analysis that is less concerned with the public discourse of urban change. Rather, my research looks at people's practical ways of knowing landscape, making their way through, and dealing with such changes everyday. This thesis is then less about *why* gentrification happens than about *how* it is lived and resisted by those who are not planners or buyers, but rather are positioned differently in its social space. Resentment is one of the many geographies which urban working-class people stick to, everyday.

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18 There are here and further towards the final chapters some echoes of Williams' notion of 'structures of feeling', as 'the meanings and values implicit and explicit in a particular way of life', but in the critical reading offered so convincingly by Stuart Hall (Hall 1993).

# Chapter 1. Literature Review

*“They are unaware, or pretend to be unaware, that urbanism, objective in appearance, is a form of class urbanism and incorporates a class strategy”  
(Lefebvre 2003, 155)*

## Introduction

The starting point for my research is that, in the process of urban change around East Greenwich, there has been a displacement of working-class people's cultural values (their 'way of being') and material social practices (their uses of place). This displacement has occurred with regard to their uses of the riverside as a space for leisure, entertainment, social reproduction, work, social activities, and local knowledge. I understand this process as 'gentrification'. The contention expressed by this thesis is that, when a neighbourhood becomes gentrified, there is not just a direct reduction of possibilities for local residents (e.g. their access to an increasingly expensive market for houses or to some public spaces). More importantly, there occurs a violation of a whole way of being of working-class residents. Their dispositions and social practices get violated (see Allen 2008a; Bourdieu 1984).

In the following chapters, I show that both direct and indirect displacement of working-class people need to be taken into account for a class-based critique of urban change. I therefore argue that gentrification is not a neutral or beneficial

process, as some literature and government agencies want people to believe (among others, R. G. Rogers 1992; Slater 2006; Slater 2009; Watt 2008; Hunt 2005; Lees 2000; Lees 2008). Rather, gentrification is a class based reorganisation of urban space to the benefit of more affluent (in both cultural and economic assets) middle-class people.

In order to illustrate this point, I use scholars of gentrification to position my theoretical underpinnings around the process of urban change that is the focus of this study. Then I examine the debate around the classed dispositions, preferences, or habitus of working-class people towards the space of living (market for houses, dwellings, and public space). I make a clear distinction between two approaches, the first of which looks at class *in relation to* other social groups and the second at class *'in their own terms'*. I use and critique the important work by Chris Allen (2008) on the market for houses. I re-adapt his framework to my own needs, drawing widely on Skeggs' (1997, 2004) model of creation of value and its recognition. At the same time, I look into recent debates on 'class', by re-instating its importance for contemporary social analysis in general, and for research on gentrification in particular. In the final section, I recount my contribution to the above debate on class-based urban change by investigating the emotional response to such changes from the lower ground perspective of working-class everyday geographies. I understand cities as complex spaces that need to be unpacked by the practice of walking. Taking a standpoint very close to the work of Michel De Certeau (1984), I challenge the 'view from above' implicit in planning and in the administrative way of seeing urban space. In that sense, I foreground cities as made and re-made by the anarchic unfolding of daily experience of space, weaving a narrative which is context-based and reflexive.<sup>19</sup>

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19 See also end of Chapter 2 and the introduction to Chapter 3.

Throughout this chapter there is a commitment to recast the previous debates into the evolving space of the 'urban'. Cities are the most innovative and challenging spaces for sociologists and cultural theorists, where complexity reigns. In urban environments class struggle is enhanced by the close proximities of huge disparities and inequalities. Cities are in fact both mirrors of global financial investments and sites in which local life needs to cope, and reproduce itself, everyday (Harvey 2012).

### **Re-placing Dis-placement**

The early gentrifiers that Glass (1963, cited in Hamnett 2008) observed were typically households who 'pioneered' in inner-city neighbourhoods, often buying their home for life, and spending a considerable amount of money to renovate it. They often did the upgrades by themselves, it was part of the experience and part of their lifestyle. Something there didn't fit neatly into a supply side explanation of gentrification (that is, theories of rentier's speculation because of rent differentials, also known as 'supply-side' gentrification). People moving into a specific inner-city neighbourhood were not doing so by way of responding to an economic stimulus (or at least not only to that). They were also, and significantly, reacting to their own self-generated demand for housing. This has at its heart a structure of preferences, taste, and sense of aesthetics (Bourdieu 1984). Therefore, studies in tastes and lifestyles became the focus of subsequent analyses, in what is normally referred to as 'demand-side' gentrification (Butler 2003).

Supporters of the latest wave of gentrification maintain that this happens mostly on brown-fields or derelict industrial land and it only involves demolition and rebuilding of unoccupied sites, so that no displacement occurs. They argue that the overall result appears to be a general improvement of the neighbourhood, surrounding

public space, and street furniture. Growing density will stimulate local demand and create a 'critical mass' for new services (Silverman et al. 2006). The social mix that such 'residentialisation' brings is certainly beneficial for creating much sought poverty dispersal. This dispersal is thought to abate crime rates and anti-social behaviour. Finally, it relies on private developers in order to deliver construction plans, not aggravating already lean local authorities balance sheets. This model of gentrification appears to be a winning policy goal and therefore cities are importing and replicating it. This policy-driven, state-led and private-developers-delivered gentrification has been called 'new-build gentrification' (Davidson et al. 2010) or the 'third<sup>20</sup> wave of gentrification' (Hackworth et al. 2001). Local and national states, through major infrastructural investments and public–private partnerships, socialize the costs and the risk of such initiatives, repackaged as 'mixed-income communities' or 'city renaissance'. Because the size of the operations usually requires large corporate developers, 'new-build gentrification' is predominantly driven by capital (Warde, in Rerat et al. 2009; see also Harvey 1978).

Regeneration is correspondingly refashioned as delivering positive 'trickle-down' effects (Lees 2008). So-represented derelict, desolated, and crime-ridden (often in a racialised way, (Keith 2005)) neighbourhoods are being prepared to host more civilised (more affluent and indigenous) parts of the population.<sup>21</sup> This is a crucial critical point in the debate on urban change and it is also the junction at which I insert my contribution to the current literature. My contention is that such beneficial effects are not always felt as such by the local people I met during my fieldwork. Rather, drastic and sudden changes in the physical fabric of, as well as in perceived

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20 Where the first one was the pioneering single-household model, and the second one is its consolidation by waves of private investors, supported by estate agents and by private developers (*ibidem*).

21 Some might even voluntarily decide to move out and profit from the rent gap created by the increased demand for residential housing in the area (Hamnett 2003). Pushing this argument further, local people occupying council properties or receiving assistance with their rents in these newly gentrifying neighbourhoods are to be considered 'privileged' or even 'undeserving' (see Hamnett 2010b).

norms of behaviour inside, the neighbourhood can generate rejection. In my work, this rejection is understood as having an affective component: a form of nostalgic remembering and sometimes 'ugly feelings',<sup>22</sup> such as resentment.

New occupants of luxury buildings generate, however, a new demand for services and products which is well beyond the cultural capital and the economic reach of local working-class residents. This is referred to as an 'exclusionary displacement' (Shaw 2008; Marcuse 1985), an indirect form of displacement, which is both cultural and material, and which brings a general loss of sense of place (Slater 2006; Slater 2009; Davidson 2009; Davidson et al. 2010).

Indirect displacement does not imply a 'moment of spatial dislocation' as such, but it has more subjective and phenomenological meanings, akin to psychoanalytic displacement (Davidson 2009). In order to understand the way in which displacement without removal works, we need to equip ourselves with a different notion of space/place. This space is not the Cartesian/Euclidean dimension of maps and territory, but rather it recalls the profound social dimension of space (Lefebvre 1991) and the trajectories of power-geometries there embedded (Massey 2005). The spatial understanding humans have in terms of sense of direction and cognitive mapping has been located in an area of our brain, the hippocampus, which is strictly connected to memory. That is, people link their sense of place to an internal repository of subjective experience and encounters.<sup>23</sup> Subjects in space interact with their environment but they also actively constitute it, with their reference points, lived experiences, and story-telling practices. People build their own vernacular landscape, tied to their social memories; they are 'storehouses' and frame of such memories (Hayden 1997). Using this more textured concept of space/place, it is

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22 I use Ngai's expression here, which relates also to 'anger' and 'envy' (Ngai 2004).

23 *Focus*, September 2012, no. 246.

possible to unfold an idea of displacement which brings forward the affective and practical side of urban living. In this context, displacees are rather those who see a whole 'way of living', their everyday social practices, and the use-value they put into things, including houses, being wiped out by a process of urban change. At times this has been as rapid and dramatic as the redevelopment caused by The Olympics.

There are two symbolic dominant aspects in this sort of urban change which further shade working-class perspectives on city living, that is, displace their 'way of being'. Firstly, the exchange-value of private residential houses is considered to be the unique motor to city development, rather than their intrinsic value as a shelter and a place for dwelling. Secondly, 'new' middle-classes bolster the signs of their culture in an economy which increasingly privileges the symbolic sphere as a form of class dominance (Lury 1998; Lash et al. 1994). Symbols of status and knowledge, such as displaying the right attitudes and having the 'proper' taste for things, are so overwhelming that they slip into the normative, 'what must be is dictated by what is' (N. Rose 2000).<sup>24</sup> As Allen has it:

*The issue at stake now is not displacement or the pain that this causes but how gentrification can 'lift everybody up' (the so-called 'rising tide' thesis) as if this is what working-class people must want. But is it? Such arguments are indicative of the manner in which the academic nobility assumes its middle-class cultural practices to be 'good for everybody'. (Allen 2008a, p.182)*

Displaced people have little control on the workings of such complex system of signs and value attribution. On the other hand, symbolic displacement can be so pervasive and violent that it changes 'entirely the scholastic opposition between coercion and consent' (Bourdieu et al. 2002, 273). Middle-classes' visibility is in fact the constituent element of their supremacy. Additionally, local residents have little space or say in the mechanisms of city renewal. Especially when this boils down to

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<sup>24</sup> My first photobook focusses on the changes in the symbolic landscape of the Greenwich Peninsula (Cardullo 2009).

the stage of delivery of important 'cultural' projects, such as The Queen's Diamond Jubilee and Olympic celebrations (see Raco 2012).

If middle-classes crucially play upon their visibility for accrual and conversion of their assets into symbolic capital – whilst symbolic displacement is characterised by its invisibility – we need to equip ourselves with tools of analysis which can unmask this interplay at the heart of city living. The purpose of my practice-based approach to the study of urban life is in pinning down daily practices of displaced residents, by way of using innovative and multidisciplinary analytical tools, other than quantitative tools of mapping. Photography can make explicit what is hidden, forgotten, rendered marginal and invisible. The everyday experience of gentrification, from the perspective of working-class people, is rather an experience of profound dislocation, nostalgic remembering, and even resentment (Cardullo 2011). Additionally, photography can question spaces created by the predominant neoliberal re-organisation of cities as well as the signs that the symbolically dominant class bolster (Cardullo 2009). Either way, there is a crucial role for photography in making the everyday experience and the landscapes of gentrification strange.

Moreover, as I argue in the following sections, the eviction of displacement and its class-based argument from academic research is mostly a methodological problem. This is because of the predominant quantitative approach trying to map the movement of the urban poor. Instead, radical geographers exhort to read displacement from the perspective and the actual experience of displacees. As Lees remarks,

*the importance of methodology has rarely been stressed in analyses of gentrification, despite the considerable interest in the differing outcomes of different theoretical frameworks. (Lees 2000, p.404)*

I contend that promoting visual-based analysis combined with the practice of



walking the city is not just a methodological issue, rather it is an important theoretical node for the current state of the debate around urban transformation. On the one hand, for my research photography has had a crucial role in the recognition of working-class practices (Cardullo 2011) as well as in the exposure of the symbolic violence brought in by gentrifiers (Cardullo 2009). On the other hand, walking frees photography from any mapped route or predetermined script, giving it the discontinuity and the strength of the utterance (Certeau 1984). Walking makes space. It is a whole way of looking at the city opposed to the theories and ideas of urban planners. It reshuffles and juxtaposes layers of experience, practices, and memories that ultimately give meanings to cities. It is the combination of the two methods – photography and walking – that changes the way of looking at cities, not as a gaze from above, but as an almost haptic activity which engages with place from the ground level of mundane life.

## **Class matters**

In this section, I address in more details some of the concepts introduced above, starting from 'class' and moving to a dynamic model of class struggle for the city undergoing gentrification.

Intuitively, 'class' implies differentiation and/or inequality of positions and assets in social spaces or 'fields'. Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1987, 4) notoriously defines the structure of social space as the distribution of the various forms of capital, which he distinguishes in four types: economic, cultural, social and symbolic. The amount and mix of such resources determines the relative position of social agents in any specific field. Crucially, this position is also a potential movement, due to the

adjustments of these assets in time, their evolution, or their trajectories in social space (Bourdieu 1987, 5).

While economic and social capital are quite intuitive, more needs to be said about the other categories. The real innovation formulated by Bourdieu is the concept of 'cultural capital'. This is the set of tastes and preferences, cultural forms and goods, values and habits, which agents stores and transmits. However, these dispositions only become assets at the moment in which these show they have the potential to be successfully converted into social power. In other words, there are two stages in the creation of cultural capital: firstly, 'the contested legitimation of cultural forms', and secondly, 'the symbolic violence', and both are the result of class struggles (Savage 1992, 16). While the former has to do with recognition, the latter needs some explanation. By 'symbolic violence', scholars of class studies refer to the process of forcing upon others cultural codes, manners, attitudes and moral values which are not 'proper' of people's understanding of their own class position (Bourdieu et al. 2002; Skeggs 1997). One way of saying this is that working-class residents are undergoing indirect displacement due to the middle-class led change of preferences in the space of the market for houses (Allen 2008a).

Skeggs (1997, 2004) has shown how four mechanisms are at work in order to guarantee and reproduce middle-class cultural domination: inscription (the way value is transferred onto bodies), exchange (how value is accrued, transmitted, or lost), perspective (the moment in which value is imagined in the interest of specific groups), and institutionalisation (the making of the class structure). Without the possibility of being converted into social power, cultural capital cannot exploit its structure of value, its value *in fieri*. This is why Skeggs insists that class struggle is fought at the level of the symbolic, and mechanisms of representation are crucial in this respect. It is at the level of the symbolic that power comes into play. In order to

be traded as an asset and therefore capitalised as a gain, other forms of capital need to be converted. It is then at the level of the symbolic that power is exercised and resistance to power put in place. In her own words, 'the refusal to accept inscription and be bound by its value is a significant act of challenging the dominant symbolic order' (Skeggs 2004, 13). It is therefore crucial for the survival of the dominant class to have the ability of promote their own cultural forms and social tastes as legitimate, worthy, valuable, and generally superior to the ones of the others (that is, to exercise power). Cultural capital works together with, and actually is in extreme need of, symbolic capital. In the context of urban change, the visibility of cultural signs is a central element for the reproduction of urban space.<sup>25</sup>

Now I want to introduce another important concept complementary to the workings of capital in social space, that is *habitus*, or disposition. Bourdieu maintains that social position is carried over, inscribed in body, language, manners, and attitudes which agents are brought up with. Agents in the same social position in any specific field are also prone to resemblance, in a predictive and rather descriptive way. 'They are endowed with similar dispositions which prompt them to develop similar practices' (Bourdieu 1987, 6). Furthermore, the social positioning affects agents 'intrinsically'. Bourdieu does use the word 'existence' to determine this; as Allen has it: 'habitus is a form of 'being-in-the-world' that is *not* simply a product of positioning within systems of production, education, and consumption, but rather social space *writ large*' (Allen 2008a, 59 original emphasis). However, Bourdieu also insists that social position affects agents 'relationally' ('that is in relation to other positions' (Bourdieu 1987, 6)). Here the point of contrast is quite obvious. Another way to express this is by drawing on Skeggs to note that the construction of the social space in which agents move has been historically determined by struggles over

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25 See Cardullo 2009, 23-29. See also the discussion on 'new' middle-class, at the end of this section.

acquisition, accrual, exchange, and symbolic representation (Skeggs 1997, 11).

Struggle then implies relationality. I describe this struggle over symbolic inscription in relation to the gentrification of East Greenwich. I argue that it is the disruption of mundane material practices of dwelling and the social positioning in relation to cultural values that contribute to a slow, almost unconscious resentment. This transpires in my fieldwork at the junction between daily appropriation of urban space and 'necessary' urban renewal. The resentment about the rapid and dramatic urban change my participants experienced is exactly that resistance to the 'symbolic violence' responsible for their displacement (see chapters 3-5).

I now introduce the 'new' middle-classes who are the most visible and culturally dominant group, and the leading force of change in inner cities. I will mostly follow the distinction between British 'old' and 'new' middle-classes (Savage 1992). According to a traditional structuralist theorisation of class as a reflection of occupational structure, the 'old' middle-class refers mainly to people with managerial roles, rich in economic capital, and with accredited qualifications (Goldthorpe, in Wright 1997). In the spatial organisation of the city, this group are generally portrayed as living outside the metropolitan area, in rather large, expensive, and private suburban houses. Instead, the 'new' middle-class consist of those professionals, creative people, artists, media types, well-educated, with a higher level of cultural assets and with a high or rising economic capital. They generally regard luxurious consumption as vulgar, are extremely individualistic and practice a sort of ascetic lifestyle, between healthy living and self-help practices (Lury 1998). This lifestyle reflects 'their often expert knowledge of the body and their separation from the world of business' (Savage 1992, 106–109).<sup>26</sup>

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26 Of course this is also Bourdieu's argument in *Distinction* (cited).

'New' middle-class preferences, alongside the rising importance of the 'sign economy' - an economy that relies mostly on semiotics and in which objects, activities, social and consumption practices are all powerful signifiers of social position (Lash et al. 1994) - recast urban living in a completely different light. From now on, what is eaten, visited, practised, seen, or chosen is equal to, or more important than, any economic asset that one might have mobilised in order to act in that specific way. To do the 'right' thing and behave in the 'right' manner, in a way which shows exactly how to be, is crucial, more so than having a managerial job or organisational skills. In respect of the globalised city space, being middle-class is about expressing a know-how of 'pluralistic versatility' (Bennett et al., in Martin 2010). Especially among the more highly qualified, urban middle-class lifestyle resembles urban mythologies of 'cultural omnivorous' (Peterson 1992, cited in Martin 2010) and demonstrates skills of cosmopolitan living (Skeggs 2004, 158–159).<sup>27</sup>

The cosmopolitan urban dweller then 'achieves its middle-class status by engaging in 'correct' consumption practices' (Allen 2008a, 8). The satisfaction of these practices is literally inscribed onto the city map, passing through the 'cultural quarters' (Keith 2005) or the renovation of run-down inner city terraces and creation, in this way, of a new 'gentrification aesthetic':

*this is because the 'cultured' middle-class engage in a struggle for recognition via engagement in 'authentic' forms of consumption', which is turning traditional patterns of consumption of products into the consumption of 'signs'. (Allen 2008a, 46, citing Lash and Urry, 1994)*

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<sup>27</sup> There is also a valid argument around middle-classes not being *the only* 'multicultural' and skilled subjects in dealing with migration and cultural diversity, while working-class people (especially 'Whites') are usually portrayed as vulgar racists (Tyler 2012; Ware 2008). Such argument would in fact substantiate the mainstream account that links gentrification to a benevolent and beneficial 'social mixing'. Put it differently, the way in which 'cultural quarters' become desired and gentrified (Keith 2005) might not produce the same outcome in terms of social mixing as the daily participation in the 'multicultural drift' (Hall et al. 2009) among markets stalls, within community schools, at streets corners, and in council estates, that is, in the inner city 'contact zones' (Pratt 2007, 8).

The deployment of creative-media skills, combined with some skills proper to the organisational group, determine the capacity of this group to dominate at the symbolic level. As I argued using Bourdieu's and Skeggs' models, this is the crucial step which guarantees both the legitimation of certain choices (in short, their cultural capital) and their conversion into accrued value. This value comprises economic capital gains (wealth) and whatever comes from being in the position acquired in the space of positions (symbolic power, social status, networks, recognition). Once such mechanisms of conversion are consolidated, that is, once they become structural, there is no need for an agent who accrued such a status to demonstrate anything; middle-class people need only to be.

In the global city, 'new' middle-classes are of course at the forefront of the creation of trends, consumers' preferences, and tastes. Their symbolic predominance in the market for houses (but not only there) combines a desire for positioning themselves in the space of positions as well as an understanding of residential property as an asset, that is, as a 'showroom' for their own position and for future buyers.

In the market for houses, which absorbs most of the debate on city changes, people seem to learn the rules of this game very quickly thanks to an extraordinary increase in TV programmes on property developments, DIY works of renovation, and eccentric multi-million pound projects of refurbishment of derelict mansions. In particular, middle-class agents are supported by complacent professionals who shape the rules of this market. Architects have been seen by insiders of the profession as masters in increasing the positionality of their creations. Till shows the increasingly self-referential making of an architect from university into a progressively competitive profession, detached from real life:

*The trouble is they [architects] invest so much energy in aspects of architecture such as aesthetics which don't have much relevance with*

*everyday life and the actual use of buildings (Till, Radio 4 podcast, my emphasis).*

In the next section, I maintain that the perspective taken on class is absolutely crucial in understanding what 'gentrification' is about. In fact, it is the notion of 'class' we have in mind that will invariably determine the image of urban change that scholars reproduce, as well as its negative/positive effects on working-class people. It is the understanding of the dynamics of class struggle that determines the most appropriate tools for research analysis. I discuss this later in the chapter with reference to a recent influential debate on gentrification which starts exactly by exposing a very different idea of what 'class' is about.

### **The problem of value**

Using Allen's work (2008) as an entry point, I will now illustrate my position in the debate on class and urban change. I progressively take distance from his ideas as the chapter evolves but for now it is sufficient to summarise my understanding of Allen's framework. The stance I take on gentrification – as a process of change that both displaces working-class residents and violates their 'way of being' towards the public and open space of the riverside – is similar to Allen's ideas of working-class people's displacements in the market for houses.

Allen studies the process of gentrification of the 'deprived' working-class neighbourhood of Kensington, in Liverpool, focusing on residential market dynamics and consumption patterns at the moment in which Liverpool was nominated 'city of culture'. Here, there are very close parallels with London as the hosting city of the Olympics. Allen suggests the working-class attitude towards housing follows the

'reality principle (brick, shelter, roof)' (Allen 2008a, 74). That is, working-class people's preferences generate spaces *per se*, or what he calls 'in their own terms' consumptions.

In order to look closely at this peculiar disposition of working-class people towards houses as spaces for dwelling rather than as a position in the space of positions, Allen argues for dismissing Bourdieu's framework. This considers class distribution in social space according to the volume, composition, and evolution of their capital, also known in the new sociology of class as 'resource epistemology'. In Allen's words:

*Since working-class households are, by definition, less well endowed with most of the capital assets and resources that middle-class households possess, the question arises of whether an epistemological focus on 'capital' is appropriate to a study of how working-class people relate to the market for houses. (Allen, 2008: 59)*

Allen's argument is that working-class people articulate a 'primordial point of view' on housing (Allen 2008a, 163), that is, as a space of dwelling, as an expression of their 'just being' attitude *rather than* the 'position in the space of positions' that middle-class consumers aim at. It is the proximity to necessity which dictates working class disposition (see also Bourdieu 1984). Allen's existentialist take on working-class needs does not comprise a *relational* understanding of class, as he repetitively suggests. This would in fact continue the representation of working-class people as 'failing consumers, because their consumption is always situated in relation to *other groups*, as 'failed' '(p. 58, my emphasis).

Allen has the merit of showing how working-class people position themselves towards the market for houses and towards houses as practical dwellings. He analyses gentrification from the perspective of working-class people and puts urban professionals and specialists of urban change in the background. However, I



maintain that in his model there is an essentialisation of working-class needs and dispositions. Allen underplays the workings of the mechanism through which certain actions or cultural attitudes acquire 'capital' statuses whilst others do not. The 'other groups', which he mentions in the crucial passage above, are in fact the symbolically dominant ones. He risks essentialising class by eliminating the temporal dimension, that is the evolution or 'trajectory' (Bourdieu 1987, 6) that agents might or might not take in their social space.<sup>28</sup> In order to make this clearer, I take a little detour on what forms 'value' can take and how it is formed in the first place.

According to Joan Robinson the problem of value implies a notion of justice, of something accepted and known as the 'right thing'. That is, value implies a moral assessment even before exchange happens; 'value is a relationship between people' (Robinson 1964, 34). This argument shifts the emphasis from the object or disposition to the relation of power which determines its appraisal or its conversion into assets or capital (Skeggs 2004, 11). So morality, in terms of assessment and evaluation (either good or bad), lies behind all values. As Skeggs convincingly argues, 'the moral evaluation of cultural characteristics is central to the workings and transmission of power' (Skeggs 2004, 14). What becomes valuable and worthy of accrual is then determined in other symbolic fields or forms of representation. Looking at the working-class 'on their own terms' is certainly an important stance for presenting working-class spaces of the everyday, as well as their social practices and perspectives, rather than re-presenting their (supposed) devalued dispositions. Working-class people are in fact using *other* forms of capital, social and cultural, such as the use-value they put into place, a practical knowledge of their surroundings, social reproduction practices, manual working skills,<sup>29</sup> leisure time and

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28 In chapter 4, I illustrate this point with an example taken from my 'data': the series of encounters and interviews I had with a self-defined middle-class couple.

29 See for instance the section in my latest photobook on this (Cardullo 2011, 41-63).

a communal art of living.

The problem is that these forms of capital are not made worthy and exchangeable by mechanisms of representation to the extent that they are not able to be converted or propertised by individuals or social groups. They are not 'capital', so to speak, and cannot become an asset until their conversion is allowed. Skeggs (2004) suggests that such mechanisms of conversion are the structural architecture of class composition. So for instance, specific patterns of behaviour or sets of preferences towards consumption are not so important *in themselves*. It is rather their translation and legitimisation via mechanisms of representation that become crucial in understanding class formation. In the market for houses in a gentrifying neighbourhood, it is not just the attitude towards dwelling that matters *per se*, but the relational understanding of people's own position towards houses.

There is therefore a double movement here which dictates the strategy of my research. The first strain of enquiry works around mundane spaces that working-class residents have *per se*. For instance, I think of forms of social and cultural capital expressed in practices of social reproduction; or of some sort of 'soft skills' of communal living ('we-being'); or of other kinds of cultural capital which are not recognised and generally undergo a process of de-valuation, such as a practical experience and knowledge of the city or a particular way of celebrating Christmas.<sup>30</sup>

The other critical movement shows how these forms of capital do or do not acquire value *in relation* to middle-class lifestyles. In the market for houses during a process of gentrification, working-class understanding of housing – 'brick, shelter, roof' – is continually devalued by predominant middle-class stance, which prioritises exchange of future economic capital gains (equity) and spatial location (riverside

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<sup>30</sup> See my interviews with old local residents in chapter 4 and 5 as well as part of my latest photobook (Cardullo 2011).

view) within that field.<sup>31</sup> 'It is important to remember that "class" is about relative inequality, and is an inherently comparative concept' (Botero, in Sveinsson 2009, 10).

This interplay is reproduced in my two photobooks as a creative tension between working-class practices of dwelling, which makes these visible 'in their own terms', and new middle-class appropriation of the symbolic and material landscape of East Greenwich. Questions I ask are: what happens when – thanks also to the work that critical photography can do in making visible aspects of urban change – people recognise themselves as being displaced? What emotional reactions are triggered by the awareness of being positioned within a mechanism of allocation of urban space and cultural values which does not include them? Although they hardly ever mentioned 'class', people I met think of themselves as not being able to act like those whose practice of consumption or dwelling are so different from theirs (riverside living style) or as not being allowed to put in place their own practices (different uses of riverside).

I found that the resentment working-class residents manifest against the gentrification of their neighbourhood is one of the interfaces around which personal stories, splintered memories, quotidian social practices, process of urban change, material sites, found objects, encounters and sense of belonging coalesce. As Ahmed maintains,

*emotions do not positively inhabit anybody or anything, meaning that the subject is simply a nodal point in the economy [of affect], rather than its origin and destination. (Ahmed, 2004: 45–46)*

My argument is that this resentment is a form of rejection to mainstream narratives of gentrification as a beneficial change for all. It is, in this respect, an expression of

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<sup>31</sup> See my first photobook (Cardullo 2009) which explores the making of Greenwich Peninsula as a 'sustainable community'.

the 'emotional politics of class' (Skeggs, 1997): to the extent that working-class participants recognised themselves as being a part of the gentrification process, in fact, they also manifested a form of class consciousness.

## **Displacement: now you see it, now you don't**

The implications deriving from a mainstream occupation-based definition of class in respect of the study of gentrification are best seen with some practical examples. In this section I show how Chris Hamnett<sup>32</sup> has concluded his survey of the movement of population in London in the last 40 years with some very influential findings, which I then critique using Tom Slater's work.<sup>33</sup> In particular, I focus on Hamnett's methodological approach to the study of class, so to make clear how an initial theoretical bias – at least, this is my argument – becomes a controversial conclusion in his influential work. Then I show how displacement of working-class populations has also been denied and rescued in some research conducted in New York city (Newman et al. 2006).

Hamnett's findings on the movements of the population of London by borough between 1961 and 2001 are essentially that gentrification has happened to some extent, since first observed by Ruth Glass (1963) but it has the following characteristics:

1. gentrification is a social and spatial manifestation of the *transition* from an industrial to post-industrial economy (Hamnett 2003, 2401);
2. this transition is reflected in the occupational structure of the economy, with a

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32 See Hamnett 2003; Hamnett 2010a.

33 See Slater 2009; Slater 2010.

dramatic reduction of jobs in manual work (manufacturing or 'blue collar') and their *replacement* with financial, business and creative service jobs;

3. parallel to this replacement in the occupational structure of society, an extraordinary shift in preferences and tastes in the *demand for houses* has occurred. This shift explains the number of new households in the middle-class range of the income scale.<sup>34</sup>

Two conclusions can immediately be drawn from his study. Firstly, gentrification happened in London, but it is nothing bad or *done to others*. Rather, it is a spatial manifestation of a slow, inexorable and *organic* trend in capitalist economies. Therefore, Hamnett prefers to use the term 'replacement', instead of 'displacement':

*a gradual contraction of the working class and its replacement by an expanded middle class rather than displacement per se. (Hamnett 2003, 2421)*

Here, the term 'replacement' is crucial: it is in fact a gentle word which not only denies struggle, loss, or gains, but also considers some benevolent effects of urban change.<sup>35</sup> Replacement implies a transformation into something new and more uplifting than previous configurations, a gradual, almost inevitable, and mostly voluntary process of change, carried on by mutual agreement. This process is also about filling a gap left by people buying houses out of town, having 'upgraded' their residential position. Or people simply move on in life, they 'disappeared'. This argument implies that, after all, middle-class people have to live somewhere

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34 This latest point triggers a series of considerations on the fact that Hamnett's research is based on the demand-side of the gentrification debate (basically challenging the 'rent gap' theory of movements of financial capital into the construction industry (N. Smith et al. 1986; Harvey 2003)). However it is still solidly anchored on the underlying structural economic basis of the debate. In his own words in fact: 'It is a demand-based argument, but one based on major changes in industrial, occupational, earnings and income structures and related change in housing demand rather than on preferences *per se*'. (Hamnett 2003, p.2424).

35 See also a similar point made by Newman and Wyly (Newman et al. 2006, 25): 'redevelopment, renewal, revitalisation, regeneration and reinvestment are good, but these are understood to be different from gentrification, which involves direct, conflict-ridden displacement'. Also for Peck and Tickell (2002, in Slater 2009) these terms have the function to 'bolster a neoliberal narrative of competitive progress'.

(Hamnett 2003).

Secondly, the disappearance of working-class people, which logically excludes displacement, is demonstrated essentially by analysis of Census tables. The working-classes have progressively disappeared, due to demographic factors, retirements and deaths, but also due to their new occupations. This new level of affluence is explained as an 'upward social mobility' (Hamnett 2003, 2419). As I argue throughout, it is the way in which 'class' is defined which produces the methodological bias in such research. Here, class is understood by looking at the occupational structure and levels of income, as from a classic framework *a la* Goldthorpe (in Wright 1997). According to such an influential system of classification, people employed in the service industry – with a better 'market situation' (income) and 'work situation' (autonomy and control) than traditional manual jobs – are increasingly counted as belonging to the middle-classes. Unsurprisingly, it derives that the presumed end of manual labour coincides with accounts of working-class disappearance.

Hamnett's influential study has generated a wealth of critiques and unexpectedly revitalised a stagnant debate. Firstly, it is argued, a change in the structure of production does not mean that people employed in and around the service industry are not working-class any more, even if we want to maintain a Goldthorpe-like structuralist position on class division. Office towers in Canary Wharf still need to be cleaned, policed, serviced and catered for by an army of low paid employees. That is, cities attract an increasingly affluent population but they also increasingly need to reproduce themselves (Harvey 2012; Keith, in Imrie et al. 2009).<sup>36</sup>

Secondly, even if we admit an increase in the number of middle-class people

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<sup>36</sup> Here the problem is in the disappearance of manual work from public representation (Strangleman 2008; Sekula et al. 1995), rather than the disappearance of working-class people *per se*.

attracted by the fashionable life-style and the best paid jobs that London offers, does this necessarily need implying a removal/displacement of working-class people living in those neighbourhoods?

Finally, if 'social mixing' is better than 'social segregation' (Hamnett 2003), why not bring poor people to already super-gentrified areas? (N. Smith 2002)

Hamnett's study naturalises displacement as not something done to others, but as an organic movement of population. It replaces class struggle, which was at the heart of Ruth's original definition of urban change, with a change in the occupational structure and with a demographic 'replacement' of some residents with others. This demographic movement historically happened, at least in Anglo-American cities, in the sixties. This account has gained popularity since it has been rehearsed by official narratives. The Urban Task Force in the UK, for example, aimed to foster 'practical solutions to bring people back into our cities, towns and urban neighbourhoods' (DETR, 1999) (cited in Lees 2000). These 'practical solutions' often imply waves of demolitions, resettlements, new residential development, and general improvement of urban infrastructures.

A methodological approach similar to the one adopted by Hamnett was used by Freeman and Braconi, and Vigdor (Freeman, 2005; Freeman and Braconi 2004; Vigdor, 2002, in Newman et al. 2006). They managed to demonstrate that gentrification created minimal or no displacement at all in New York. Their findings gained popularity and were used in order to show how people remained in their neighbourhoods, sharing the 'benefits' of such urban changes (so-called 'trickle-down effects' of gentrification). Newman and Wyly (CUCS-CURP-CURA 2006; Newman et al. 2006), Slater (Slater 2006) and Shaw (Shaw 2008) challenge those

findings and ask new important questions on the issue of 'displacement'.

Displacement is, at the very least, about people who moved away, particularly poor people. In this context, snapshot surveying cannot be representative, simply because displaced residents, those in unofficial and in precarious employment, illegal or semi-legal inhabitants, are difficult to track down or unwilling to be accounted for. Moreover, relying on the working population automatically excludes from the account the inactive and unemployed part of population, which are less prepared to resist in a gentrifying neighbourhood (Watt 2009 in Slater 2009). For these reasons, Atkinson (cited in Slater 2006) has referred to the attempt at quantifying displacement as 'measuring the invisible'. As a consequence, *measurement* of the effects of gentrification might not be the right approach. By their very nature, measures imply quantitative assessment: do we need to know exactly *how many* people get displaced when 'displacement' *in itself* needs to be demonstrated, made visible, and resisted?

Secondly, 'displacement' cannot be accounted for solely by people who lost their homes as a direct result of eviction or rent increase. This is certainly the most immediate and unfortunate case of forced movement of people away from an area; however, it is not the only effect brought about by gentrification. There is also an indirect way of being displaced, in the form of so-called 'exclusionary displacement' (Marcuse 1985), that is when people are unable to buy or access places to live in a certain area because this has been gentrified. Newman's and Wyly's (2006) interviews, conducted in the same neighbourhoods in New York where Freeman and Braconi produced their mapping, provided them with a wealth of information about how low-income residents remain in gentrifying neighbourhoods because they cannot afford to move. Rather, they stay because they have no other alternative. This is 'fixity' to a locality in the way that some people are not able to control their



own mobility, their capacity of choosing where to live. As Skeggs reminds us: 'voluntary mobility is a social good, a resource, not equally available to all' (Skeggs 2004, 50). In other words, people might become displaced whilst still in their own homes, and yet counted by the Census as local residents. They are often portrayed by media representations as being 'the lucky ones' who can enjoy the up-and-coming features of a gentrifying neighbourhood, which they would not otherwise be able to afford. Newman's and Wylie's interviews instead show how problematic it is for these people to live in a gentrified neighbourhood and also how they manage to resist direct displacement by way of 'accepting poor housing quality, coping with high housing cost burdens and/or sharing housing with other residents' (Newman et al. 2006, 49).

Finally (and crucially), we need to take into consideration another form of displacement, not immediately evident or easy to reveal, and certainly invisible to quantitative surveying or mapping; that is, a 'displacement pressure' (Marcuse 1985). This occurs when a household moves because the neighbourhood becomes less and less liveable under gentrification (shops are expensive, neighbourhood becomes less friendly, attitudes change, spaces are sanitised, previous social networks get dispersed). Marcuse powerfully explains it:

*When a family sees the neighbourhood around it changing dramatically, when their friends are leaving the neighbourhood, when the stores they patronise are liquidating and new stores for other clientèle are taking their places, and when changes in public facilities, in transportation patterns, and in support services all clearly are making the area less and less liveable, then the pressure of displacement already is severe. Its actuality is only a matter of time. Families living under these circumstances may move as soon as they can, rather than wait for the inevitable; nonetheless they are displaced (1985:207)*

What Marcuse is describing is an increasingly cultural, psychological and affective dimension to urban change, in which physical debasement doesn't necessarily happen. Rather, loss of neighbourhood, 'community', family, and home in a

phenomenological sense makes up for a new 'sense of place'. This has enormous consequences for urban theory.

This broader definition of displacement makes a valid argument for a different meaning of class, one which takes into consideration the cultural aspects of subjectivities, sets of preferences, affective responses and everyday social practices. Displacement pressure is a rejection of gentrification and the residents, codes, and trends this brings into an area. It is the exact opposite of the so-called 'trickle-down effects'. People are dispossessed, in the sense in which the 'whole structure of attachments through which purposes are embodied' (Marris 1986 in Slater 2009) have been disrupted by changes in their 'up-and-coming' neighbourhoods. Rather, displaced residents are trapped into an alien place.

There is a crucial issue at stake here about the methodology used in producing evidence in this field of work. Newman and Wyly (cited) have shown how Census data may produce very different results if compared to participant observation and textual analysis in the same neighbourhood. Qualitative research with interviews, life stories (Finnegan 1998), walking tours (Bendiner-Viani et al. 2007), and photo elicitation (Harper 2002) are able to pick up on the complexity of human situations, on the variety of histories told, and on the texture of place. Surprisingly though, in a huge literature on gentrification, there are almost no qualitative accounts of displacement (Slater 2006, 749).

In a more recent paper (Butler et al. 2009), Hamnet's arguments seem to be reinvigorated:

*gentrification research needs to come to terms with a new urban class map in which the largest occupational grouping, by some distance, is the middle class and that the next largest group is often the economically inactive.*

Again, the most notable absentee is 'working-class' as a measurable and mappable

entity. They become 'effaced' (Wacquant 2008). Put it bluntly: no employed working-class, no displacement.

Both possibilities have been challenged by a battery of criticisms (among others, Allen 2008a; Bourdieu 1987; Devine et al. 2005; Martin 2010; Savage 1992; Skeggs 1997; Skeggs 2004; Sveinsson 2009; Walkerdine 2001), and the debate has involved new ways of looking at class and capital in contemporary capitalist societies.

As Skeggs suggests:

*Making class invisible represents a historical stage in which the identity of the middle classes is assured. There was a time when the concept was considered necessary by the middle classes to maintain and consolidate differences in power: its recent invisibility suggests that these differences are now institutionalised, legitimated and well established (Skeggs 1997, pp.6-7).*

If gentrification is a *visible* expression of class inequality (N. Smith et al. 1986, 3), then its denial goes hand in hand with the process of making invisible the existence of the working-class population. It also hides their struggles for both recognition (Skeggs 1997) and their 'right to stay put' (Hartman 1984, in Newman et al. 2006).<sup>37</sup> If 'displacement is back on the agenda' (Newman et al. 2006, 24), so is class theorisation. Rather, the latter has probably brought the former back.

## **Visualising gentrification**

By taking a critical standpoint on the most useful work by Allen (2008), I have excluded the possibility of addressing 'class' as a single unit detached from the dynamics of time and space. 'Class' is more a dynamic and intrinsically antagonistic

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<sup>37</sup> For Wacquant (Wacquant 2008), the invisibility of the working-class in the public sphere and social enquiry is the other side of the celebratory representation of gentrification in academia and social policy.

*relationship* than a descriptive, ontological, or existentialist *category*.

On the other hand, gentrification can be thought as being either an abstract phenomenon, caused by circulation of global financial capital, or as a very pragmatic process, which impinges on material stuff (affordable housing), on daily movements in the neighbourhood (disruption of social networks and practices), and on changes in cultural codes (symbolic displacement). Similar to my critique of class categorisation, a study of city change can take a radical perspective of the spaces created by the practices of the subjects 'whose bodies follow the cursives and strokes of an urban "text" they write without reading' (De Certeau 1984). In other words, I chose to position my research in spaces and in geographies of the everyday, rather than in the area of macro-economic mapping. Photography, as a practice-based strategy of gathering 'data', favours this position.

One of the contentions of my analysis is to show how photography (and in particular photo elicitation) contributes at making visible the symbolic and affective struggle over meanings and uses of place. My first photobook (2009) evokes how, in a gentrifying neighbourhood, new residents re-enforce upon urban landscape a set of normalised codes, which we can sum up in: corporate and middle-class cultural values (individualism, aesthetic lifestyles, positional goods, cultural status) and 'sustainable' communitarian relations (home ownership, 'green, clean and safe' neighbourhoods, individual responsibility). Considering conversion of capital in the space of symbolic economy requires plotting a moral geography of place and answering questions about: who has legitimate access to and rights over a specific place; what kind of topography has been generated by this value attribution; what social formations might have been created, and what 'sense of place' or valuation has been attached to a specific locality (Simone 2004; Stallybrass et al. 1986; D. M. Smith 2000). Considering 'gentrification' and 'class' at the street level means to

investigate how neoliberal and new middle-class values affect perspectives, valuation and the affective configuration of local working-class residents, as they move through an increasingly entrepreneurial and privatized urban space.<sup>38</sup> One of the objectives of my research is about putting critical perspective back into the gentrification debate, at a time when gentrification is promoted as being the prototype of civilized life, in a self-proclaimed classless society.

At a wider level, studying gentrification means to foreground a historical process, in which both the territorial aspects and the socio-economic ones play a concurrent yet, at times, contested role. As Harvey puts it:

*it's important to distinguish between territorial and capitalist logics of power, the interface, the synthesis, the interaction between a logic that expands the space on the one hand; and on the other, the need of capitalism to find new places to make profit. (Harvey 2004)*

That suggests the highly intertwined, but also contextual, relations between cycles of 'creative destructions' (the anarchic dynamics of capitalist accumulation) *versus* the institutional decision process (including community-based alliances and pressure groups) which is very local. Such an interplay between financial capital supply and grass-root demands suggests a critical stance that would embrace, at the same time, local and global perspectives. Localised resistance and vernacular multiculturalism, local plans of interventions, at both neighbourhood and council level, and local suppliers to the construction industry intertwine with global financial investments, and movements for best paid work-places (which ultimately determine the composition of the gentrifying group), but also with global migration forces of less fortunate workers employed in an effort to reproduce an increasingly affluent city (Harvey 2012; Keith 2008b, 59).

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38 This movement reveals how power works through inscription of moral value onto cultural characteristics (Skeggs 2004, 14). Moral value accomplishes the perspective and interests of the new middle classes as normative, thus creating a 'slippage between the descriptive and the normative' (N. Rose 2000).

But these tensions and paradoxes at the heart of the functionalist logic of organisation of the city to be have in their very rationality the concept of time, that is progress (what Neil Smith (cited) called the 'gentrification frontier'). As De Certeau (1984) argues, this regulating logic, while destroying and creating urban space, completely overlooks space itself, in the sense of the experienced space of the very familiar city. At the end these tensions boil down to what subjects practically do everyday, whether in a rather conscious way or not, in order to escape or evade the regulating power of the organisational city. One of the questions set to be asked by my fieldwork on the Thames riverside of this East London neighbourhood is to investigate the kind of spatial practices and affective reactions that a new organisation of urban space generates.

Photography can pick up well these contradictory meanings of gentrification, both global and local, very concrete and highly abstract process. There is in fact an intrinsic specificity to photography, in its potentials in positioning, within the same frame, the very particular and the broader social landscape (Knowles et al. 2004). Working with juxtapositions and montage, photography can place background and foreground in a dynamic interplay. Instead, one way of *not* doing geography is by representing place as a static map, as a top-down snapshot survey, such as a Census data collection. Thrift (2008) puts this theoretical and epistemological contention at the centre of his 'non-representational geography':

*This is the difference, between representation and practice. In the one, we know the outcome. In the other, ..., we can only guess. (Thrift 2008, 8)*

In my discussion of Hamnett' findings (2003), we see that he is even able to show the positive side of gentrification, as a spatial process which increases inner-city social mix. What I find extraordinary is the way he reaches such conclusions. He does so simply by looking at the social composition by occupation in each London

borough as reported by the Census. He foresees a decline in 'social segregation': 'the social class composition of inner London is now far more mixed than it was 30 years ago'. (Hamnett 2003, 2417).<sup>39</sup>

In order to understand gentrification, I rather take the standpoint from a critique of the everyday as the starting moment of reflection on this very complex and controversial phenomenon. I aim at answering these pragmatic questions: Where is gentrification to be found and how can it be shown? If displacement – as Atkinson (cited) argues – is about 'mapping the invisible', how do we prove it, or where exactly does 'symbolic violence' happen? Possible answers are to be found in the spaces of the mundane, far too often overlooked as banal and uninteresting. There, the relevance of use-value over exchange-value can be exposed, and a crucial critique of value can be developed (De Certeau 1984; Highmore 2002; Margulies 1996; Moran 2005). It is in this often neglected space that the effects of the forces and dynamics of 'abstractions', such as 'capitalism', 'gentrification', or 'displacement' become realities in the lives of social agents who directly experience the effects of these forces on themselves.<sup>40</sup> I discuss in the following chapters and visually engage in my photobooks with some aspects of *how* gentrification is lived, *how* displacement occurs and *how* cultural values and social practices of gentrifiers replace working-class people's own values and practices.

A perspective on people's everyday lives enhances a 'realistic' perception of their own social position rather than rehearsing represented clichés or abstract expectations. This perspective helps to show how people live, reproduce, or challenge their own positions for the crude reason that 'living class is very much part

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39 The quote subtly implies some sort of beneficial effects in terms of influx of more civilised, intelligent, and wealthy people which are able to rescue failing boroughs, schools, or estates from the trap of 'social segregation'. It is worth noting that Hamnett's inner-city 'mixity' is solely about social class and not, by any means, about ethnicity, religious creed, or culture.

40 See Alberto Toscano's discussion on 'real abstraction' (Toscano 2008).

of how class is made' (Skeggs 2004, 171). Strictly speaking, there is a sense in which people do not think of themselves as being in a certain category as pure numeric assemblages. Rather, they remember concrete experiences, emplaced memories, past hurts. The language of remembering, especially when it comes to sharing a common experience is, in fact, one of the best ways of expressing class. In my fieldwork especially elderly residents, sharing their stories of childhood along the river Thames or of previous demolitions, gave me such an impression. But also some younger ones, thinking nostalgically about their Christmas reunions in the 'old' Greenwich, 'with the lights and all that'.<sup>41</sup> However, 'the narratives of sites are makeshift. They are made of fragments of the world... Fragments of forgotten stories are juxtaposed in a collage in which they relationships are not thought out and therefore form a symbolic whole' (Certeau 1984). it is the skill of the historical materialist which threads these fragments of narratives back to a coherent historical path between the shifting strata that form site and the 'countless ghosts' (ibidem) that haunt place.

## **Conclusion**

My contention is that thinking about space/place cannot just be concerned with forms of performance in the present. It involves considering a central and active role for the past too. My 'data', discussed in the following chapters, show that the displaced people I met during my fieldwork expressed a form of affective reaction to gentrification very similar to resentment. This can manifest itself as a form of nostalgia. Drawing on insights from the geography of emotions (Lorimer 2008; Thrift et al. 2000; Anderson et al. 2001), circulation of affect (Ahmed 2004), and critique of

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41 See Chapters 4 and 5. There is here the sense in which 'culture is ordinary' (Williams, cited in Hall 1993); that popular culture is made of core common values, social practices and experiences, shared across social differentiations by a vast number of people.



performative geographies (B. Jones 2010; O. Jones 2011; Bonnett 2010; Strangleman 2012), I would argue that this nostalgia is not just a form of detached, melancholic and romantic remembering. Rather, it can also convey an affective space grounded on footsteps, encounters and personal experience – fragments of past everyday practices intertwined with the phenomenological dimension of present displacement. 'History begins with footsteps' (De Certeau 1984), and the spatial meanings created by the act of walking as a metaphor of everyday urban life is layered by narrative and past experience, as well as by present performance. In the following chapter, I argue that photography is a well suited tool for rendering explicit the dynamics of lived social space, its material texture and evocative dimension. This is mostly because of its intrinsically contradictory nature. Photography is in fact a catalyst for memories, while having a strong link with the phenomenological 'reality' (Berger et al. 1982; Becker 2002). It can recast apparently insignificant details into a wider and complex social landscape in which they are embedded (Knowles et al. 2004).

The 'bad feelings' I detected from talking to people I met during my fieldwork – anger, disappointment, resentment – are also emotions that do not exhaust themselves *within the present* with the act of their manifestation. However, the sociological approach to resentment has mainly considered it as linked to white working class racism, for instance in the context of *here and now* 'street talks' from shopkeepers (Watson et al. 2005). These talks are framed as 'moans' on perceived unfair distribution of resources and are thought to sustain a right-wing populism. That is, such research foreground a 'politics of resentment' (Nold 1986, cited in Watson et al. 2005). In this reading of affect, resentment plays a central role around the construction of 'race' and Britishness, *de facto* hiding the class element of urban change. Moreover, such research do not explore the link between place and

'community', relying on accounts of its 'golden age' (see Back 1996) or solely on traditional ethnographic methods.<sup>42</sup>

Instead, Ware (2008) appeals for an increased interest in the discipline towards such pervasive affection, advocating for a 'sociology of resentment'. Drawing on the Nietzschean concept of *ressentiment*, she complicates the phenomenological meanings of resentment maintaining that the wider the perceived gap between expected equality and actual redistribution of resources, the deeper this can be. Ware expresses her deep concern about how media contribute to a sense of the white working class as a 'homogeneous social segment driven inexorably into the arms of the far right'. In other words, 'race' has displaced 'class' in media and political speech, making of certain categories (white working-class, in particular) their favourite caricatures as enduring racists or unheard victims.

My fieldwork, which I describe in Chapters 3-5, showed me the space in which such forms of affection can thrive. I position my argument on the affective responses to gentrification in the interstices between theories of urban change and class, on the one hand, and between performative geographies and nostalgic remembering, on the other. My contribution to this debate is then twofold. Firstly, I take the position which sees gentrification as a class-based transformation of cities. I use innovative (for the discipline) visual tools to unpack the intersections of place and class.<sup>43</sup> As I develop in the next chapter, my visual approach – comprising photo elicitation, walking tours, and random encounters – complements this task. It can place the gentrification issue against basic alternatives, by showing the relevance of use-value of housing as shelters and public place as an accessible space for social

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42 See Back 2009; Back et al. 2012 for a wider and more complex ethnographic perspective.

43 Thrift's epistemological call for non-representational geographies suggests that the performative aspects of the everyday cannot be grasped using solely ethnographic methods: '*A non-representational outlook depends upon understanding and working with the 'everyday' as a set of skills, which are highly performative*' (Thrift 2008, 8).

reproduction.

Secondly, I show how resentment is a deep seated feeling which slowly matures in everyday geographies of displacement. That is, I place this emotion on the fine grain of everyday movements through a city undergoing rapid and exclusionary changes on the eve of the Olympic Games. Therefore I argue for a 'geography of resentment', an intimate connection between urban territory undergoing changes, people's experience of this, and their emplaced memories. This approach is strictly contextual, grounded on mundane social practices as well as on how nostalgic remembering can be rooted in colonial histories. It pays little attention to generic talks and vague political claims of a supposedly homogeneous white working class. These in fact might simply reproduce media stereotypes and political discourses. As Keith has recently argued (Keith 2012), the understanding of racism we deploy has to be linked with the notion of 'the urban' which we implicitly have in mind, as well as with the paradoxes that this intrinsically utilises. More specifically, Bonnett (2010) contends that there might be a flaw in radical antiracism about nostalgia seen solely as a reactionary force, rather than as an intrinsic product of modernity.

## Chapter 2. Methodology

*'Those who assert the existence of classes will tend to take a realist stand' (Bourdieu 1987).*

### Introduction

In the present section I chart my epistemological approach to the medium I have used for producing 'data', that is digital still photography. I want to discuss my visual methods practically, focussing on how still photography enhances the efficacy of my fieldwork.<sup>44</sup> I constantly refer to my chosen output method, photobooks, as an evidence of the practical side of my research. The two photobooks, which I originally produced in 2009 and in 2011, are very different in terms of layout, basic aesthetic choices and the interplay of images and text they contain. This difference is explored throughout the written text with constant reference to parts of the visual work. However, as I argue in this chapter, the two efforts – photobooks and present text – are to be taken together as an organic work.

In this chapter, I first address the intrinsic realistic flavour of photography, which reconnects with a long tradition of social engagement. I outline a critique of it, taking the distance from both social realism and perfectionist tableaux. The subsequent section discusses ways of tailoring such a tool to the purpose of knowledge

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<sup>44</sup> Photography shifts its efficacy and meanings according to the context in which it is deployed, or rather according to the discourse to which it participates: it is a very peculiar research tool and/or a form of artistic expression (Sekula in L. Wells 2003; Becker 1995).

production, looking at mechanisms of circulation of academic practices, focussing on audience, practicalities of engagement, and possibilities of artwork circulation. I then reconnect this argument with the current debate on gentrification, as seen in the previous chapter, outlining what I called the 'combined practices' of walking and photographing as a central strategy and theoretical node for grasping city.

The aim of this chapter is to draw a method suitable to unpack affective configurations, materialities and unconscious tensions surrounding the process of urban change, 'gentrification' in my perspective. I call this method 'Critical Photographic Realism', which is a mixed approach consisting of walks, my own photographs and photo-elicitation interviews.<sup>45</sup> More than a work of fine art or, on the converse, a traditional sociological investigation, my aim is to work with all these details together and give a holistic and realistic impression of my whole experience in the field during the last four years. I start by developing my approach to photography in the next three sections below.

## **Writing with images, visualising with text**

The act of pressing the shutter button is less an erratic and sudden circumstance, than a studied, thoughtful, and sometimes even cunning activity. This is a crucial starting point, around which I build my understanding of 'realism' and my practice of street photography. The subjects of my photographs are dictated by events, readings, talking, exchanging of information and, ultimately, by strategic decisions: choices made on what is relevant and why.<sup>46</sup> As a consequence of this almost

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45 The formal interviews with photo-elicitation that I transcribed were about eight. I widely report and analyse four of them in Chapters 4 and 5. However, encounters, informal chats, and exchange of local knowledge, such as suggestions to where to navigate next, are very numerous and filled my research diary during my four year fieldwork. This experience is mostly reported in the next chapter.

46 See especially Chapter 3.

erratic, or anarchic, way of proceeding, my photobooks are not a sequential narrative of a chronological account. Instead, the outcome seems episodic, non-linear in space and time, asking the reader to work harder at making their own connections. The photobooks are however to be taken into consideration as a project, a series of pictures that want to make a statement, rather than a sequence of self-contained, single-framed, black-and-white still images for gallery walls. The choice to take photographs for a book is in itself symptomatic of the way in which I organise my work. I build the project bit by bit: a montage *with* words rather than a linear sequence that speaks 'a thousand words'.

Photographs are in fact so ambiguous (polysemic) and powerful (effective at producing knowledge) that they need to be put in the context of their production. One way of achieving this is by working visually, but in a close interplay with text. Often photographs have informed my writing, they have become the nexus between my experience in the field, the readings, and the arguments I want to expose, in a triangulation. Rather than trying to explain photographs with captions or support text with 'visual quotes' (Prosser et al. 1998, 166), I tried to use words in contemporaneity with the photographs I have taken, because they inspired each other. I liked to go back to my folders of photographs on my computer when I wrote my thesis. This was a refreshing moment in which the field came alive again, even in the busiest corner of my desk space. Sometimes, I picked up details that I missed on the spot, or I made new connections altogether, by simply re-positioning the sequence of photographs taken. Working with photographs and with text implies always a creative tension, in which neither of the two forms of literacy, the visual and the written word, have a privileged place.

This interplay was developed by attempts and experimentation, producing two very different output within two years: in the first photobook (2009), it is the use of

scholarly quotations that seems to make statements. It seems to me that I was then almost looking for authoritative voices in order to justify my photographs. The second book (2011) bolsters a more visual approach. Here, photographs occupy much larger room on the pages, often in a full-bleed layout. Besides, I link text more closely to the visual: the text is in fact predominantly taken from extracts from my interviews/encounters. Sometimes the quotes refer directly to the photographs, that is they are the outcome of photo elicitation; in other moments, the photographs were taken after participants suggestions, which led to a specific 'walking tour'.

Becker (2002) argues that text and photographs can work together, and while text maintains its generality of arguments (theory and politics), photographs help the reader to specify it, to respond to the writer's stimuli. Photographs don't lay any claim to truth,<sup>47</sup> 'not they are evidence as "compelling" proof, but rather they sometimes carry an "existence" proof', a trace of the 'flesh and blood' of living people and real places.<sup>48</sup> As John Berger sums up:

*In itself the photograph cannot lie, but, by the same token, it cannot tell the truth. (Berger et al. 1982, 97)*

Images do something other than the text. They can remind us of the materiality of reality, of the embeddings of social life: 'the camera lens picks up the particular and issues an invitation to establish connections with the bigger landscape on which it sits' (Knowles 2009, 19). It is this peculiarity of the photographic medium, its ability to attract 'the banal appearances', that makes explanation necessary with a text. Appearances, despite being considered banal and usually unquestioned by the readers/viewers as an emanation of 'reality', are in fact the product of both social

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47 As Becker states, this argument about "truth" is nor more nor less than a 'philosophic muddle', shifting the focus on what rather photography can effectively do for social scientists; for instance, how it can support the argument's credibility or even, like in the case of 'A Seventh Man', provide 'solid evidence' (ibidem).

48 'Photographs, as Berger insists, are irredeemably specific. The image is always of someone or something specific, not an abstract entity or a conceptual creation' (Becker, cited).

fabrications – the cultural construction of framing, photographer's reading of the event, the specific social situation in which the photograph is shown – and chemical or electronic processes proper of the technology of the camera work. That is why words put photographs in context, interpret and explain them.<sup>49</sup>

Photographs reveal an interplay with the place under scrutiny: they are less a truthful representation and more an interface with real events.<sup>50</sup> Photographs in fact maintain a sense of attachment to the real – this is their most obvious function and expectation from most audiences. However, they are also staged. They aim at reflecting social constructions, a sense of perspective, and the selection of whatever is included in or purposely excluded from the frame.

## **Why Realism? Why 'Critical'?**

In this section, I briefly look at 'Realism', distinguishing my own practice from both 'Social Realism' and certain aspects of fine-art photography. If the former in fact has given way to populist and heroic constructions of working-class subjects (see Newbury 1999), the latter has been regarded in traditional leftist thought, as suspiciously being the embodiment of a bourgeois aesthetic.<sup>51</sup> Below, I highlight the 'specificity' of my practice in relation to other artists' practices as well as in relation to

49 Collier reminds the practitioner of social science study that the use of artistic processes per se, that is without theoretical underpinning and critical analysis, can lead to the 'abandonment of the responsibility to connect findings to concrete visual evidence [sic]' (Collier 2001, 59; also Harper 2012, 219).

50 Notes from Knowles' lecture, Goldsmiths 2011.

51 Bourdieu's contention is a very articulated outcome of his theory of 'habitus' as a classed way of apprehending reality. It is the '*refusal of facile*' and other more trivial senses which is at the basis of all 'pure' aesthetics and of the act of seeing (Bourdieu 1984, 256). This aesthetic distance from the object of representation, that is life in all its everyday most banal and practical essence, is favoured by the condition of existence, or agents' own class position. It is the amount and composition of capital in any given field which determine taste or its opposite, disgust. In condition of freedom from urgency and necessity, Bourdieu maintains, it is easy to detach themselves from the facile, the banal, the 'cheap and cheerful', the undemanding. On the converse, it is working-class aesthetics, their *art of living*, which rejects the futile, the formal, and the impractical. Bourdieu maintains that 'the [working-class] judgement applied to the photograph in no way dissociates the object from the picture and the picture from the object, the final criterion of appreciation' (Bourdieu 2005, 90).



the evolution of my own practice (see also Burgin 2008). I ask two questions: what is common about this struggle to represent the 'real'? And, how does my work fit into this tradition?

From studying realist movements throughout history of art and media, there is a clear sense that all these authors and schools were always very aware of putting up a representation of reality rather than a transparent imitation of it. Looking at these artistic works – from pioneering masters of the Dutch school of painting to the latest avant-garde (mostly cinema) - I note a set of escamotages put in place in order to reach a likelihood of reality, or a 'reality effect' (Barthes 2006). It is a common feature of these artistic and literary movements their ability of giving the 'impression' of reality to audience, almost 'uncannily' (Westermann 1996). In the cauldron of symbols and details that their artworks recall, in fact, the sensorial of perceivers is stimulated to the extent of accepting what is shown *as if* it was. The effect is achieved by way of referring to mundane aspects of everyday life, by way of articulating thick descriptions (in novels and paintings) or lengthy and repetitive scenes (in films). In other words, by staging an 'excess of the trivial' (Yeazell 2008) and so being able to establish a connection with audience's own daily experience. In this sense, and very notably, realism has strived to capture the common thread – however problematic and historically determined – which reflexively maintains popular lived values held in common in everyday life.<sup>52</sup>

A common question that realist photography seems to answer is a quest for social structure (Margulies 1996). That is, something which is so invisible and, at the same time, so overwhelmingly present and oppressive needs to be unveiled, made explicit and offered in a most apprehensible way for an audience to relate to it. Rather than

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<sup>52</sup> Williams (1958) identifies in solidarity the core value of working-class reflexive account of themselves as the social majority of people.

hermetic formulations of certain Marxist tradition, I untangle geometries of power by re-presenting the social practices of working-class subjects on the foreground of a rapidly changing urban environment, to whose hidden process I only hint.<sup>53</sup> I literally followed workers on the mud of the river shore; I walked with elderly residents and recorded their frustrations at finding footpaths suddenly being closed off; I had both a direct and internet-based tour about local shoppers' preferences, such as discussions on current prices of ale or on the type of crowd certain pubs would attract.<sup>54</sup>

Where else in fact can we find the workings of power and the daily strategies put in place in order to cope if not in the spaces of private life, labour and leisure? The quotidian is the signifier *par excellence* of the realistic impulse, it is the residuum of all meaningful activities and, as such, it is made of both the material reality and the *impossibility* to account for it (Lefebvre, cited in Margulies 1996). What characterises the 'quotidian' is the residual part of the day, after work or leisure activities, which is unworthy of being narrated. Especially in visual arts, the insignificant event in which nothing happens resists representation.

I don't usually explain photographs, even if I always put text alongside in order to give them context. However, I want to provide an example of how I represented the mundane in my photobooks. I decided to open my latest photobook about East Greenwich gentrification (2011) with a photograph of a tea mug left on a bannister. The riverside, my field with its derelict industrial sites, engages the page next to it,

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53 See extracts of Councillor Mary Mills' interview reported in the Introduction and in Chapter 4.

54 Greenwich Phantom blog recently posted a strong statement about local pubs putting prices up in occasion of the Olympics: 'NINETEEN POUNDS FIFTY for the fish stew. Fish STEW, that is – not a bit of fish, a *stew*.' (The Greenwich Phantom 2012, emphasis in the original). The post had over forty responses in three days, a clear sign of how sensitive Greenwich people have become to these issues. Other comments: 'Greenwich businesses have become more focussed on the one-time visitor than on local customers', 'Greenwich is now more expensive than the West End', 'Greenwich Council are more interested in being a Royal Borough than being a People's Borough'. Heuristically speaking, in Jubilee and Olympic Greenwich resentment seems to spill over.

almost by chance. The photographs were taken from the same spot in the tiny garden outside one of my participants' cottages. They could be imagined to be part of the same panorama. The mug belongs to my key participant, elderly resident Joyce. She spends part of her day watching over for ships like the harbour master, whose monumental house borders her tiny cottage, used to do. She looks after the communal garden saved from the demolition of the docks by volunteers. Joyce is angry with the new developers who, somehow, managed to close off the riverside path towards East. The mug therefore speaks of a social practice of one resident, it is a material element in a narrative around lived experience. That mug also tells a story – among other things – of displacement of a working-class resident and of her attitude towards the river. The tiny object is an 'irrelevant' detail compared to the enormity of the task of explaining power relations of class and culture at the eve of the most global and televised event of all: the Olympic Games. In this case, the realistic impression that the photograph of the blue mug gives to the audience, fills the content of the research (the 'data') with further details and texture.

In an environment already packed with signs, my photographs aim at openly communicating with an audience without purposely defusing signification, by recurring to 'hermeticism of structure' or elaborated 'opacity of signs' (Sekula and Buchloh 1995:196). However, the quotidian resists direct representation, despite or maybe because of being so obvious and banal (if nothing happens, why bother to represent it? And who would be interested?). It is this paradox that seems to fascinate realistic artists, whatever the medium deployed. In order to render the quotidian, realist artists need to recall any possible aspect of social life, from the minute detail to the most amazing aspirations, the material and the affective working together at making social representations.

The sense of place which transpires from my photographs, texts, readings, and

encounters is unique, almost an unrepeatable experience. However, this experience is also something other than biography since the production and dissemination of its final visual output are shared.<sup>55</sup> The steps which led me there are explained. Audiences can take a stance in support or against my arguments. This peculiar rendering of the place can then be participated, discussed, or contested. In the context of lived experience, viewer's memories trigger other memories, so that 'appearances become the language of a lived life' (Berger 1982, 289). Going back to the example of the blue mug, my guess is that most people looking at it would immediately connect this to any moment in their lives in which they have enjoyed a cup of tea looking over a familiar landscape. I can only imagine from this point on what an audience would then think of it: a feeling of belonging and a sense of haptic bonding with such landscape? The pleasure of being part of it as on every other day, or the resentment at being dispossessed of the use-value that such practice carries within?

Reality is firstly and foremost the materiality which both reflects the light and attracts the framing gaze of the photographer. This is essentially and simply because photographs are always about something specific (the blue mug is, after all, a blue mug: that is its 'irrefutable evidence' (Berger et al. 1982)). Paradoxically though, this specificity can have a myriad of meanings depending upon a series of factors, including audience's understanding of them. Viewers always relate images to a system of symbols. Photographs are therefore formed by the phenomenological world in which photographers move, the intertextuality of meanings in wider symbolic systems which generates the object of the photographic gaze, and the accepted social meanings from which an audience gets the content of

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55 My photobooks are published under Creative Commons and available for free download.

representation.<sup>56</sup> The conditions of production of any knowledge at any specific time ought to take into account the author as a active and reflexive subject as well as the audience which actively make sense of what is seen. It is the audience, whether real or simply imagined, which ultimately will decide on the meaningfulness of the artwork. Photographers can only bring forth their arguments and support the evidence of their thesis with both words and images, the work of which is one of the mystery of knowledge. What is in fact the relationship between a constructed montage in the form of a photobook, a text which draws on remote social theory, and viewers' understanding of this as a meaningful narrative?

Berger and Mohr (1982) explains this conundrum as the making of 'the story's reflective subject': memories trigger other memories, and the photographer's experience stimulates viewers' recollection of their own experiences. There are in fact two moments of a photograph: firstly, the moment when the event/object photographed was in being, in the continuum of personal, individual, and necessary time (Joyce was offering me a tour of her immediate neighbourhood when I saw her mug). Secondly, the freezing on the film, or on memory card, that detaches the subject of representation from its original context (the photograph of the blue mug is now on somebody's desk or on their computer screen). This is equivalent to an arrest of the flow of time which the event/object in question was into: what Berger refers to as a 'shock of discontinuity' (*ibidem*). In order to have a narrative within fragmentary and discontinuous photographs, we need a sort of 'agreement about discontinuities' between audience, narrator, and subjects. This relation is historically determined and dynamic, and it forms the 'reflective subject', whose task is that of

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56 In Lacanian terms, the image resulting from the gaze is situated midway between the eye and the object: between the physiological eye of the photographer, its unconscious or 'what "the other" would like me to say', and the object as it is already embedded into a web of meanings grounded in its own network and history (see Levine 2008).

memory (Berger et al. 1982, 287).<sup>57</sup>

One way of facilitating such an agreement is by working with text and photographs at the same time. However, no text can ever resolve the intrinsic ambiguity of images, which are and remain polysemic (see also Barnouw 1994; Harper 2002). A series of photographs can make up a narrative despite being assembled like a montage in juxtapositions, rather than as a linear story. A bit like walking, so photographs make a story despite, or perhaps because of, the ability of the viewer/reader to browse through them in no particular order. And a bit like walking, stories do not pause when they rest, but continue their less conscious working through webs of meanings.<sup>58</sup> How meanings are produced, how societies establish them as part of a knowledge, and how this knowledge becomes a morally binding truth are main concerns of social sciences. For my argument on photography as a realist epistemology, it is sufficient to remind that 'photographs help us to think through things, not above them', as Kracauer would have it (in Barnouw 1994, 14).

## **Why Photography?**

In this section I compare some works by famous realist photographers in order to position my own practice. Street photographers Cartier-Bresson and Jeff Wall, for instance, express two opposite but also ideologically concurrent artistic goals. The former willing to capture the naturalness, the spontaneity of the scene before his lens, believing that this is a mechanical way of reproducing what is immediately available to the sense of seeing. This is the utmost ability of the skilled photographer to press the shutter in the 'decisive moment'. The latter trying to render reality by

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57 This seems to me very much the 'intermediary area' or 'the anteroom' in which historical reality and photographic reality converge (Kracauer, in Barnouw 1994).

58 The metaphor belongs to John Berger (Berger, cited in Ingold et al. 2008)

prefabricating the scene into its tiniest details, *tableaux vivant*, and pushing the technological possibility of the medium to the extreme. Both schools aim at representing the natural perfection of life as it is. Instead, I argue that these authors push the sense of seeing to its most detached possibilities, that is, to contemplate aesthetic beauty.

Another possibility is offered by photographer and critic Allan Sekula, whose insistence of photographing people at work in sequences or triptychs defies both ideas of 'decisive moment' and of *tableaux vivant*. He rather aims at a representation which produces a montage, a 'dissembled movie' (in H. Van Gelder 2009). Sekula's photographs are never single masterpieces, defiant of time and place. Rather, they seem very embedded in a specific situation and yet refer to a 'larger montage principle' (ibidem). His insistence at willing to encourage visual connections to the totality of images and texts that make up the entirety of his archival body of work is very much what I have been trying to do with my work. This started a few years ago as my final MA project (Cardullo 2007) and I now re-propose it in colour in my latest photobook (Cardullo 2011, 16–29).

In another photobook,<sup>59</sup> I present a raw contact sheet of some of many photos I took for that piece of work. In that occasion, the workers I portrayed seemed engaged in the almost pointless task of repairing a juncture of an old pontoon barge while, in the background, a vast demolition process of the largest industrial site in the area of East Greenwich was taking place. A posteriori, this scene resembles Sekula's work 'Shipwrecks and Workers' (2005), in which: 'a worker shovels debris in front of a freighter blown up against the shore: the Angel of History absorbed in his task, disguised as one of Breugel's peasants' (in Baetens et al. 2010). Sekula's ability to

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59 Most of this photobook – which I produced as a 'paper' for a panel at the International Visual Sociology Association (IVSA) conference in Bologna 2010 – is now reproduced in my latest one (2011, 41-65).

elevate ordinary workers into subject of the finest pictorial tradition teaches me to reconsider my own approach towards the quality of photographic output. As Marcuse suggests, 'the political potential of art lies only in its own aesthetic dimensions' (cited in Baetens et al. 2010, 37). If we want to create some spaces for intervention with photographs, then we also need to address issues of aesthetics: very bluntly, ugly photographs hardly get viewed. If they are not appealing to an audience then their impact is less effective.

These considerations open to the 'critical' aspects of this quest for reality. There are at least two meanings that I give to the term 'critical', as it is applied to my practical engagement with the field. The two are not mutually exclusive but they work together towards an outline of my research practice. In first instance, I use 'critical' as an interrogative stance, a research attitude, and a more general political statement: it is an 'evaluative attitude' towards reality (Marcuse 2009, 185). It implies a way of knowing that projects the researcher's own social values into the subject of investigation.<sup>60</sup> In this sense, my participation is never neutral and detached, but rather reflects my own direct engagement as a resident of working-class background, my own experience of displacement and anger at being displaced.

The second meaning refers to the uses of photography in rendering reality. I follow here an argument on photography which runs through the writings of Walter Benjamin and John Berger, to the practice of Victor Burgin and Allan Sekula. Photography constructs reality rather than representing it, as it is usually assumed in documentary photography. Critical realist artists are very aware of this and put a lot of emphasis on the 'politics of representation' (Burgin 1996), at expenses of 'politically non-engaged poetics', as Jeff Wall would instead have it (cited in H. Van

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<sup>60</sup> This is also the argument developed by Marx against Feuerbach, about his lack of 'sensuousness as practical, human-sensuous activity' (Marx 1845, thesis V).



Gelder 2009).

Method itself is generative for critical realists, since the subjects of representation change with the evolution of one's own practice.<sup>61</sup> 'Critical realism' is therefore a research method in its own right rather than a genre, as Sekula insists. Its goal is to make some difference, maybe slow and tiny changes, at least at the level of the individual. In the next section, I discuss how I brought some of my key participants to discuss the regeneration of their neighbourhood from a standpoint of remembering, exactly with the aid of my photographs. It is my contention that the emotional reaction to such changes was determined by the combination of encounter, photographs, and interview. In Chapter 3 I narrate how, thanks to my photoblog, I started a dialogue with artists in residence on the Greenwich Peninsula. There, photography maintains an interventionist stance, but it's freed from both ideological and heroic claims to truth.

In concluding this part, I note here – again – that there is very little in my photographs of a mystical belief in the 'decisive moment', the alchemical conjunction of elements that fascinates so many street photographers. The prevalent idea of this perspective is that the photographer is a 'bystander', an external and innocent witness of the chance, a flâneur like Cartier-Bresson, overlooking the crowd from a neutral stand-out point (and with an assistant carrying a notebook). Neither I identify with a photographer as an outsider artist who expects the elements of the composition, lights and subjects, to come all together in a sort of magic montage, like Jeff Wall with his very expensive entourage. Both these very different artists have something in common: the quest for a masterpiece shot.

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61 I expand on this last point in Chapter 3, which is a central chapter in my thesis not just because it describes the genesis of my fieldwork, showing how this is made of casual encounters and strategic choices. In particular, I reflexively discuss there how my practice evolves from occasional 'by-stander' to emphatic and engaged visual sociologist.

## Doing photo elicitation

The following section continues in a practical way my quest for the 'reflective subject', as discussed earlier. I develop here a framework of photographic practice which takes into account both the authority of the photographer/researcher and the recognition of their research participants, who often are also the subjects photographed. Despite not handing over my camera to participants, I opted for a balanced act of re-presentation of their lives. This happened when I managed to sit down with some interviewees and discuss the photographs I took during my walks; what it is known as 'photo elicitation'.

Anthropologist Malcolm Collier insisted on the importance of logging, dating, cataloguing visual materials as 'data'. In particular, he maintains, 'if the informant can provide the contextual information out of their own experience, even poorly annotated images may be used as data' (Collier 2001, 46). The insistence on photographs as carrier of information – particularly names, places, dates: indexical captions – seems to be a particular preoccupation of certain anthropology. This tradition would face disappearing communities, or ethnicities, and aims mostly at fulfilling archives, producing records for posterity (see Harper 1989, 37).<sup>62</sup> However, there are problems in the taxonomy as this is a form of framing in itself, and there is a risk for social science to show a colonialist, superimposed and classifying side: a traditional way of conducting ethnography in which photographs are used mostly to gather 'social facts' and evidence. There is the sense in which the purely indexical

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62 This practice is evident in the choice of materials and technologies (especially in moving images), as well as in cataloguing techniques. It is true though that an increasing (particularly electronic) archive requires some sort of combination of tags (see Harper 2012, 211–212); reasonable backup is also a preoccupation of anyone who cares about their own research material; and most importantly the issue of radical contextualization returns here over and again. That is, 'the information [from the photographs-data] must subsequently be organized and presented from a sociological perspective' (Harper, in Prosser et al. 1998).

description of whom, when or where, becomes an objective in itself, without an understanding of the sociological context in which the viewing happens and the photographs have been taken.

Rather, the way I used photo elicitation was aimed at entailing trust from my participants, as well as at providing open ended and critical discussions: a model of collaborative practice in which I maintained my role as a photographer (see Harper 2012, 155). These are necessary steps in order to build a conversation around details of an images, to set the context in which photographs become meaningful, and to re-present participants in their own terms. My research methods have implied photography in order to facilitate my engagement with the subjects of such encounters at different levels – as an ice-breaker, as a rationale for tours around the neighbourhood, or more simply as an interviewing technique. In all instances, photography helped me to generate and render the mixture of emotions and nostalgic remembering embedded in people's accounts. During photo elicitation, in particular, photographs were the leading motif for the narrative, pushing chronological boundaries and mixing up the linearity of causal connections.

The very act of taking photographs has been an excuse to talk about places and issues, therefore being an entry point into my field. People seemed increasingly accustomed to seeing me hanging around with my camera, and therefore less suspicious. At times, they came to ask me what I was doing. In these occasions, photographs unlocked diffidence and entailed trust, by way of immediately establishing a sort of intimacy between the viewer and the photographer. That was the case for when I met Joyce, old long term resident of Lovell's neighbourhood in East-Greenwich. These are some notes I took, immediately after the interview I had with Joyce:

*She gets immediately nervous at my request of recording our interview. I*

*didn't expect to be such a formal thing, I need to take some details'. She disappears upstairs to get a notebook and pen in order to write down my details. I calmly explain the reasons of my research and the meanings of 'oral history'. Joyce is still on the defensive; maybe I wasn't clear or the language I used was too technical? I finally show her a photograph of my son running along the cobbled path of Lovell's Wharf, as it was prior to its redevelopment. The photo seems to have a magical effect on Joyce, who starts feeling much more comfortable and allows me to record our conversation, opening her memories up in a flow of descriptions, anecdotes, details, considerations and opinions, that only rarely needed to be prompted.*

In another occasion, my photobook challenged the professional and detached voice of Syral's site manager, Scott Benson, who I interviewed after almost one year of requests, emails, and phone calls. Scott showed no sign of regret with regard to the recent story of the industrial complex, to how 250 people, mostly locals, were affected by the decision to close. He addressed this as any other technical matter and as a rational choice. However, he got quite apologetic when I showed him a photograph I took *four years before* our meeting. It was a photograph of a painter depicting the factory corn jetty, an amazing piece of industrial architecture for which attempts of having it listed had failed.<sup>63</sup>

*We saw him, we watched him on the river front for several months. He didn't give a lot of way. Basically, he was aware that we were about to demolish that structure, so he began painting it. We have an obligation as a business to carry on a demolition of the site, and that structure formed part of the requirement to clear that...so...yeh...the agreement we had with the landlord was to clear the site.*

Photographs – especially as material objects, that is, in printed form – can trigger emotions, insights, thoughts and memories, enhancing the circulation of affect which follows from an encounter.<sup>64</sup> In other words, photo elicitation 'enlarges the possibilities of conventional empirical research' (Harper 2002, 1), due to the fact that meanings of photographs are multiple and change according to who looks at the photographs. Besides, photographs are deeply entangled with personal stories and

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63 See Cardullo 2012, 69 -70.

64 This is my intuition on photography applied to a well-know reading that Deleuze and Guattari have of Spinoza (Deleuze 1978). See also Sarah Ahmed (2004).

memory processes, which is a crucial theoretical node in my analysis of residents' affective reaction to gentrification. It was the case of Steve, who learnt from my photobook that some migrants manual workers were employed just two minutes away from where he lived. He firstly connected these to memories and familiar accounts of his granddad working in the Greenwich docks. Surprisingly and unexpectedly, he then had a rant about fairness and housing allocation, making his own connections out of my photographs.<sup>65</sup>

Photo elicitation and walking tours, which I explain at the end of this chapter, are my favourite 'tools' of engagement and empowerment. These go beyond the overwhelming practice of 'handing over' the camera, promising a model for collaboration in research, and changing the power relationship between the researcher and the subject, to the point that the photographer-researcher 'becomes a listener and one who encourages the dialogue to continue' (Harper, in Prosser, cited: 35). Photo elicitation allows a process of re-balancing the authority of the photographer, re-establishing meanings according to participants' own experiences and memories. For instance, my elderly participants immediately reconnected the photographs of kids at play and the graffiti around Lovell's with their own concerns around safety, filling the photographs I had taken with completely different meanings.<sup>66</sup> There might be cases in which photographs become powerful tools in the interview process, expressing their entire agency, 'in a kind of chain reaction, causing people to do and think things they had forgotten, or to see things they had forgotten, or to see things they had always known in a new way' (Banks 2001, 95–96). So it was the case when the same elderly participants started remembering all sorts of anecdotes of them taking kids to search objects on the riverside or even of

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65 See Chapter 5.

66 Cardullo 2011, 28-29.

themselves swimming in a particular part of the river. My eldest participant, Arthur, stated:

*We used to go often to 'Rocky Bay' just around the corner from there [pointing at the photograph]; one day my brother got stuck under a boat and, my god, wethe meanings of any one discursive image or text depend not only on that one text or image, but also on the meanings carried by other images and text (G. Rose 2007, 142), nearly lost him! My mum won't let us go over there to play for a while...*

Sometimes, the researcher learns details of activities or objects s/he photographed by being in conversation about them with participants (Harper 1987). It happened when elderly Joyce showed me dried plants she collected from the riverside. With my surprise, she expected me to name them since:

*You know them 'cos you photographed them; this is called Buddleia, it spells...*

In the many examples I showed above, there is the sense in which photo elicitation allowed the people I photographed to re-present themselves, counterbalancing my authority as a researcher and expanding the possibility of our encounters. However, photo elicitation has little to say about the social construction of meanings as well as the social differences between audiences or the institutional practices through which images and meanings make sense, that is, their intertextuality. Here, critical discourse analysis, supported by theoretical readings, have indeed filled some gaps in my 'data'. It was the case, again, for Steve's remarks on presumed unfairness in the allocation of 'affordable' housing. His statements demanded that I started thinking in terms of post-colonialism and that I expanded my research horizon.

## **Display and dissemination**

Finally, any visual work needs to find its audience, that is, it needs to be prepared for presentation and, eventually, dissemination. This is less easy than it firstly appears.

Photographs supply a research tool or they might even maintain their innovative character, but only to the extent that they remain constrained into a traditional academic framework of doing qualitative research. In that context, usually, it is implied that 'the verbal analyses the visual' (Chaplin 1994, 2), as a presentation of the representation. Rarely a text has been requested in order to support a visual output. This difficulty is ever so evident when it comes to funding opportunities, disciplinary boundaries, strategies for supervision, peers' feedbacks, academic presentations, and gathering of references. This can be moved further by discussing the final layout that the visual sociological work is meant to have. Again, Chaplin (cited) suggests that the 'judiciously' chosen typography and page layout can help to construct a reflexively sound text. They can make a positive contribution to the structure and content of the sociological analysis. Artworks are unfortunately also a function of how much funding is available for the designing of the final output. The 'art-and-media' complex<sup>67</sup> does have many solutions for almost any budget.

Fortunately, the relative affordability brought in by the digital revolution implies alternative solutions which bypass expensive output. These solutions authorize cultural practices around production and dissemination that were not imaginable only a few years before. Projections of slides, DVDs and print-on-demand photobooks have all together shifted a bit the power balance from a rather exclusive environment, in which 'quality' is supreme.<sup>68</sup>

Surprisingly though, the same supporters of the 'fine-art' paradigm don't seem to consider the issue of work-flow. It is the case that often visual workshops led by enthusiastic and skilled artists, as well as the very debate on the future of

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67 So to mock Angela McRobbie's more famous 'fashion-and-beauty' complex.

68 I re-fashion here a complex argument on the loss of aura that the mechanisation of the cultural industry has brought to art circulation (See W. Benjamin's 1936 essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction').

photobooks as I highlight below, end up underplaying the role of the software used in the production of the visual output. They all assume the software as a *datum*, namely the overwhelmingly popular Photoshop (or FinalCut for moving image) or, more generally, the Adobe-Apple duopoly. Alternative solutions, such as the Free (Libre) and Open Source Software (FLOSS) and print-on-demand services, are either ignored for lack of experimentation (from the photographer's side) or discouraged for assumed lack of professionalism (of the software). In this context, the photobooks I produced are rather unique. They move away from an established and unquestioned work-flow (Adobe-Apple), and refuse easy commercial solutions of off-the-shelf templates. In fact, they are purely 'home-brewed', using the quasi artisanal craft of the Free and Open Source software.<sup>69</sup>

Here I want to communicate the sense in which to transfer an established commercial work-flow into an experimental one is a huge effort which implies dedication, tenacity, and commitment. It requires time. It often requires sharing of information and tips over internet forums. The outcome is therefore a sense of achievement that goes well beyond the output *per se*. For this and other reasons explored above, the books are published and made available for download under Creative Commons License 3.0. On the other hand, there is a clear understanding of how photography, freed from the solipsism of the pure artistic vocation, is a form of labour. As such it resembles other forms of social productive activity imposed by the contemporary capitalist system. In other words, I intend the work-flow discussed above as the means of production in which so much photographic practice is entangled.

After following a series of passionate on-line blogs, articles, and crowd-sourcing

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<sup>69</sup> Credits need to be written for the 'community-developed' software I have used: mainly Scribus, Libre Office and The Gimp, on Linux Xubuntu platform.



forums on the future of photobooks between artists, publishers, curators, and collectors, I matured the idea that there is more than one good case in favour of printed artefacts. This despite the more democratic feel of the internet and the relative autonomy of the digital product compared to the Euclidean law of the printed book.<sup>70</sup> The prevailing view is that the printed output maintains a feel of physical objects, indispensable to our collective history. 'Books are indelibly printed onto our consciousness from early on' (Himes, Radius Books<sup>71</sup>). No electricity is required to access printed books.<sup>72</sup> They can be touched and marked for future use. They are, as artefacts, part of an autonomous art form in which photographs lose their own character as things in themselves (whatever use or value we imagine they might have) and become part of a narrative, of 'a dramatic event called a book' (R. Prins, quoted in Badger and Parr, 2004<sup>73</sup>). In fact, having in mind a book as a final visual output influences the very act of taking a photograph. This is not meant as a mere stand-alone masterpiece, a frozen moment, but perhaps more as a suspended moment in the continuity of a story to be told. Photographs in books are rather 'indecisive moments'. Finally, books are far more accessible than exhibitions or digital archives. One can return to them repeatedly and absorb the accompanying texts at will, creating a special bond with it.

With the proliferation of photobooks there has been also a market explosion for obsessed collectors, as well as the growing expectation of the art world to see artist's credentials in the form of a photobook. On the other hand, and unsurprisingly, the digital output is often seen as cheap, tacky, and mass-produced:

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70 In fact, one still will have some sort of bi-dimensional layout from printing.

71 <http://www.wordswithoutpictures.org/main.html?id=189&note=194,202>

72 Nor they can be deleted by malicious software or by malicious ownership processes (such as the Amazon-Kindle relationship, which brought the multinational to delete – hilariously – Orwell's '1984' via a back door. See 'The Danger of E-books' at: <http://www.gnu.org/philosophy/the-danger-of-ebooks.html>).

73 <http://www.sevensevennine.com/?p=862>

*The internet is a junk heap. It's every frame that comes back from the drugstore. It's the contact sheet, the raw material, the unsorted mass.*<sup>74</sup>

## **Why 'Walking on the Rim'?**

In the following section I re-contextualise my method and practice in the debate on gentrification. In Chapter 1, I discussed the issue of appropriate indicators as ways of measuring displacement induced by gentrification. The choice of indicators is obviously crucial and gives different results, depending on which one is privileged. In this section, I maintain that a qualitative methodological approach, supported in my case by years of still photography, photo elicitation and walks in the 'field', is more suitable for an understanding of gentrification as a cultural change.

As I insisted in the previous chapter, I am researching ways of pinning down the so-called 'indirect displacement' (Marcuse 1985). This is the sort of pressure experienced by some residents on their 'way of being', to the extent that they feel displaced in their own neighbourhood. This form of displacement is cultural, affective and psychological. It is impossible to be detected by the sole use of quantitative data. In fact, arguments on lack of displacement come from research which mostly use Census data or other quantitative indicators (rent arrears, evictions, etc.). These might give inconsistent outcomes in the measurement of displacement effects, focussing mostly on hard to reach evicted, as victims of direct displacement (Atkinson et al. 2005; Lees 2000; Marcuse 1985; Slater 2006; Newman et al. 2006).

Difficulties in the measurement of gentrification were also part of Neil Smith's problematic search for its frontier, from which the title of my research is partly taken (N. Smith 1996, 189–190). His idea is that an advancing 'gentrification frontier' has a very strong appeal for developers, planners, and activists alike, insofar as it absorbs

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<sup>74</sup> <http://tinyurl.com/cdte2wj>

all in one place layers of economic profitability, expectations in social advance, nostalgic memories of past, and a creative work towards the future. In other words, imagining a frontier creates 'a cultural verve and a sense of optimism': it is 'the place where the future will be made' and where all the planning efforts and the policy goals will be realized. This frontier is for Smith ideological and pervasive; it is a cultural and economic construction; it embeds the optimism of the future thinking on the city form and economic progress. It is this ideology that shapes the boundaries, imaginations, and representations of the city. That the development industry delivers money to itself through the very act of drawing boundaries for 'area-based' initiatives might sound so obvious, in fact, that often social analysis overlooks it, leaving it as unquestioned (Porter et al. 2009, 249).

If something extremely positive is moving forward, then something else has to be mapped in negative terms. My photographic narrative sits exactly around the symbolic and material boundaries between Greenwich Peninsula development project (Cardullo, 2009) and the mostly industrial area of East Greenwich riverside (Cardullo, 2011).<sup>75</sup> The study of boundaries that delimit the city from its externalities locates a specific discourse on the city: historically, 'the city is always conceptualized in relation to its externalities' (Cinar et al. 2007, xviii). In the logic of capitalistic accumulation, this process is necessary in the first place, in order to justify intervention in the urban form. In Smith's own words:

*Mapping the gentrification frontier helps significantly to demystify the frontier language through which so much gentrification has been interpreted in the popular press and helps us discern the economic geography of urban change that gives this language a semblance of reality. (Smith 1996, p.209)*

By showing the advancement of this frontier, which is both material and cultural

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<sup>75</sup> There are two distinguishable periods in the regeneration of East Greenwich Riverside, the moment of the devaluing and planning, followed by the demolitions and reconstruction. For my research too, two moments seem to come out as a critique of the symbolic and material landscape of that neighbourhood: exposure (Cardullo, 2009) and archaeological recovery (Cardullo, 2011).

(direct and indirect forms of displacement), its underlying ideology can be exposed. Interestingly, Smith's conclusions seem to point to a patchy and disorderly tapestry:

*The gentrification line is not so much a “wall” of equal and continuous development as a highly uneven and differentiated process. (Smith 1996, p.209)*

The inconclusiveness of economic geography indicators is even more relevant if seen in the London context of 'affordable' housing. Here, policy goals of social amortization are being put in place in what has been seen as a 'soothing intervention' of the gentrifying process (Massey 2007). The experience of displacement then become 'invisible', either hidden by the impossibility of being mapped or turned into tempting statistical outputs for policy-makers' reports.

The inability to map a line of gentrification does not mean, obviously, that this process is not happening. Insisting on visual practice as an analytic tool for researching it challenges the findings of quantitative methodology. It is hard to map gentrification or represent its displacement effects as an outcome of economic indicators. However, scholars insist that gentrification is the 'visible window', at neighbourhood or street level, of broader societal changes (Hackworth 2007). The way I engage with this epistemological paradox is composite. Firstly, I adopted the broader definition of displacement, as a psychosocial and material phenomenon, and of class struggle, as a battle fought mostly at the level of the symbolic. Secondly, I insisted that the vernacular urban landscape is the contested terrain where most of this semiotic and material battle happens. I argued that the cultural re-making of cities is mostly due to the incredible investment in symbolic capital that 'new' middle-classes need to bolster in order to mark their hegemony. It is this semiotic and aesthetic practice of new gentrifiers which calls for a visual approach. But it is also the fact that different classes organise the meanings of their space in different ways, projecting their habitus and sense of place into their neighbourhoods

(Harvey (1989) in Krase 2012, 29). Different competing groups make their own mark on the cultural landscape of the cities, and this is intimately tied to memories, both personal and social. For Dolores Hayden,

*urban landscapes are storehouses for these social memories because they frame the lives of many people and often outlast many lifetimes. (Hayden 1997, 9)*

It is the use-value piled up in cities that interests me as it has been displaced by the exchange value of profitable land. In order to make cultural and material displacement visible, we need to equip ourselves with some innovative, more visually grounded tools. I use these tools to elicit memories and affective reactions of people as urban landscapes change under the cycles of creative destruction of capitalist change. A contention of this research is that photograph-based analysis can help viewers/readers to understand the concealed links between 'things' and people as well as the 'heritage' they hold. The sort of existential trace that 'things' carry within themselves is, in fact, always entangled with tradition, memories, and nostalgia. Photographs do speak to our inner self in a pre-conscious and irrational manner. They trigger sensations even before these can be named and given meanings: what Derrida (in McMullen 1983) calls the 'ghostly dance' which haunts our consciousness.<sup>76</sup> 'Things' have on their own surface, so to speak, an Aristotelian imprint of their past. However, because of their re-shuffling in social fields, 'things' get loose, affective and material connections re-established or built anew (Thrift 2008). It is the power of social encounters and photo-based interview, I maintain in this chapter, that determines affect and the circulation of emotions in the first place (see also Ahmed 2004).

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76 For a counter-argument on the efficacy of photographs in depicting concealed aspects of what is immediately available to human eyes - 'the unspoken and the unspeakable', as Knowles would have it (see also, Knowles 2000, pp.18–23) - see Emmison et al. (Emmison 2000, 10), according to whom, 'to the extent that images are a conspicuous part of the seen world, then, they constitute data for investigation in exactly the same way as all other visible phenomena. To repeat: our argument is directed against the view that the features of the social world must be photographed before they become available as data for investigation'.

I also use walks in order to recall everyday cartographies of local residents and passers-by. Therefore, the rim that I follow is never geographically determined, mapped by zoning boundaries imagined in council departments or development agencies. Rather, it is unpredictable and changeable like walking can be: it draws its own patterns and creates different situations. Walking generates sudden encounters as I move across the city. Sometimes, walking meets obstacles, new enclosures or areas made private, but it can react to this by way of trespassing, jumping, and moving around: walking is unpredictable and anarchic. It also varies according to the time of the day or night, or even according to seasons. In my experience, it was often the tidal time that needed to be taken in consideration, as well as the peculiarity of the river front being so open to elements, especially wind, which makes it less easy to be experienced during winter months. Crucially, walking does not hinder but actually stimulates thinking. Feet put in motion other senses and these encourage ideas. According to Solnit (cited in Sandhu 2007, 15), walking does not stop the walker from wandering in their own thoughts.

Looking for the material texture of place, rather than its semiotic meanings only, is a pragmatic exercise, as Lefebvre has insisted (in Donald 1999, 13). Affordances, physical as well as social, of surrounding environment are not immediately grasped by language, but neither by appearances only. What I propose here is a dynamic geography, which maps place in conjunction with the power geometries (Massey 2005) and the histories which intersect and form its space. This dynamism is given not only by the tools and realist artifices I deploy to narrate place/space, but also by simply setting in motion the actual practice of doing research. My fieldwork is experienced on foot, in unplanned walks.

## 'Combined Practices'

Recently, there have been many valid contributions aimed at theorising the importance of walking in regards to knowledge, epistemology, and research practice (De Certeau 1984; Dobson 2002; Ingold 2000; Knowles 2010; Pink 2008; Solnit 2000). However, I want to stress something more peculiar in the way in which I experience landscape on foot, that is in relation to the camera: an aiding tool for research and a prosthetic extension of the very act of seeing. There is almost nothing instinctive and perceptive in seeing, despite common understanding of vision as both an involuntary and – therefore – a true sensual perception. There is a long-standing tradition within western philosophy and its 'episteme' which links vision to truth (see Jay 1993). Which moreover understands vision as involuntary and unsolicited. I have posited methodological problems for the visual (that is one rationale of my practice-based research) in a wider discussion of what I have called 'critical photographic realism', in which 'truth' and 'real' get disentangled. What instead I want to stress is the peculiar way of walking with a camera or to take photographs during the walk.<sup>77</sup>

Whenever strolling through city is mentioned, urban scholars have to come to terms with the ambiguous figure of the *flâneur*, historically attached to decadent French poet, Baudelaire. I cannot possibly share intellectual agreement (neither less 'embodiment') for mainstream ideas of 'the *flâneur*', seen as a detached and dispassionate dandy walking the urban metropolis. His (rather than 'her') excessive attention to aesthetics is pushed to the extent of making his own lifestyle a matter of curiosity *towards* the others as well as eccentricity *for* the others. I have some concerns about this character, simply because I am/have been very involved with

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<sup>77</sup> Similar, but also different, to Pink's analysis of walking with video camera (Pink 2007): even if I appreciate the sensorial approach led by the mechanical device (which I develop in this chapter) I don't suggest any kind of embodiment with the subjects of such encounters or with the landscape.

the field, as both a displaced resident and a caring father. That means I have been sharing the affective and practical sides of the incoming gentrification, the practicalities of coping daily with disruptions, demolition, and new architecture. This has necessarily implied an empathetic attentiveness to social phenomena and local people's concerns that cannot be measured only by surveys or rendered by placing myself in the perspective of a neutral observer, physically and existentially untouched by his surroundings.<sup>78</sup> Moreover, my arguments on seeing takes very seriously into account an interchange between senses. This leads towards an attachment with place that has very little in common with the classic notion of the *flâneur*.

However, I agree with Jenks (Jenks 1995) who suggests that we can rescue a certain idea of the *flâneur*, as a way of seeing and knowing urban culture. The paradox of the *flâneur* is that he/she puts at the centre of knowledge the act of seeing. However, by the very act of walking the *flâneur* contradicts this centrality, hinging on all the other senses and their interconnections. Walking defies seeing as a detached and purified way of knowing. Rather, it recasts seeing as a multisensorial bond with the landscape. In this sense, the *flâneur* represents more than a specific gendered person, a visible witness. The *flâneur* stands for a 'metaphor of methods'. This metaphor calls for an attitude towards knowledge and its social context grounded in the everyday movement through the urban landscape. It stands for a cognitive behaviour which is at the core of a realist epistemology (Jenks 1994, p.148). There is an inherent discontinuity in the 'rhetoric of walking' (Certeau 1984), which is made by both, even simultaneous and apparently contradictory, movements of choosing, for instance, where to go or who to meet and of mixing up spatial signifiers through the very use of them (e. g. by taking shortcuts,

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<sup>78</sup> See Honneth's discussion on 'reification' and 'second nature' (Honneth 2008).



or making unsolicited associations between the most grand architecture and the most common action, etc.). Even the *flâneur*, as a pedestrian, while walking in the city, has his own style, which is a sort of language which speaks about the city and takes part in creating its meaning. While walking in the city, the pedestrian gives new meanings to places and streets which are not the same as those originally assigned to them. Walkers create the meaning of the urban space by applying their imagination on it through the manner in which they move about the city, 'linking acts and footsteps, opening meanings and directions' (De Certeau 1984).

Quite surprisingly, in his books which collect comprehensive essays on different ways of walking, Tim Ingold does not contemplate what we can call the 'modern *flâneur*', that is an urban stroller equipped with a camera device (Ingold 2000; Ingold et al. 2008). It seems to me that this character would instead be central in current practices of city wonders, especially due to greater affordability and smaller size camera offered by digital technology. Obviously, ways in which uses of photography are put in place in the city can be very different, ranging from tourism to policing, all the way to visual ethnography (Tagg 1993). In conclusion, the supposedly automatic relationship between the medium and what is seen during the walk is less evident than it first appears.

There are some other limitations, or opportunities, to be discussed on the role of photography in relation to the practice walking. On the one hand, affordances of the walk adjust choices around the technology to deploy, whether tiny digital camera, or more sizeable formats, or tripods, and so on. On the other hand, walking is also planned around a certain 'script',<sup>79</sup> that is by having a certain vague idea of what to photograph. Maybe something seen before, often from the top floor of a double decker bus, or in a completely different occasion. Something that sticks in the back

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<sup>79</sup> I borrowed this idea from Suchar (Suchar 1997), however I use it in a quite different way.

of a photographer's mind like loose elements of dreams; something which haunts the photographer until the moment he or she comes to terms with it. Moreover, it is a specific use of photography which enables pace in walks: this is made of frequent stops, moments of contemplations, adjustments, climbing or trespassing and sudden changes of direction. Walking and photography are 'combined practices' (Cardullo 2011) which influence each other and determine distinctive ways of proceeding; a method in its own right.

In conclusion of this chapter, I want to re-instate that my photographic practice wants to move beyond a discourse on pure aesthetics (the discourse of art) or objective evidence (the discourse of science) (see Sekula, in L. Wells 2003, 450). It is radically contextualised and emplaced. It speaks of East Greenwich neighbourhood, its shops, buildings, bridges, and objects, the materialities of this landscape; of some of its residents in 'flesh and blood' with their peculiar social practices; and it is reflexive, as most work of art is, speaking of a personal transformative quest in a determinate period of my life. The capacity of photography to record the transient moments and the critical experience of the photographer are in fact always connected with the particularity of place, time and temperament which resists generalisation. At the same time though, the outcome of my practice aspires to be something other than a pure biographical account. It wants to show a way of engaging with people, objects and place which can be transferred in to other contexts. In order to work around this tension, I talked in this chapter also about audience, 'agreement of discontinuities' (Berger et al. 1982), and the strategy of dissemination I chose for my photobooks.

The mixed methodology I deployed (photography, walking, elicitation) substantiates

the theory I engage with (cultural displacement of working-class values and practices). Theory, however, informs a peculiar way of knowing the world. The intertwining of practice and ideas is ever so important when we account for an epistemology of seeing that goes beyond the visual in itself and embraces the texture of reality. A critical photographer is not a distracted by-standers, or an abstract artist. Rather, they project human social value in their quest for 'reality'. Through their sensory and engaged activity they express a historical determined perspective.<sup>80</sup> On the other hand, the experience of practice determines almost organically a critical analysis of such experience (see Marcuse 2009). In the following three chapters I want to give an example of the way in which a 'critical' use of photography and a 'critical' theory of gentrification, as a cultural and material displacement, can work together.

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80 Here, I follow Marx's critique of abstract idealism, as it is expressed in the 'Theses on Feuerbach' 1845, V.

## Chapter 3. An Ethics of Encounters

### Introduction

This chapter focuses on the dynamics of the encounters I had with local residents, occasional passers-by and workers – in between random occurrences, studied photographic scripts, theoretical underpinnings, and photography as an amateur practice. It is a central chapter which drastically switches gear from the previous ones, which are much more theoretical. Moreover, it supports the rationale of my work in many ways.

It firstly addresses the work produced by encounters met during my fieldwork. In fact, I understand them as always productive of affective reactions. At the intersection between people, objects, theoretical studies, and photographic practice the genesis of my research project becomes a story in its own right, narrated via those encounters. These are therefore both a necessary element of the social practice of walking<sup>81</sup> and a catalyst for production and detection of affect.

Secondly, such encounters have produced a reflexive engagement with the issues of this research. Coloured with own emotional reactions to urban encounters and changes, reflexivity infused my perception of others, the world around my practice and my own self. Formulation of questions, let alone formulation of answers, is situated and, therefore both methodologically and epistemologically, it is very

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81 For Certeau, encounters form a sort of 'contract' between the walker and other people. Walking is a bit like 'spaces of enunciation' which imply a referent, somebody to talk to. However, walking can also turn into an utterance of the speech act, showing its intrinsically anarchic aspect as an interior 'mobility within the stability of signifiers'. In other words, encounters can become the unplanned and generative way of making space and 'fieldwork' (de Certeau 1984, pp.97–99).

important for me to state where my own situated gaze has been. While writing this chapter, I felt that by stating how I came to be involved by issues of class analysis and belonging, gentrification and displacement, I would provide the critical reader with more tools in order to assess and appreciate what I am writing. This chapter is reflexive also in the way that it wants to be a simple exposition of the work done and of the difficulties encountered. I have therefore recompiled here the chaotic kernel of my fieldwork, narrated via my research diary notes. They account of how this research and my photobooks were created. Not as an objective and scientific work, but as a lived ethnographic and artistic creation entangled with the life of its author.<sup>82</sup> I therefore write from within my own experience and engagement with the field. In a sense, this experience is part of the 'rhetoric of walking' (Certeau 1984). It has its strengths but also its own limits: if meaning starts mostly from within experience and not outside of it, it is therefore limited to that experience and can hardly transcend it. But this experience is also generative, as I have repeated many times. It has had an impact on the way I conducted my research as well as in my own development as a critical participant of my own study. In the following sections there are more or less explicit references to the researcher's presence and to the stance he takes.<sup>83</sup>

This chapter does another important work. Thirdly, it gives contextual nuance to the lives of the few participants whose exerts I chose to analyse in depth. All together, diary notes, assemblages of voices, found objects, fragments of memories, and photographs render the texture of a complex and multi-layered urban landscape at the moment of its dramatic and sudden change. I write below the details of such encounters, the engagement with people and landscape which makes my research live. With this mindset, I privilege some aspects of this trip through industrial ruins

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82 (Harper 2012, 47–51)

83 See for instance my discussion with Scott, manager of the demolished Syral, or my intervention at the Maritime Museum with its curator, Sayer.

and open public space of riverside, the emotional turn in which people's reactions suggest the 'might have been' or the 'it used to be'. In the next chapters, I will show how 'bad feelings' related to this kind of regeneration often entangle with people's own memories of place and practices. They certainly exacerbate mine, at a moment of rupture and displacement in my own life during my fieldwork, when I had to leave Greenwich and move elsewhere.

Finally, I want to narrate my fieldwork highlighting the intersection between people I have encountered, theoretical development of my research and photographic practice. People I have met so far on and around the Peninsula, mostly during my solitary tours of the area, are all very symptomatic expressions of different moments of my research design and methodological approach. These encounters in turn informed choices on series of pictures I have taken and readings I have done. By revisiting notes from my research diary, and triangulating these with theoretical readings and photographs of such landscape at the moment of its dramatic change, I aim at giving a vivid realistic portrait of this area, revealing its texture and the social practices that make it so unique for some of its users.

Thanks to this fruitful combination, walking and photography, I found it possible to render the texture of the place of my fieldwork, establishing an almost *haptic bond* with the landscape, something other than mainstream iconography. This has historically been depicting detached views of panorama, from landscape paintings to contemporary real estate advertisement. The dominant representation of the river Thames has been sustaining models of wealthy lifestyle, marketed for and appropriated by middle-class residential expectations.<sup>84</sup> My photographs instead maintain a direct, almost haptic, and often unplanned engagement with people,

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<sup>84</sup> Obviously, also royal representations of the river have insisted on detached vision as a moment of affirmation of their power. This tradition seems to be still in place.

objects, and places. Events (and encounters) produce space. But also the events that don't take place, inherently possible, at least in our imagination. Uncanny spaces created by ghostly matters (Gordon 2008), dreams (Pile 2005), and repulsion/desire (Cardullo 2009).

My own position as a displaced resident is there, throughout my artistic and academic production. It is intertwined with people's responses. In the practice of interviewing research participants questions come before answers and both are situated. I want to make this clear, and I repeat over and over again throughout, that my work does not call for objectivity or truth. My 'data', made mainly by photo-induced interviews, informal encounters and personal visual observations, rather want to sustain a path to truth. They paint, like the almost endless strokes of an Impressionist artist, a picture which resembles and reflects the complexity of the site under study. I offer a radical interpretation of the life in the tiny neighbourhood of East Greenwich, which sits in between one of the largest regeneration projects carried out in this country and one of the most famous world and royal heritage sites. Ultimately, it is the reader/viewer who will decide to what extent to agree with my analysis. One last thing I want to stress is that the notion of 'data' I deploy is other than the tradition 'evidence' implied by mainstream sociology, whether in the form of quantitative survey or textual analysis. This is why it is always used in inverted commas.<sup>85</sup> My work instead has to be taken in consideration in a holistic way, weighting the complex interaction between my situated gaze as a photographer, people's own views, and readers' own experience.

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85 I agree with Bourdieu that the 'evidence' of conversation analysis seems to 'completely ignoring the data of the immediate context that might be called ethnographic (which is traditionally labelled the 'situation') (Bourdieu et al. 1992, 226). Paraphrasing Sandhu (Sandhu 2007), my fieldwork equipment is made of a pair of trekking boots and an always obsolete digital camera.

## **Genesis by encounters**

The first person I spoke to about my project was the sculptor Richard Wilson, author of an artwork inspirationally (and rather ironically) called 'Slice of Reality', a half ship sitting at the northern end of the Dome, on the Greenwich Peninsula. Richard was one of the very few international artists to be asked to leave a permanent installation, an artistic object, behind and this is typical of the first wave of regeneration of the Peninsula: big commissions, big names, big projects. The unique occasion was offered by the historical opening of the Dome, at the fatalist date of the end of the previous Millennium (yet another 'gentrification frontier' created for East Greenwich).

I met him by chance, during one of my bike rides on the riverside. At the time, in fact, I was mostly interested in the possibility of 'play and discovery' (use-values of public space) offered by the riverside, still partly untouched since its industrial decline. I used to ride with my young son, and often took pictures of chance encounters, especially of young people (Cardullo 2007; Greenwich Council Communications 2007). At the time, I was mostly driven to the partly derelict industrial landscape with a sense of wonder, imagination, and discovery. Industrial sites attracted me on many grounds, the archaeological, the aesthetic, and the adventure, which also reflected some of the emotional landscapes of my own childhood, between play and work experience, family narrative and present social location.

When Wilson invited us to jump on board, it was with great curiosity and excitement that we started exploring the ship. We chatted behind a cup of tea in his three storey studio-deck about the peculiarity of the area, and we shared some worries for the enormity of the incoming Master-Plan, especially for the riverside. Unfortunately, I



did not have my camera with me: the art installation would have been a brilliant scenario for some excellent pictures of the ocean going sand dredger. The artist has in fact cleared the body of the ship by 85%, carefully sectioning her deck, clearing her bow and stern, to leave only the habitable central parts. He refurbished these with pool table, bar and other comforts of contemporary riverside living.<sup>86</sup> As I learned later, Richard's aim as a sculptor is after all 'to tweak or undo or change the interiors of space'.<sup>87</sup> From the West side of what is left of the sand dredger I could see Greenwich white buildings, in the distance, and some rusty barges, much closer to us. These and the workers I met working around them will be the subjects of my next photographic project (Cardullo 2010).

My approach to photography was at the time quite opportunistic, close to a reading of the real as magic and perfectly composite, *a la* Cartier-Bresson. Certainly, there are some photographs in my portfolio, especially the early ones, that do resemble the 'decisive moment' in which, by chance or by devotion, I simply captured what was instantly available, stop-freeze action of people in the streets. The prevalent ideas of this perspective is that the photographer, even in the best of his/her intentions, is a 'bystander', an external and innocent witness of the chance, the flâneur overlooking the crowd from a neutral stand-out point, as an outsider (Westerbeck et al. 1994).<sup>88</sup> As my practice became more focused on the topic of gentrification, these opportunistic shots have disappeared in my later work. Arguably, this is due more to a change of methodological attentiveness responding

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86 Instead, Toby Butler (now Lecturer at UEL) associated the artwork with voices of dockers in his Memoryscape project: <http://www.memoryscape.org.uk/Dockers11.htm>

87 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard\\_Wilson\\_%28sculptor%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Wilson_%28sculptor%29)

88 Things do happen by chance sometimes and the elements of the composition might come together in perfect harmony for a masterpiece shot. Even so, there are technical choices, post-production elements, dissemination constraints and possibilities. After all, there is always an audience, their interpretation of the photograph and the associations they make with a narrative (and this within other sets of discourse). Too many other variables that either are not in the reach of the photographer or, by converse, depend exclusively on his/her unique choice.

to the necessity of a more structured way of approaching the medium, as well as to a shift of focus onto other details and subjects, rather than to a sudden disappearance of interesting subjects from the field.

Almost a year later, the steps were down during 'Open House' weekend. The sanitised ship looked a bit more rusty this time, as if the elements and the water had partly reclaimed it. There, I met a group of visitors led by a rather enthusiastic guide, who happened to be – as I learned later – Sarah, an artist in residence in one of the cottages along the Pilot Inn Pub. That terrace is the only one left from the Victorian period, the only few houses on the Peninsula to have resisted the slummification and the building of the Blackwall Tunnel. It is therefore protected and it is often brought up by developers and planners as an example of 'good practices' in conservation. I responded to an advert asking for participants for a creative writing workshop, and soon I was informed that the cottage hosting the workshop belonged to English Partnership (now Homes and Community Agency). Sarah in fact was also employed by them as part of a wider initiative aimed at forging a 'sense of place' in the community of residents on the Peninsula. Her job was to create a blog made by residents who would tell their own experiences and memories of the place, in order to make a 'soundscape' of the Peninsula, alongside the artist's own writings.<sup>89</sup> I was also introduced to Vivienne, coordinator of Arts on the Greenwich Peninsula, an office created *ad hoc* in order to fund and direct artistic projects in the area.

It was to my great surprise that I didn't find any of my two pieces of creative writing included in the blog that was being created week by week. Therefore, I started engaging in a critical dialogue at distance with the mentioned artistic project, writing

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<sup>89</sup> The outcome is available on line, at <http://www.almostanisland.blogspot.com/>

and taking pictures from my own perspective on my photoblog project: <http://kiddingthecity.org>. I might re-frame this phase as the point of 'perspicuous contrast' of the vision, in which "the possible human variations would be so formulated that both our form of life and theirs could be perspicuously described as alternative such variations" (Taylor et al. 1994). For instance,<sup>90</sup> while a post by the funded artists in residence was celebrating the livelihood and the diversity of the newly built Millennium Village, by considering the amount of post left in somebody's letter box, I matched this with a photograph of the entrance to Faraday Lodge (a few blocks away in the Millennium Village), in which I highlighted the grid-like, impersonal, cold and number-detailed entry phone to assert exactly the opposite. The same happened for the photographs of "School Bank Approach" and "Child Lane" in response to poems from 'local' schoolchildren (done in cooperation with the artist and uncritically assumed to be evidence of the community in-the-making), celebrating the wildlife of the Peninsula. These examples also show a change in my photographic practice: I was not trying to freeze a single 'decisive moment' for a gallery wall, but rather I was shooting with a more articulate project in mind, a blog first and a photobook later.

At this point, the Millennium Village, around which most of the community imagined by the developers seemed to gravitate, became for me a new frontier for my studies on regeneration, and I started looking at readings around 'sustainability', 'urban villages', and 'New Urbanism' (Campbell 2002; Corbett 2000; P. Jones 2008; Silverman et al. 2006).

This is also the period in which I started visualizing architecture and design as spaces of oppression, on one hand, and uncertainty, on the other, reproducing the expectations and tensions of an imagined community in the minute details of the

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90 see Cardullo 2009, 49–53.

street furniture, in the overwhelming billboards of the marketing campaign, and in the carefully designed school-place. The aim of this kind of photography was mainly the deconstruction of a dominant discourse and public visual sphere; thus my subjects became more the symbols and the signs of urban change.

In this period I was involved in making my own photo/web log and I started frequenting an informal drop-in workshop on Linux-based software at the Greenwich clock tower building (ex, and now abandoned, town hall). There, I met a group of hackers and compute enthusiasts who introduced me to the Free and Open Source Software world, and the hands-on, learning-by-doing kind of approach to computer technology. I therefore became part of the Open Wireless Network (OWN) which spreads free broadband connections over the neighbourhoods of Greenwich and Deptford, and installed a 'node' in my own flat. This gave me also a chance to meet and befriend an other important name in the genesis of the Peninsula art projects: artist Christian Nolde, author of the Greenwich Emotional Map (Nolde 2009), a project done in collaboration with Independent Photography (now Streamarts). Christian applied a device on the participants' wrist, able to capture the Galvanic reactions of their skin as reflections of their arousal as they walked around the Peninsula. This was later to become an interface for personal mappings, interpolated with a more 'objective' satellite device (GIS, a Geographic Information Systems which includes mapping software). The group of participants also took their own pictures and were then invited to discuss the findings in focus groups and individual interviews.<sup>91</sup>

One of the most appealing elements of Christian's project is the psycho-geographic

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91 This visually intruding map is available for download at: <http://www.emotionmap.net/>

approach entangled with a technological device, and the visualization resulting from the experiment. As I have argued with the artist during our passionate discussions, this represents also the limit of his project as it leaves too much space to the computerized interface to produce 'data'. However, by looking at the map which was generated by the software, I was struck by the high pitch (in blue, meaning more attention, sweating, arousal) which all the participants reached at the junction with the infamous A102M crossing and flyover, in East Greenwich. This was going to be crucial for the development of my project as I started thinking of walking along it, and visually engaging with the gentrification 'physical rim'.

My best photographs at the time came from the south-west side of the Peninsula, split by the motorway leading to the Blackwall Tunnel and crossed by some footbridges, which supposedly ought to link the two neighbourhoods. This is the 'physical rim', a very visible boundary which splits neighbourhoods and paradoxically makes the 'sustainable area' look even more eccentric. As some commented, the Peninsula project has been treated as 'an in-fill site in a local town centre' (Campbell 2002), as 'almost an island'.<sup>92</sup> This is the period when I started developing visually the idea of the 'gentrification frontier'<sup>93</sup> and reading around 'abjection'<sup>94</sup> and 'filth'.<sup>95</sup> The series of pictures I took there are generally evocative, pushing the element of affection (repulsion and attraction) even further. They are in-between neighbourhoods, but they also attempt to bridge two suspiciously different words.

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92 This impression is also shared by a contemporary research report carried by the CUCR: 'There is a sharp contrast between the shiny, high profile developments of the Peninsula ward and adjacent East Greenwich. Most of the large scale regeneration is happening on the Peninsula side of the ward'. (Rooke et al. 2011, 14)

93 See (N. Smith 1996; N. Smith et al. 1986).

94 See (Douglas 2002; Stoekl 2007).

95 See (Cohen et al. 2004; Crook 2008; Sigsworth et al. 1994; Stallybrass et al. 1986).

In May 2009 a commuter died under the flyover on her way to work, her bicycle crushed by a lorry, and a friend of a friend was offered counselling for having seen the woman's torso splattered on the tarmac. I started reading on-line blogs, articles, and other sources around the episode and got in touch with very concerned members of the public, bloggers and cyclists. I took my own photographs of the 'ghost bike',<sup>96</sup> the memorial left by the Greenwich Cyclists, and dedicated my photobook to the victim of that dramatic accident. Incredibly, the bike was recently removed, maybe by the same people who put it up in the first place, but then anonymous residents put another one back. The same year, another very unfortunate incident happened about one hundred meters away from the spot where the first accident occurred, one week before Christmas: another cyclist was killed by a lorry and flowers, photographs, and various memorabilia (teddies, football shirts, handwritten cards) can still be seen attached to the railings for what seemed to be an old and popular resident of East Greenwich.

At this stage, I started doing some archival digging of the parliamentary debates around the building of the ring-road A102M, and I found pamphlets produced by the GLA in 1971 to inform residents of the grand scheme on the way.<sup>97</sup> By juxtaposing the cardboard-like models of the proposed plans for the motorway and the MPs objections to the then Secretary for Environment, Mr. Michael Heseltine, and of course by taking my own photographs of the 'event', I travelled back and forth in time in this intruding and dramatic urban 'tour'. Here is an extract from one of the debates at the Commons:

*If one looks at the motorway map for London one can see that this network*

96 (Cardullo 2009, 72-74).

97 See Cardullo 2009, 10-17.

*will cause a tremendous change in the character of London. It will isolate thousands and thousands of homes. We shall be involved in the destruction of many houses...The prospect of 40- and 50-ton lorries coming off the motorways and going through Plumstead, Charlton and Greenwich fills me with horror. (W. Hamling, 1971)<sup>98</sup>*

Around that time, I watched 'Lottery of the Sea' by Allan Sekula (Sekula 2006), discussed by Alberto Toscano in various workshops and seminars at Goldsmiths. It seemed to me that Sekula's work is highly relevant here since he is able to capture history, biographies and capitalist structure in one narrative. He does that by using a confluence of more stories linked to the common trait of the sea. Somehow, the film convinced me that I was on the right track. The film prompted me to insert, for instance, the series of photographs of the lorries, which I purposively kept in colour in order to differentiate them from each other.<sup>99</sup> They symbolize, in my intentions, the connections between globalization and urbanization, the ebbs and flows of commodities in the era of containerization. The traffic, the huge infrastructures of tarmac and the bridges residents use in order to cross it and get their errands in the near Sainsbury's, play all together with this very idea of visibility/invisibility. What is concealed has been moved downstream to the new docks, leaving visible just the spaces of consumption and commodification (e.g. supermarkets). What is at play here, in my view, is also the dialectic between industrial and post-industrial societies, which seems to be particularly relevant in this period of transition of East Greenwich and Peninsula neighbourhoods.

With this framework in mind, I added also some colour photographs of workers doing the physical job of cleaning and maintaining the eco-village, a place where they can probably never afford to live.<sup>100</sup> I decided on the colour rendering in order to put them in a context of everyday-ness rather than in an abstract, timeless black-

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98 *MOTORWAYS London, House of Commons Deb 15 December 1971 vol 828 cc746-64 746v.*

99 (Cardullo 2009, 68–69).

100(Cardullo 2009, 52–53)

and-white aestheticism typical of documentary photography of people at work (Stallabrass 1997; Strangleman 2008). Moreover, I think colour breaks the monotony of black-and-white pictures of the surrounding landscape where main concepts explored are lines, shapes, emptiness and distances. The other reason I found some similarities with Sekula's film is because of the pictures of filth. Their symbolic association with corpses reminds us of the materiality of stuff, the impossibility of total clearance by machines, the reliance of slow hand-work of picking up the waste. Paraphrasing Sekula, I hint at the possibility that the huge machine of 'sustainability', here a parody for 'gentrification', is still heavily reliant on slow hand-labour. In this series of photographs, there is also a concern with other senses, in particular touch, smell and sound, which traffic, waste, and filth can recall brilliantly.

Working with Sekula in mind also involved engaging with a particular 'realism', more explicit than the realism of the appearances or of the 'social facts': rather, with the realism of everyday experience in a context of advanced capitalism. For instance, the foot-bridges which cross the motorway can be conveyed in many different ways. I do have a series of pictures of the bridges in many weather conditions, and at different times of the day, which therefore show them as being the outcome of my personal representational (and aesthetic) choices over many possible others. However, there is also an element of materiality in the insistence of the imaging of the bridges as a basic idea of crossing, connecting or – rather – keeping apart, since



those are the ultimate functions of bridges in most of people's everyday experience.

As a result of a conversation I had in the Pilot Inn one night during a quiz organised by a local art project (Streamarts),<sup>101</sup> I decided to walk on the Peninsula and take some photographs at an unusual time for me. I was told in fact that a big concert by Britney Spears at the O2 was due to finish, and I thought there was a chance to take some pictures of young people lounging around the famous fountains and steps of Peninsula Square. I managed to get there just in time to see the youngish audience leaving the concert. After taking about ten photographs,<sup>102</sup> I was approached by stewards who were busy channelling the concert crowd towards public transport.<sup>103</sup> They warned me that I could not take any photograph and that I risked being 'arrested'. To my surprise, they were really determined to stop me. After some polite responses, I was soon surrounded by two security guys, who threatened to confiscate my camera and physically removing me from 'private property, belonging to O2': apparently, any enquiries and permissions for photo-activity there has to be approved by the land owner.<sup>104</sup>

Browsing through my photo-archive later on, I noticed that I had taken (as in fact I remembered quite clearly) a photograph of a small plaque just near the outdoor stage of the square, according to which:

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101 See more details of Sophie Hope's Ph.D. Research project here: <http://criticalfriends.sophiehope.org.uk/>

102 See Cardullo 2009, 34-37.

103 A very similar scenario happened during the Olympics, also in Greenwich (Equestrians). Market traders complained for a drop of revenues due, among other things, exactly to the efficient crowd management policy (BBC News 2012). Undeclared goals of this intervention seems to be the avoidance of people gatherings.

104 A similar experience is reported by the Greenwich Green Party blog (Chamberlain 2010) about one year after it occurred to me.

*No right of way, public or private is acknowledged over Peninsula Square. The ways on this land have not been dedicated as footpaths nor there is any intention to so dedicate them'*

The image is rather small (I was shooting in jpeg format at the time) and blurred by movement, one of those you just want to bin and take again. Fortunately I didn't because, when I went there explicitly to re-take that shot, I could not find the plaque.<sup>105</sup> This might have reflected a positive change in the policy of management of the square, or more likely only a marketing move while the policy is maintained in place *de facto*.

After this last 'tour', I really started thinking that the northern part of the Peninsula had become an example of a 'revanchist city', and started reading about the policing of public space.<sup>106</sup> The sensation I want to convey with this last set of photographs<sup>107</sup> is also the uneasiness of navigating through a space which is rather empty, very geometric and organized, and devoid of the embarrassing presence of the social subject: the anxious and paranoid space of Le Corbusier's triumphant modernism, which Anthony Vidler has so brilliantly associated with 'claustrophobia in the face of the old city, but also, and linked to this, that fear identified by Simmel – the fear of touching' (Vidler 1992, 58).<sup>108</sup>

Soon after I finished the photobook on the Peninsula and its 'rim', I started taking photographs of the dismantling of the largest industrial compound left there, Syral, formerly called Tate&Lyle (Cardullo 2010). The work of demolition was being carried

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105 This episode tells a long story of the difference between a 'fine art' project and a 'sociological' one. Or rather, it is all about the discourse in which photography is embedded. See Sekula (in L. Wells 2003).

106 See (Colomb 2007; Lees 2008; MacLeod 2002; Raco 2007; P. Rogers et al. 2005; N. Smith 1996).

107 See Cardullo 2009, 30-37.

108 These impressions are shared a couple of years later by one of my key participant, Amanda (see section 'Home sweet home' in Chapter 4).

out by a company from Yorkshire, for the sum of 6 million pounds. Before, though, the leftovers of the plant were moved to France's other Syral's estate, and 150 workers were made redundant. My repeated attempts to obtain permission to enter the complex and take photographs, from both the demolition company and the Syral head-quarter in France, were dismissed on Health&Safety grounds. Remembering my previous experience with security, I tried to walk around unnoticed, and disguised myself as much as I could into a worker, wearing a high visibility jacket, a helmet and Wellington boots, and going around the perimeter of the complex early in the morning.<sup>109</sup> One morning, on the way home, I walked to the nearby boat repairing service on the riverside by the demolition works, where three men were soldering and grinding around a rusty barge. There, under the rain and with the mud up to my heels, I spent two hours taking probably my most interesting photographs so far (Cardullo 2010).<sup>110</sup> These workers were methodically clearing parts of a pontoon from rust, bit by bit, almost totally by hand, while nearby huge powerful machines were crashing to pieces the largest industrial complex in the area. What makes those series of photographs even more dramatic and surreal is the surrounding soundscape, which my montage hopefully manages to render.<sup>111</sup> On the one hand, the inexorable rising tide makes the barges shriek by pulling the ropes they are tied to. This also determines the tempo at which the job has to be carried out. On the other hand, sudden clangs and blasts dominated the air as parts of the plant were taken to pieces and destroyed. It seemed to me that those migrant

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109 My presence around the site soon became more familiar to workers of the demolition company, and I had a chance to talk to a few of them as well. 'I have been to Italy, you know – a man told me – beautiful women there'. He then started singing some Italian songs before letting go the crucial tip off of the time when the explosion of the silos would happen (Cardullo 2011, 64-65).

110 See Cardullo 2011, 40-63.

111 The importance of the aural contextual to the visual is a long-standing tenet of a multisensorial approach to knowledge. In addition, I have recorded noises from the riverside which are available from my blog: <http://kiddingthecity.org/blog/?p=1287>. The idea is that the viewer gets a more realistic impression by listening while browsing the photographs. I have to stress that this is only another realist fabrication since the sound has been recorded in a different moment and situation from the making of the photographs.

workers, whose lives happened to cross my research on the gentrification of East Greenwich neighbourhood, were doing a Sisyphean job while incredibly more powerful movements of electronic capital were deciding their and other workers' destiny (see also Sekula 2006). Their precariousness – in terms of status and jobs – was only enhanced by the dismantling of the nearby industrial plant as well as by the alloys only temporarily cleared from rusting.

I had been working silently, while these people serenely accepted me moving around in this surreal encounter: almost no words were exchanged and none of them spoke English, but a few gestures were enough to establish some level of reciprocal trust. I was particularly pleased when, later on, I emailed some of the photographs to one of them, who wrote his email address on the barge with a piece of chalk. I thanked them for having given me their images, for accepting me around them, and for the gift of returning their gaze back to my lens (see also Back 2007).

This encounter, and a couple of very brief subsequent ones, had been crucial in starting dismantling my romantic attachment to industrial ruins, with a burst of 'realism' from the side of the very workers I managed to immortalise on the camera memory card. The mud, the pressing tide, the fatigue and the horrible smell of the smoke coming out of the welding tool talked of a practice which encouraged other senses to become participant of this representation. In a way, they prompted an unfocussed vision and a more haptic engagement with the subjects of my photographs.

A few months later, I managed to meet Scott Benson, the person in charge of the demolition process for the Syral factory. All my attempts to meet him till then had gone nowhere. By the time of our meeting, only the central office building was standing while a few caterpillar machines were flattening the rubble of the vast plant.

Scott greeted me on the top floor office, once overlooking the compound, beside a large aerial photo of the Syral, in which the tall silos looked no more than Lego pieces for kids. To my surprise, he was so defiant that he even allowed me to take some photographs of the empty offices. Presumably, he couldn't imagine what I could possibly get from these. The amazingly suggestive photographs are now part of my latest photobook with extracts of our twenty minutes (*'Not one more, I am afraid'*) interview.<sup>112</sup> Sitting behind a long oval table, which once must have witnessed many heated discussions on the future of the industrial plant, Scott Benson, manager of the demolished plant and visibly annoyed informant in my quest,<sup>113</sup> could not resist to ask me one final question, once my dictaphone was already in my bag: *'Mr Cardullo, why are you doing all this? What will you get out of it?'* Despite of the many answers that came to my mind, I smiled and left him with his doubts, taking my very little revenge on over one year of his silence. Having been photographing the demolition work of the large industrial plant, somehow, made me part of a struggle which set the obsolete plant and the workers made redundant against the interest of private land owners and developers. In this sense, my emotional response to one of my (very reluctant) participant is also symptomatic of the way I related to myself and others during the fieldwork. It is clear to the reader, by now, that I had a personal and sometimes emotional investment in the whole research process. The emotional response is there to witness for my engagement with the narrative I was constructing, woven into the fabric of interactions I happened to be involved in. When I argue that encounters generate affect, I never mean that this would be the case *just for* my research participants.

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112(Cardullo 2011, 66–69)

113 I suspect that our meeting must have been imposed on him by higher levels in France.

Increasingly important for me, as my research proceeded, was to capture Mary Mills' thoughts and stories about East Greenwich. She has been Labour Councillor for Peninsula Ward for many years, but more importantly she is a unique historian of the industrial heritage of the London docks. I read her book on the industrial history of the Greenwich Peninsula (Mills 1999) and have been keeping an eye on her prolific web production – two or three blogs and newsletters. I befriended a member of the Greenwich Industrial Society, who took photographs from the inside of the then Tate&Lyle a few years earlier. However, his knowledge on the history of the site was so detailed around names of machinery, years of production, and other very technical details that totally obscured any other concern of mine about workers, social practices, and regeneration. His photo technique was fixed on black and white film with studied grainy effect. It seemed to me that his nostalgia for the way things were could not possibly be by-passed. The photographer knew Mary Mills very well (she is also a founding member of the Society) and he arranged for me to meet her. Mary asked me to meet in a place that became central<sup>114</sup> to my practice-based research of East Greenwich: a café hidden in a small park in an old cemetery, the East Greenwich Pleasaunce.<sup>115</sup> According to the side inscription, the corpses of over 3,000 seafarers who fought at Trafalgar were buried there (and then soon removed to make room for more affluent corpses).<sup>116</sup>

The Autumnal rainy day and the creepy atmosphere of this unusual park set the scene for our first formal interview. I nervously showed Mary my photobook (Cardullo 2010) and she started turning the pages in silence, occasionally nodding,

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114 It is crucial to my 'post-colonial turn' (see Chapter 5). That is, this place and the photographs I took of it a few months after my meeting with Mary Mills informed my understanding of Greenwich as a battleground for competing histories, different forms of nostalgia, and antagonist cultural values.

115 See Cardullo 2011, 75.

116 As I learned recently by browsing blogs from local people, this tiny park is the only public space for miles around Greenwich. It has been recently re-discovered by many families thanks to the fact that the more famous Royal Park has been shut for months during the Olympics (Equestrians).

and then suddenly said:

*When I started working in the Docklands, nobody did this sort of thing. It was completely new, we would be setting up programs, you wouldn't even consider it..now, everyone is doing it. It is interesting how things have moved on...You know, I have to turn down so many requests from students and researchers, because they don't have a clue of what they are talking about...*

In my reading of this passage, Mary suggests that there is something different in my request to meet with her, or at least in the way in which I approached the topic of de-industrialisation with my photographic project.

Mary talked for nearly two hours with me while the pelting rain prevented us from leaving the tea hut even if we wanted to. Dr. Mills, the historian and Labour activist, recalled anecdotes on life around East Greenwich, such as the time when she rescued boxes of minutes from the National Barges Unions meetings from the rain, while they were stored in the building of the local Labour Party:

*I put everything in the back of my car, and went over to the Museum in Docklands and I say 'please take this stuff because it is getting soaked and I don't know what to do with it', and I assume its still there. And if it were not for me, it would have been paper maché within a couple of hours....*

She gave me a few details about the regeneration process (planning, lobbies, people she cannot name, etc). I felt like she was in fact passing over to me some tricks of the trade, couching me towards who I should talk to next. Above all, I stress, she was able to communicate the sense of huge machinery working for gentrification: pools of professionals working for 'the urban process', taking it away from the 'polis' (Harvey 1978; also see Raco 2012):

*I just see the results at the end and clearly both developers and planners already have ideas in their minds about what they think or they are going to end up with...that process is something that goes on among professionals not among people like me....What happens before that process is down to the professionals, the developers, and the planners, so I couldn't comment. I have never been a professional, I don't really know what that process consists of... You have to ask professionals. Architects would know because they do quite a lot of negotiating*

*process...but the same thing would have gone on in the 80s, in the old days of the LDDC, I mean, that...that background process is hidden from everybody except from professionals involved into it.*

The encounter with Councillor Mills was also important for it provided me with a sort of counter-intuition. She made me understand clearly that I would not need to 'discover' the hidden 'urban process' but, rather, I could focus on the wrecked working-class people left behind by its bolstering tide.

The most incredible encounters of all happened again by chance along the riverside, totally unplanned, but incredibly fruitful for my research. In both circumstances it was the 'stranger' who came towards me, either curious about the camera I had secured around my wrist or asking some unprompted questions. That is how I met the most fascinating characters of my fieldwork, Joyce and Arthur, both working-class elderly local residents. Actually Arthur is an ex-worker and ex-resident, since he moved to the outer suburbs of Eltham back in the sixties. His touching story of direct displacement is addressed in an other chapter below, but I want to stress here how his presence there on the riverside, at the precise moment of its levelling, seemed to be a stubborn reminder of his resilient life around there.

His uncertain voice was barely audible, surrounded as we were by the demolition sites:

*This cobblestone was put up when I was young, and so all this [pointing to the industrial landscape in ruin]. Now that I am going, all this is going too... Where else can I walk?*

By pointing to the very act of walking as his last form of appropriation (De Certeau 1984) of this space in the moment of its dramatic change, Arthur seems to claim for one last time aspects of his working life and leisure practices along this stretch of riverside. His bitter remarks talk at the same time of an awareness of being



displaced<sup>117</sup> and of his resentment which refuses dominant discourses on gentrification as good-for-all.

Instead Joyce still lives in a pretty cottage on the sought-after stretch of riverside in East Greenwich. 'She is beautiful, isn't she?', she approached me pointing with her chin to a steam engined boat moving slowly downstream. It took me a few seconds to understand what Joyce was talking about, having thought she was referring to a real person. We both stared at the boat till she disappeared and then started talking. We were standing right outside the dockmaster's house and at the very end of the walkable path of the riverside.<sup>118</sup> On our right hand side, the Lovell's Wharf scrap metal site was already undergoing 'regeneration', transformed into a residential luxury complex with exclusive riverside views over Canary Wharf. In a few minutes we had an agreement about what will become a series of contacts and a lengthy more formal interview with photo elicitation and tour.

The first time I met Steve it was absolutely unplanned, again a random encounter. My new flatmate sent me a text in order to ask me to join him for a drink in a pub next to Greenwich market, one of those I carefully avoided for years when I lived there because it was usually full of tourists and weekend goers. My friend introduced me to Steve, who he knew well since they used to play cricket together at school. The reason why I asked to have a more formal interview with Steve and

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117 Twice actually, firstly when they had to move to Eltham and, one last time, indirectly when he feels that his life as he knows it has been taken away by the pre-Olympic regeneration (see following chapter).

118 She often seemed to resemble the ghost of the dockmaster who used to live in the large house attached to hers. During our subsequent tour of the semi-private garden outside her cottage (Cardullo 2011 6-7), she showed me the hidden steps he used to walk to get down to the river, and the corner from which he used to spot vessels coming into Greenwich. Working-class lives became exposed, coming out of their entangled narratives and memories.

his wife Amanda was not only because they are 'newcomers' to East Greenwich, but also because he told me his family used to live in Greenwich.

Our next and crucial meeting was in a more familiar pub on the East Greenwich side, just round the corner from their new small house, a few yards away from Lovell's Wharf. I was immediately struck by their (Steve's and Amanda's) geography of local dwelling places and pubs, which they ordered with hierarchical precision. It turned out, for instance, that their 'local' was noisy, with karaoke and shouting, and they were disappointed that many neighbours had complained, while the one on the riverside was 'posh'. It did not take long for Steve to narrate all the beautiful Christmases he had spent around Greenwich. It took even less for him to express his resentment about the perceived unfairness in the allocation of supported housing. He immediately linked his nostalgic remembering of 'old' Greenwich with the sense of being cut off from both 'new' Greenwich (middle-class glass architecture facing the river, in their own words) and the small portion of new houses being reserved for social purposes ('affordable housing'). In both instances Steve reacted by putting forth a hierarchical sense of belonging, linking his family's recent history with a sense of community, heritage, and place. This encounter and the series of interviews I had with Steve and Amanda determined a new direction in my latest research. They prompted me to look at the presence of nostalgia for the missing Empire in Greenwich, and how this would influence its residents' perspective on place, urban change, and the Olympics. Therefore, I started looking into other and more official narratives of remembering and searching for motivations

around celebrated histories (see chapter 5 about the regeneration of the Cutty Sark).

During the celebrations for Diwali (the Hindu festival of lights) at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, for example, I met Sayer, curator of the museum's archives. The first curiosity I wondered about by going there was the reasons why Greenwich would celebrate a Hindu festival. On that occasion, particular efforts were put into the event because of the concurring opening of a new permanent exhibition, inspiringly called 'Traders'.

Sayer was waiting in the new multimillion pound wing of the museum for participants for his talk on 'Lascars', Asian seafarers who served on imperial ships. I was the only one who engaged with Steve, and now I think that it was a bit of good luck since Sayer let himself go in a series of harsh comments about: the organisation of the event (how he had to push the management to accept his talk and how this was squeezed into an unsociable time for museum goers); the politics of archive (*'all the stuff that is in there and that will never make it out here'*), and profusely about the new exhibition (see chapter 5). It seemed to me that his very presence there, solitary but dignified, insisted that history is not something that only exists as we choose to imagine or preserve it in the present. Rather, history can be resistant, contrary and alien too.<sup>119</sup>

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119 The latest big exhibition launched in Greenwich is 'Royal River', curated by controversial David Starkey. Lord Sterling, Chairman of the National Maritime Museum triumphantly stated on the museum website: '2012 will be a remarkable year. In addition to the momentous occasion of The Queen's Diamond Jubilee, Greenwich will become London's new Royal Borough and a major venue for the 2012 Games. *Royal River* will be the first major exhibition in the Museum's new Sammy Ofer Wing in 2012. It gives us great pleasure that this exhibition has been sponsored by a great British bank, Barclays.' <http://www.rmg.co.uk/about/press/royal-river>

## Detouring the “tours”

I have been developing the idea that my own interpretation of a changing neighbourhood would not be enough for an articulate discussion on the effects of these changes, despite being aware that my own position within the field was engaged and actively participant. The theoretical framework I am moving through suggests, in fact, that place can be perceived, understood and lived in many modalities by different subjects, or even by the same ones in different settings and scales as well as at different times of the day.

The strategy I have been adopting so far is mapped within the above stories, which give a heuristic impression of the field of my research. This strategy comprises a double movement, at times contradictory, made of attempts leading to successful engagements and failures. On the one hand, I participate with enthusiasm in a work of 'botanization of the asphalt' (Dobson 2002); on the other, I sketch my own 'scripts',<sup>120</sup> once I know what I am looking for and why. The former concerns with the spontaneous, introspective, and almost erratic wandering around. Walking is a 'cathartic experience' of the self, an attempt to appropriate the urban field in all its complexity, in a Situationist vein. The latter is made of more consciously planned walks, of photographic subjects that I want to explore and develop, and of ideas of place (or aspects of it) shared with the subjects of my encounters, what we can simply call 'tours'.

By 'tours' I mean the prior discussion with interested people (informants, passers-by, artists) about aspects of place or specific localities, before going out with the camera. The final output of the tour is again negotiated: photo-elitication can be seen, in fact, as a middle ground tactic that shares meanings between the

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<sup>120</sup> For a discussion on 'shooting scripts' see Suchar (Suchar 1997).

photographer – who, in my view, remains in control of the visual representation – and the informants – who guide the former throughout the experience of the tour. According to Bendiner-Viani (Bendiner-Viani et al. 2007) urban tours offer the right mix of researcher-photographer-led reportage and interviews. The photographer navigates the places with the residents, who illustrate and talk about places before, during and after the representation process. In this way, the autonomy of the researcher (and/or the ability of the photographer) is not completely compromised, leaving at the same time some considerable room for discussion, intervention, and exchange with the interviewees.

A rather more problematic way to do 'tours' with informants, on the other hand, is by way of performing 'embodiment'. This has become a meta-concept in social analysis<sup>121</sup>, and often used to encompass the reflexive engagement between ethnographer and their participants/field. For instance, visual anthropologist Sarah Pink (2008) suggests that 'by attuning her or himself to other people's practices the ethnographer might be able, through his or her embodied experience, to make and thus to comprehend the places she or he seeks to analyse'. How can a researcher reflect *tout court* the lives of others, their senses of place and their personal way of experiencing the phenomenological environment of their everyday material practices to the point that s/he becomes 'the other' by embodying them?<sup>122</sup> Scholars have pointed out how reflexivity is a partial and imperfect way of knowing, and the mythology of 'embodiment' works better for some bodies than others (e.g. Skeggs 2004). Moreover, Bourdieu explains that habitus is more than simply a repository of practices, rather it is also an unconscious 'system of enduring dispositions'

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121 For Csordas (Csordas 2008), embodiment starts from positing the body as an object of culture. It is the 'existential ground of culture'; but, whose body is it? And, which culture?

122 I think here of Mitch Duneier's seminal work on the pavement of Greenwich Village in NY, for instance. Duneier so comments of his relationship with informant and co-author, Hasan: 'Yet Hakim and I both know that, in the end, I was the author. Our experiment does not alter that fact and the responsibility it implies.' (Duneier et al. 2001, 352).

(Bourdieu 1990, 55–56), which bodies learn with time (it is 'embodied history' (ibidem)). That is, habitus describes also a method of apprehension, a scheme of perception of the world which, first and foremost, depends on class (Bourdieu 1984, 372–373). It was my own habitus, rife with previous leisure and work experience, that became the way through which I research place and through which I managed to encounter my research participants. This sort of 'haptic bond' can be best framed with the trope of 'attunement'.

'Attunement' is the opposite of a detached, passive and reifying vision (Honneth 2008). It is a metaphor of engagement with the research subjects, which privileges direct experience over representation (Csordas 2000). Attunement is a craft that entails trust (see Back 2007). Walking helps to develop an attentiveness to the world as well as to the life of 'others' we want to describe in our ethnography. This practice, I argue alongside others (Back 2007; Pallasmaa 2005; Pink 2009; Thrift 2008), favours a multisensorial approach in which vision can only represent one aspect of the process of knowledge construction. This knowledge comes rather from building a haptic bond with the landscape, thanks to time and direct engagement. By walking and encountering people, nature and objects, researchers are more likely to develop empathy towards their field. This process involves care and first-hand expertise, rather than staging a contemplative observation (*a la flâneur*) or a god's eye view (as in surveying and mapping). The critical realism with which I conducted my fieldwork is at odds with the cognitive praxis of reification of his/her participants, striving instead to attune the researcher to the fine grain of social life.<sup>123</sup> My research-diary notes provide the reader with a contextual perspective of the field which I have been moving in for the last five years. They also witness my intellectual and positional development which would have never been such without those

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123 For instance, see the discussion on 'reification' by Honneth (Honneth 2008).

encounters.<sup>124</sup>

At least in my case, the situation – the chance occurring or imagined, the path clearly drawn or the uncanny feeling of discovery – has often been determinant as a way to engage with the field. Encounters are expected and welcome events in the genealogy of my research – I make 'an ethics' of them. They also generate 'data' for the simple fact that they occur; that is, they make my field 'live' without me having to represent it.<sup>125</sup> This is, I maintain, the strength of my analysis, which fosters a mixed method, of visual/walking ethnography. By applying unstructured and performative geographies, that is, unplanned walks and actions unfolding as the fieldwork develops, I could reach a middle way in which the documentary pretension for the search of the 'truth' meets with the overwhelming practice of 'handing over' the camera. The latter has been increasingly seen by researchers as a remedy for postmodern critiques of ethnography, and by developers as a panacea for community-building and place-making processes ('ticking the boxes', see Raco 2012).<sup>126</sup>

Art projects can be seen at times as a tool which might empower people or they can be used by developers as an evidence of community consultation. In relation to the prolific art work done alongside the regeneration attempts made on the Peninsula, in particular, there has been the clear impression that the consultation work carried out in the form of small art commissions has been instrumental to and compliant with the regeneration process. In a research carried out by the Centre for Urban and Community Research, Alison Rooke so concludes the report:

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124 Similarly, anthropologist Ricabeth Steiger took her own pictures especially for a project she was conducting, but 'her theoretical orientation and working hypothesis were liable to change during the course of the research in response to what her subjects said or did' (Banks 2001, 199).

125 On the difference between language and experience, semiotics and phenomenology, see Csordas (2008).

126 There is a sense in which 'community' consultation becomes the end in itself of an increasingly hysterical search for political correctness, what has been framed as a debate on the 'tyranny of participation' (see Mohan, in Cooke and Kothari, 2001).

*There is a risk that this approach to understanding arts participation can become a new mode of instrumentalism. There is also a risk here that governmental agendas, which see art as a contribution to the Big Society, may employ a version of citizen participation in community activity which promotes art work that risks being insipid and innocuous and compliant with well-behaved citizens. (Rooke et al. 2011)*

I contend that in this scenario of rampant state-led but developer-built gentrification my research can indeed supply a discordant, yet refreshingly radical voice, among the chorus of state and developers commissioned art production. My research design is in fact anarchic in its conception and boasted a mixed method approach. A performative geography of encounter, because it is generative, does not pretend to resolve tensions of authority between voices, but rather it admits that none of the research actors knows all the truth. However, being agents in the social world themselves, critical social scientists and artists participate in the creation of the contexts in which their theories and art work are publicly verified. It might well be that when the latest 'gentrification frontier'<sup>127</sup> has been implemented there will be chances to look at my photographs in a way which would initiate a public process of self-reflection on the conditions that led Greenwich to transform its riverside so dramatically. It might then be that different perspectives can be foregrounded around this overwhelming process of urban change and on the public discourse created around it.

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<sup>127</sup> At the moment of writing, it is the Olympic Games. However, a new jetty for cruise ships, replacing Enderby's Wharf, has already been in the rumours of local bloggers.



## Chapter 4. Lovell's and Surroundings

### Introduction

In the previous chapter, I narrated the chaotic kernel of my engagement with people, objects, and territory of the East Greenwich riverside. I mostly worked with my research notes, with my photographic archives and with first-hand impressions, producing some 'thick descriptions' of the field and the people I met. I reflected on the critical role that myself had within such encounters, being both a photographer and a displaced resident. I also suggested that among some of the people I met, as well as in my own emotional space, there was a slow-brewing sense of resentment towards the regeneration process of the Greenwich Peninsula.<sup>128</sup>

In order to start unpacking these emotional configurations, I will focus in the present chapter on two groups of key participants. I will analyse their responses to our long conversations in respect of their space of dwelling, their everyday geographies, and their emotional reactions to gentrification. In so doing, I also continue the theoretical debate on social classes and on more appropriate methods of studying them.<sup>129</sup> I have split this chapter into four sections, which cut across the interviews I recorded, the responses from bloggers I contacted, the many encounters I had with residents and occasional passers-by, and the series of photographs I took in my longitudinal fieldwork. I start with delineating the profile of my two main characters: Steve, who works in the City as a solicitor and Joyce, who looks after a small semi-private

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<sup>128</sup> I will return to this in the final Chapter 5.

<sup>129</sup> See Chapter 1.

residents' garden on the riverside. They both live in the area of my fieldwork, which I generally refer to as 'Lovell's' from Shaw Lovell, a shipping company who had a metal transshipment business there from the 1920s until its fairly recent closure. The second section aims at articulating the interplay between residents' riverside practices and geographies, while the third one investigates their disposition towards spaces of living. I mainly follow the work of Chris Allen (Allen 2008a), although I make the point for a more power-based model for the study of the market for houses, which focuses on the symbolic value attributed to river views, as discussed in Chapter 1. In the last section, I draw some conclusions on social classes, suggesting that qualitative approaches, focused on everyday practices and materialities, are best tailored for an understanding of social classes than quantitative analysis based on categories of income or employment.

Layer by layer, I propose particular moments of these stories as a foreground for global movements of capital, resources, and work, which necessarily shape the new face of East Greenwich. This specific territory, with all its peculiar history and very grounded geographies, also becomes symptomatic of processes of urban change in modern capitalist cities. The material process of urban change – closures of paths and roads, the related practical problems for everyday circulation, constructions of new buildings and shops, demolitions of historical industrial sites, as well as its shifting interconnections between developers, residents, owners, workers, and council officers – frame these conversations in a way which calls for its visual rendering. The wealth of details contained in the interviews and the photographs that accompany this written work (Cardullo 2009; Cardullo 2011) are important elements of a realist storyboard. Photography is a powerful tool, which can visualise cultural and symbolic battlefields of the new city and it is particularly effective at making indirect forms of displacement live and real.<sup>130</sup>

130 See my discussion on Critical Photographic Realism in Chapter 2.

## Roots

If I analysed my interview with a young married couple in East Greenwich by way of following the mainstream inventory of class, based on their 'simple gradational notions' (Wright 1997, 30) - that is, if I was looking only at their professions or labour relations – telling Steve's and Amanda's story would have been a much easier task.

*Q: What do you do for living at the moment?*

*S: I am a lawyer and I work in the City..*

*A: I work in marketing for [major charity], at the moment I am based in Central London..*

Their professions, which for Census-like analysis equals class and status, came first while transcribing their interview. That is, by following a linear time-line on the media player their class belonging would have been clearly assessed as 'middle-class'. It would also appear so from their residential preferences, which are the right complement to an occupation-based framework:

*S: I guess partly the appeal of Greenwich for us was that it is easy to commute in and to the City. We are young professionals, and I guess Greenwich does appeal that way, good transport links....*

The reason I asked Steve for a more formal interview was because of his family links with Greenwich and the riverside. His story gets interesting because the 'white working-class' stamp on Steve is rather indisputable, following a pattern familiar to many inner Londoners.

*Both sides of my family have a history in Greenwich. My grandfather from my dad's side used to live in the Hardy's cottages, by the petrol station and by the Naval College. On my mum's side both parents were from Greenwich and South East London area, I think originally Deptford, and I think originally my granddad had a lot of family in Deptford. As it was the way at that time, everyone tried to move out of London towards the suburbs. So both sides of my family moved out towards Bexley. My mum grew up in Plumstead and*

*Deptford, she went to school in Greenwich, a quite good school back in the sixties, she went to school very near from where we live now, just up the road, and she moved out around 1970 towards Bexley where my dad lived. His side of the family moved out of Greenwich at the end of the 50s.*

In particular, one episode was striking for the passion and respect which was evoked within, since Steve put great emphasis in retelling this story:

*My grandfather's father worked on the Woolwich docks as well. He was a boxer and there was this story that granddad just started working in the docks when he was 15-16, when he was called: 'C'me on, your dad is in a fight'. His dad was standing over a bloke, this guy on the floor, and he asked another fellow: 'What happened? What happened?', 'Oh, I've never seen someone being beaten up so quickly'.*

Boxing was, and in some respects still is, a popular sport which does not require particularly expensive equipment, but good technique, strong discipline of mind and body, and the use of physical force, the same muscles and disposition used on a daily basis to carry out the work duties on the dock. I could see Steve's pride at recalling these episodes that must have been told over and over again as part of his family's history. He talked at length and with pride about his family's origins as truly manual workers and 'proper' Greenwich residents, two aspects of the interview which became crucial for my analysis:

*They worked for the local economy, along the river. My mum's dad also worked in the docks, in Greenwich and Woolwich, he was also a boxer apparently...yeh, then both sides of my family were river workers in and around Greenwich.*

The first insight Steve seemed to have from our conversation was that *both* sides of his family were local manual workers (and boxers), almost to reinforce his sense of belonging. I am insisting on this because they never tried to distinguish themselves from their families, apart from the geography of their respective jobs:

*We came here to live not to work. There's a big difference with my grandfathers, they used to work and live in Greenwich, we work in central London and we came here because it was good to get to central London. My dad works for the local government as a lawyer, my mum is a teacher. They kept links with Greenwich more as a past time, they used to go out here – my mum went to school here – and socialised in Greenwich, they might have*

*stayed in a pub in Greenwich. We used to come up here for Christmas, just because it's a pretty place.*

These first sentences about Steve's family and his current profession, as well as their geographic movements in and out of inner London, would endorse Hamnett's thesis of 'replacement' rather than 'displacement' of working-class residents (Hamnett 2003). A sort of evolutionary movement toward a better position in the occupational structure would not have left many manual workers behind (which Hamnett identifies immediately with 'working-classes'), while a new generation of professionals would bring back into the inner-city middle-class expectations and preferences, shaping the demand for housing and services. Their reasons to move to Greenwich also seemed to confirm that reading:

*A: We knew Greenwich quite a lot, we used to hang out with Steve's family, and at Christmas...Greenwich's brilliant, it's got amazing transport links... And it's reasonable and we knew the area, it's very nice around here. The important thing for me is that I had to feel safe at walking home at night, and I do around here. You know, you still get a lot of different people around here, it's not only young professionals, you got people who live in the council houses, you've got the unemployed, you've got families, you've got a real mix, and you still feel there is a bit of community as well. We just like to be around here...and there's the river, there's a bit of centre as well.*

That could have been the end of the story. But I was not convinced, not just because I was getting to know Steve better and better, since our pub encounters and local walks grew into a sort of a friendship, but because the couple's position within the social spaces of the market for houses, their residential preferences, and their local geographies are highly ambiguous, hard to fit into any sociological trope I have mentioned so far. Our chat could have ended in the first 5-10 minutes, the same time span informants take to fill in compulsory Census questionnaires. However, by the time I got to the end of the interview and especially in the final part, when I practised some photo-elicitation, the pace of the conversation had changed dramatically, becoming more introspective, emotional, and confidential. Their cosy communitarian feel and rather romantic description of Greenwich would have soon

given room to the complex struggle for meanings between memories, expectations and own present location in the cartography of urban changes. It was clear to me by then that this couple were speaking class throughout in a relational way. By using their position in the residential market for houses they were locating themselves in a contradictory way towards either end of the spectrum of preferences.

Also my other key participant, Joyce, seemed to have a quite harmonious relationship with the surrounding material and vernacular landscape. She lives on the riverside in a small 'charming' cottage right next to the much bigger and older Harbour Master's house.

*All these houses belonged to Morden College, we all rented from Morden College. In the 1990s, they sold all these properties to anyone who wanted to buy them, and I managed to buy mine, then.*

Joyce approached me during one of my walks pointing to an unusual steam boat passing by. She was curious about the photographs I was taking of small objects and seemingly irrelevant details on the shore. Despite being there for the last 30 years, she still referred to this mostly dismissed industrial landscape as something belonging to other people, such as her neighbours (*'I came here when it was all over'*). This seemed to be because she had never worked on the docks:

*I haven't lived among the Docks or experienced the poverty, people who used to work here, they have done.*

However, her narrative is deeply entangled with neighbours' experiences and working practices, as well as with the objects that give texture to this peculiar landscape:

*J: Mrs. W. and her husband, who was the crane driver at Lovell's, [used to live in] one part of the Harbour-master' office. In the other part lived one man and his wife and they both worked at the offices of Lovell's... By that time,*

people were owning their own houses, you know...there's no one here now who is one of the **original local people**. When I came, there were quite a lot: Mrs. W. and the other neighbours further along, who were the old people who knew when there used to be a crane running along the edge of the water here on Ballast Quay.

Q: The mobile crane?

J: Yes, the mobile crane, I think the tracks are still there buried under the earth, under quite shallow earth...

Q: What happened when they removed the mobile crane?

J: Well, I wasn't here then. It was already gone and there was already that little garden made by one of the ladies who lived around one of these house. **Not one of the older, one of the new incomers**, I shall say. She had the idea to make it into a little garden, and plant that tree... I remember it been planted, I think I was here then, just a narrow little sapling.

Q: And now it's huge...

J: It's enormous, and when it was planted the lady said she didn't even know if it would grow, cos there was a lot of concrete and rubble and stuff... Obviously, it has put down **tremendous roots**, it's a tremendous tree.

Here the crucial term 'original/older' (my emphasis in bold fonts) is linked to a specific mix of occupation and dwellings, from which Joyce takes distance, but also talks about in rich details and with a great deal of respect. This tension seems to be described also by reading the apparently innocent narrative of the sapling tree as a metaphor for change/endurance (*I think I was here then, just a narrow little sapling... tremendous roots, tremendous tree*). She seems to acknowledge all along the positive elements of change from a rather rough and unforgiving landscape (*poverty, concrete and rubble*). However, Joyce seems also to have assimilated the industrial past of East Greenwich as hers, she blends in with dignity, nostalgia, and a practical, easygoing, even haptic sense of belonging that is somehow remarkable. When she speaks of her neighbours, the old dockers who used to live nearby, the objects she collects from the riverside, and the local projects of preservations, Joyce involuntarily becomes a repository of such memories.

Q: [walking around the neighbourhood] Where would this anchor come from?

J: The lady who made the garden got hold of it when there was a lot of stuff lying around, you know, before they cleared up the docks and everything... It's very special, there's something about it, very beautiful... That's the harbour-master's office... This part of the garden belongs to Morden College of course but it is rented by a lady. She looks after the garden, then local residents have their keys. She comes here every morning.<sup>131</sup>

Joyce's remembering sometimes seemed nostalgic and romantic, like the photographs that adorn the walls of her cottage, depicting the cranes of Lovell's site at dusk or at sunset (Cardullo 2011, 72):

*I have got more on this side... I had to stop at some point, otherwise I would have never stopped [taking photographs]. That's got the actual date on it: December 1995. That's because they are illuminated in a quite different way at the sunrise, than at the sunset. I was very chuffed with this one... That's the sun setting over there and that's the reflection on the window on this side, so I found that absolutely fascinating.*

However, her geographies are precise and speak of her continuous engagements with the landscape. Her surrounding world is made of practices and materialities which are very direct and tangible. She has a very practical disposition towards life, for instance when she talks about how she makes her own chutneys from the vegetables she grows on her allotment, just a mile away ('the only time I use my old car', she admits, nearly as an apology). A couple of times during the interview she disappeared upstairs, proudly coming down in a sort of childish excitement with objects collected on the shore, tools or parts of jetties consumed by a colourful rust, dried plants with unknown names or stones of a very peculiar shape (Cardullo 2011, 76).

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131 Joyce's flow of emplaced memories and details and her textured embodiment with use-value of landscape seemed to resemble Calvino's tale of the city of Zaira, when Marco Polo famously explained to the Khan how 'the city contains [its past] like the lines of a hand, written in the corners of the streets, ... every segment marked in turn with scratches, indentations, scrolls. (Calvino 1972, pp. 10-11). This messy and continuously changing aggregate that we call 'city', according to Calvino's metaphor, is constantly absorbing a myriad of memories and re-defining itself, just as a memory transforms itself throughout history. Little details of previous lives and landscapes might become the very way in which people understand and value places.



## Riverside

In every interview I conducted, questions of engagement with the spaces of the riverside, the kind of activities or practices put in place alongside it, and its symbolic value in the space of the market for houses, were central. It is fascinating to record the contrasting dispositions towards the riverside and how different people have different practices around it in their everyday life. From what I have seen, this space is contested not only because agents use it in different ways but also because of particular representations local authorities and government agencies have given of it.

In the present section I argue that, while the Thames riverside has a vital role for working-class people's practices, such as leisure time and occupation, this is always linked to some practical uses (e.g. beach-combing, dog-walking, 'school-skiving' and, of course, work). Moreover, I investigate how for new more affluent middle-class residents it is rather the riverside symbolic value, in terms of investment in property or panoramic views, which really counts. The way in which this symbolic value is put in place, maintained and exploited by developers and agencies is, in my opinion, better unpacked by visual methods. With the aid of my photobooks I argue that, in order to acquire and legitimate hegemonic symbolic value, working-class people's practices linked to riverside being open, public, and easily accessible, need somehow to be diminished, prohibited, and devalued. I will demonstrate this by way of using two sets of interviews with my key participants as main source, with two old working-class residents and with two young professionals who recently moved to the area.<sup>132</sup>

In first instance, Joyce talks a lot about her wondering on the foreshore,

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<sup>132</sup> Please also refer to my photobook (2011) where many extracts of these interviews are presented along photographs of places and objects they hinted to (walking tours) or have been inspired by (photo-elicitation).

*Q: Do you sometimes go along the riverside?*

*J: Yes I do go sometimes, quite often on the beach too, but I am rather careful now. I was more adventurous years ago. I could have gone down the ladder, but now I don't... I always find rusty tools or clay pipes, more towards central Greenwich though. Not to mention planks of wood, and great poles, you can find all sort of timber that you can make things with....*

Also Arthur, who is an old ex-worker of Lovell's Wharf and ex-resident of East-Greenwich, makes no mistake about the therapeutic and nostalgic role that this part of London has in his life. He is now retired and lives in the outer suburb of Eltham. Similar to Joyce's way of remembering, his nostalgia is also made of very practical actions, walks on the riverside and occasional chats with workers or passers-by like me.

*You see this path [pointing to the old bike route]? This has been unchanged since at least I was little. Now I am old, I still come around here nearly everyday, you will see me around, where else can I go?*

Unfortunately, I didn't have a chance to meet Arthur again, possibly because the river walk has been shut for over a year due to demolitions and, more recently, to the building of 'urgent anti-flood defences' (Environment Agency).<sup>133</sup>

It is rather peculiar that at this specific moment in the history of this part of London, coinciding with the incoming Olympics and with the crowning of the borough of Greenwich as 'Royal', a riverside path, which has been basically untouched for nearly one hundred years, becomes suddenly 'unsafe', 'unhealthy', and in need of 'urgent repairs'. Mary Mills, Labour Councillor for East Greenwich and Peninsula, writes very recently on her blog:

*We have all been a bit taken by surprise that the riverside path is again closed for the entire summer [over a year]. There had been no warning of this although it was known that there would need to be more closures soon.*<sup>134</sup>

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133 Still closed at the present (three years after my encounter with Arthur). The latest "urban frontier" (N. Smith, 1996) is now around the building of a pier for tourist cruise ships.

134 <http://marymarysdiary.blogspot.com/>

Another local blogger, who prefers to remain anonymous, suggests that private developers have learned from the past, closing off from embankment to embankment (from Lovell's up to the Dome), and with a much higher fence, to reduce 'any attempt of trespassing'. The complete closure of this tract of riverside has been feared by many residents, including myself. Mary Mills records this collective feeling in an exchange of emails following our interview:

*It has been with some shock over the past few weeks that people are realising that the walk is closed and that several sections of it will never be the same again.*

Lovell's site, owned by an almost feudal charity called Morden College, has an unhappy history of landowners ignoring local opinions: in 2001 its distinctive Scotch Derrick cranes were quietly removed because of supposed 'safety fears', with no interest in consulting heritage bodies, Greenwich Council, or local residents. They were thought to be the last two such cranes on the Thames in London. Long-term residents, Joyce and Arthur, have their own stories to tell about the derelict site of Lovell's, its young trespassers, and the authorities' response to their concerns:

*J: Kids got in there a lot, they were climbing on the frames and swing[ing] on the cranes, it really was that dangerous. I summoned the police a few times but it wasn't of much use...*

*A: They have been closed off for a while....might be because kids started climbing over and spray graffiti. They don't like that, so they closed off everything. Health and Safety, innit? Can't control everything....*

However, the same elderly interviewees remember this space as open, public, and full of possibilities,

*J: [looking at my photobook] If you go along by the river, you come across a sort of inlet which we used to call 'Rocky Bay' or something, and then went on straight for a bit and that is where the kids used to jump in the water and swim in the summer and have a nice time.*

*J: [pointing to my photograph] that's the foreshore, isn't it? I have been taking some children to play along there on the beach, and pick up things. You always find interesting things there.*

*A: [walking] We used to come down here a lot, me and my brother and all the gang. We had good fun, swimming in the river, and all sort of stuff...*

It is worth recalling how many of my own photographs were taken exactly in this location, showing kids at play, running around, cycling, taking dogs for a walk, or even 'doing the Titanic thing' over the edge of the embankment, and how much graffiti was displayed on these now demolished walls (Cardullo 2011, 16-29). I would argue that the descent of Health and Safety regulations upon this stretch of the riverside in this precise moment is not accidental. The technical way of knowing and making sense of the city has produced a calculated response, considered to be appropriate for the present situation. This knowledge is acquired from risk assessment reports made by planning officers or by panoramic views from the top floors of governmental agencies: 'representation of spaces', as Lefebvre would have it (Lefebvre 1991). The acquisition of a 'Jubilee Greenway' plaque seems to have put this place on the maps of technicians, and quickly been included into marketing materials.<sup>135</sup> This has started a process of regulation, which is hard to quantify right now. What is certain though is that visitors of the Olympic Games will be able to take a 'detour' from the O2 (the Dome) down to Greenwich Park, where other clutches of the Games are taking place.<sup>136</sup> The 'Greenway', on the other hand, might well guarantee the survival of this disputed pathway.<sup>137</sup>

*Q: The cobblestones path on the riverside of Lovell's...are they going to keep it?*

*M: They are puzzled by the possibility, pressure is mounting on developers to do so. Many people are aware a planning application is expected soon.*

*Q: Who are 'many people'?*

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135 This was yet another 'frontier' created around East Greenwich riverside.

136 <http://www.walklondon.org.uk> [The riverside is still closed off and the future of its footpath still unclear at the moment of writing my final edit].

137 'The Jubilee Greenway Walk marks Her Majesty the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the 37 mile walking and cycling route will link many of London's impressive Olympic Games venues.' See <http://www.walklondon.org.uk/>

*M: Pressure groups, many thinking that issues of conservation need addressing, because a mixed landscape is better for everyone. Greenwich Council has a long history of maintaining the riverside path as a right of way...*

Councillor Mills hopes now that the East Greenwich traders will benefit from access between Olympic sites using the riverside walk. Otherwise East Greenwich will be completely by-passed by the event, which, it is worth remembering, will only last for few weeks.

From information collected on public blogs, I have the impression that a very wide path is going to replace the existing one,<sup>138</sup> maybe paved by a green cycle route (Cardullo 2011, 12–15). There will also be a new embankment, whose rationality is to be found in both the presumed risk for Health and Safety and the preservation of local birds. Here, two sets of discourses – public safety and environment protection – seem to work together in order to sanitise this part of the riverside. In short, that could also mean that no public access to the river shore will be maintained. In the map by the Environmental Agency, which is carrying out the anti-flood defence works, the stretch of riverside where some kids (including mine) used to play is simply tagged as 'mud'. Indeed, according to the Landscape Masterplan (2007):

*A short section of existing footpath adjacent to Lovell's Wharf connecting the river at the south end of the site to Ballast Quay will be retained. This corner of the site possesses the distinct character of maritime Greenwich...the existing brick wall with the 'LOVELL'S WHARF'<sup>139</sup> inscription would be preserved.*

Maybe these few lines of the Plan made up for the developers' claims that the new residential complex is built on the 'historic Lovell's Wharf site'.<sup>140</sup> The use of 'historic' here is rather important in the context of this thesis and I will expand on this in the

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138 The design guidelines on the Landscape Masterplan approved by the Council when the scheme was agreed in 2007 seems to be very clear about this: 'The new Thames path route will be a minimum width of 6m at any given point and will incorporate a 3m wide cycle path'.

139 See (Cardullo 2011, 16–17).

140 <http://www.liveatLovell's.com/>

next chapter. Regrettably, these two 'distinct' features are both gone.

That a change in the Health and Safety policy is all around us is not something new to Sociology. The possibility that we live in a much more risk-aware society is often pointed out. My impression is that the protection of personal safety goes parallel to a reduction of personal freedom and the possibility of access to public places, becoming *de facto* the extension of intricate and fleeting power relations between regulation of body, the city, and its administrators.

Take for instance the welding place where I took most of the photographs for 'Doing Work' (Cardullo 2010; Cardullo 2011, 41–63). After a few months from the initial reportage, I went back into the dry dock to take some other photographs and attempting some photo-elicitation. The same person, apparently in charge on the workplace, that had invited me to go around any time I wanted to ('*You can come whenever you want, mate. It is open. If you wanna see some sparkles [welding] you need to come up when the tide is low, sometimes we start at six in the morning*'), was soon alerted by my presence and, despite recognising me, told me to leave immediately:

*It's gone wrong now. If you wanna come down here you need to ask the boss, and wear high visibility jacket, worker's boots and hard hat...it's gone bloody wrong, mate.*

Needless to say, my requests to 'the boss' have gone unanswered, so far.

It was again on Health and Safety grounds that, apparently, I was not allowed to enter the Syral site during its demolition, despite having pledged to comply with all the requested precautions and to be accompanied by the site manager. When I finally set foot inside the ex-industrial compound, by now an undistinguishable mountain of rubble crunched and flattened before my eyes (Cardullo 2011, 64–71), I put this to the site manager, Scott Benson:

*S: [pointing to my photograph] This is a picture taken from outside and around the site...*

*Q: Obviously, it was impossible for me to get in...due to Health and Safety issues, I guess?*

*S: Yeh, that was the problem... So that was it basically...so, you have been taking pictures of the new buildings as well?*

From what seen, the prolific use of Health and Safety regulations upon this stretch of the riverside in this precise moment is not accidental. It is rather part of a way of knowing the city which is the outcome of technical surveying and planners' practices. The lives, actions, and affective reactions of my participants sound like a cacophonist montage, compared to this much bigger game, which stretches all the way to global Olympics.

For Steve and Amanda, instead, the closure of the riverside has little or no impact in their daily understanding of place. They seem caught in the web of symbolic meanings attached to riverside living, since their geographies stretches more often to central London than to the local surroundings. These are rather an element of their leisure time inscribed in opposition to their work place. For them the river appears as a dramatic change of scenario from the usual urban environment of work and dwelling, because:

*A: It's a peaceful river, you spend so much during the week either on public transport or at work, you know, crossing busy roads, avoiding other pedestrians, sometimes it's just nice to have the space you can get when you live by the water. It doesn't feel you are in London, even if you see the London skyline. Sometimes it's just nice to have the space you can get when you live by the water. I really like the Cutty Sark [pub] when its a sunny day, just to sit outside and watch the world go by...I really like the Trafalgar [pub] too, it's got amazing views.*

The 'promenade effect' of the riverside is almost too evident in this account: pubs on the immediate embankment and views of Canary Wharf, which sits opposite to

Greenwich, are soon available for an evening out.<sup>141</sup> This way of experiencing landscape at a distance and as a detached reservoir of leisure time is a returning issue in the visual culture of the Thames. The classic iconography of the river is in fact full of panoramic views, promenade style sunsets, and royal demonstrations of power and privilege. Rather, I recall in my photos a busy and working river, as it would instead appear from the riverscape iconography of the Dutch masters' school.<sup>142</sup> The former perspective has been proposed over and again by the professionals of urban place-making. Panoramic views and god's eye surveys are the 'normal' geography from work places and from living space for an increasing number of middle-class professionals. In this context, the symbolic value attributed to the panoramic views of the river dramatically clashes with any practical, direct, and daily use of it.

Finally, for Joyce, river views seem to be somehow always embedded with practical actions. During our walk, she pointed to ships passing by and resumed the ghost of the Harbour-master by showing me the invisible trails of his working practice:

*[walking] That's the harbour-master' office. That must have been a very important look-out place for him and his work ... that's a brick shed which I think it must have been a check-in point for [incomprehensible]... at the end there, these steps down...I think he was checking the seamen going down to the boats tied up here, along that wall. On the other side, you will see, there were steps going down to the river.*

However, when I tried to re-contextualise her recollection of industrial history with the present process of regeneration, her reaction leaves no doubt in me that, again, that distinction of practices in relation to the riverside living has been played along

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141 Compare this extract with Hillary Peter's memories: 'We moved in in November [1963]. It was incredibly beautiful – misty and busy. The river was full of shipping. The wharves on either side of us were working.' (from Greenwich Phantom Blog). This extract might sound nostalgic and romantic, but Hillary was very active in her neighbourhood and her admiration for the surrounding landscape moved her to reclaim Union Wharf and build a little communal garden (now looked after by Joyce).

142 And yet the assumed accuracy of such iconography, thought to be taken from nature and painted on site, *en plein air*, is dismissed. As we now know, cityscapes have often been produced by artists who never visited the country which they represented.



the class line:

*J: [pointing to a boat] You see the boats all the time. And the commuters' boats, the new service [Thames Clipper].*

*Q: Do you take that one sometimes?*

*J: Not really. I get into London for free, but on that boat I have to pay. I am not sure if they are in the commuters' system, I don't know anybody who goes by boat... [walking] I had visitors earlier this week, and they came to Greenwich by boat, and they said that they enjoyed it very much ...*

## **Home sweet home**

East Greenwich, a neighbourhood with a rather long industrial history stretching down to current days, is changing fast, with waves of new private residential buildings, more sophisticated shops and more affluent residents coming in. This process, I argue, has not been neutral and the progressive displacement, both material and cultural, of local working-class residents has certainly been happening for a while.

In the current section, I look at my key participants' perception of their residential space in order to show how gentrification works and how it displaces working-class people both directly, for example as an eviction, and indirectly, as a cultural and material pressure for change (Marcuse 1985). Drawing on Allen's critique of class in relation to people's preferences for residential houses, I then unpack the contradictory space in which my key participants, self-proclaimed middle-class Steve and Amanda, are embedded. I suggest at the end that their class position is re-inscribed by their relational understanding of their own position in the space of residential living.

Arthur instead worked on the local docks all his life. Despite never mentioning the

reasons why they had to leave Greenwich, he sounded clear that that decision was not so much a matter of free choice.

*We had to move to Eltham about 20 years ago. I have always lived around here most of my life, I had to move only once when we were forced to evacuate during the war... We moved to Kent since we got married and moved back here for work.*

When talking about the riverside in the making, I provocatively suggested that it may yet work out for the better:

*Q: But they are going to build something...*

*A: Yeah, a lot of flats for people who can afford them... I liked around here, a lot of people around.*

This short answer is crucial for my analysis because it gives a clear sense of Arthur's understanding of the private property-led regeneration of the riverside. It is also remarkable because it adds to other people's points about the lively social environment of East Greenwich. By adding in the same sentence '*I liked around here, a lot of people around*', Arthur somehow assumes that the new expensive flats will not bring *that* sort of crowd he grew used to having around. Interestingly, he thinks that new residents will be less likely to create that dense and messy neighbourhood made of working activities, leisure practices and shared public space.

An indirect confirmation of this comes from Amanda, a charity fund-raiser in the west-end. She thinks that the new development on the nearby Peninsula is '*a missed opportunity*':

*It's houses or flats but when you actually walk around that road, its not much out there. But just it feels like being a bit of a gap...it just doesn't feel right.*

Some scholars might refer to this as a lost sense of 'community'. If we look at these memories with the aid of mental maps such as 'urban villages' (Dench et al. 2006),

then the call for the idyll of community imbued with nostalgia, 'the way things used to be', would be an insidious and dangerous reading of those overriding metaphors of space, place, and landscape. Any combination of such signifiers imply in fact a moral geography (D. M. Smith 2000) and a moral project, as I discuss further below. However, walking on the rim of this incoming gentrification, or by following it through some of the photographs I have taken in the past five years, one has the impression of a whole social world which has been disaggregated, put under continuous threat, and pushed aside. To an extent that one has to question, at some point, also the nature of such a process of urban change along the class line, what I have pointed to over and again as 'gentrification'.

A lot of cafés and pubs, for instance, have been demolished, reconverted into expensive flats, or simply walled-up and await clearance. That's how one of the residents talked about their local pub:

*...and there's the 'Royal Standard' on the other hand, and that is very much a local pub. And it's actually a lot of **local people** who used to live in the area and they have since moved out and that come back and drink in that pub. Rumours are that a lot of neighbours complain around here, they don't like it, because of the karaoke and other things.*

Immediately, the use of 'local' has to be questioned. This attribute seems to be attached to certain people rather than others. Even when these people have moved out of the area they are still somehow counted as being part of its vernacular landscape. On the converse, 'a lot of neighbours' that complain about the noise are not. I would argue that what happens here is not so much that a movement of people in and out of the borough has been happening as a consequence of the house inflation.<sup>143</sup> Rather, there has been a change in cultural norms, moral predicaments and values, of what is excepted (e.g. organic French delicatessen) and what is regarded as immoral (*'karaoke and other things'*). In other words, with

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143 'Replacement' in Hamnett's analysis of urban change.

gentrification it appears that a 'new' moral order, middle-class values, has been displacing a set of 'old' ones, working-class practices. Referring to their 'local' as the object of complaints from a newly formed residents association, '*because of the karaoke and other things*', Steve noticed how the changes in the neighbourhood become increasingly connected to the symbolic value attributed to the river:

*Pelton Road Owners Association, or something similar, complained a lot about it [pub with karaoke]. They have a club, and that's a real obvious tension between what I call the 'new' Greenwich and the 'old' Greenwich, and that's very much 'old' Greenwich ... and it's that proximity of the river: 'new' Greenwich right on the river, you have the 'Cutty Sark' pub very affluent, and you come two hundred yards in, you have an old Greenwich pub, and you find the old fashioned Greenwich people, old EastEnders and Londoners.*

This sociologically dense passage seems to recall a notorious and problematic debate on the authenticity of cities. As Jane Jacob would have it, authenticity is not just about the physical landscape but it has increasingly to do with the vernacular one, its combination of people and place. That is, people make places more than iconic buildings do (in Zukin 2011). The couple seem to me to identify themselves with the 'old' Greenwich crowd, even if more as a distant cultural identification than a practical everyday relationship. This distance ('*We are young professionals*') has at times the flavour of past Christmases spent at family and old friends reunions in pubs around Greenwich, or in tales of grandfathers working and boxing around the docks.

In my reading of Steve's and Amanda's interview, they speak class division not only as spaces for commuting, leisure, and everyday shopping, but also as the very surface of the built environment, looking at the choice of materials for construction. Talking about the Cutty Sark renovation project, which boasts a multimillion pound glass structure, the very visible contradiction in the built environment becomes clearly a metaphor to express disappointment with the gentrification of Greenwich.

*A: Greenwich is bricks, you know, more bricks and mortar rather than new materials, they say it's too modern.*

*S: Yeh...Glass structures are very much 'new' London.*

In their view there is a symbolic distinction between the two main materials that make up the housing landscape of modern Britain: bricks, on the one hand, are seen as part of a traditional, 'old' landscape of grandfathers working on the docks, whilst glass, on the other, is regarded as a symbol of the 'new' London.

The novelty of iconic glass-based structures, either for dwelling or for tourist attractions, clashes with the sense of endurance of brick and iron, symbolic resilience of a working-class culture which is still well present in inner-city neighbourhoods.<sup>144</sup> Glass, on the other hand, is symptomatic of the state of experience in post-modern societies: as a see-through material it gives the impression of experience, without involvement or direct action. The reality of the seen is there, because it is seen, but at the same time cannot be experienced directly, smelt or touched. All the direct and 'trivial' senses are kept at bay, while the most 'pure' of all, the seeing, is pushed to the extreme of its possibilities. Viewing without direct involvement helps to keep that distance which is crucial for middle-class 'pure' aesthetics (Bourdieu 1984, 487–500).<sup>145</sup> Sandhu's quotation in my photobook, that the Thames is a 'mere wallpaper, a backdrop to [their] manicured lives' of many new flat owners, made Steve nod vehemently in sign of approval, even if he confessed a scarce direct experience or geography of the nearby river bank (Sandhu, 2007 in Cardullo 2011, 46).

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144 In my latest photobook (Cardullo, 2011), I engage with uses of materials, differences in surface, and the evolution of the built landscape: all themes that seem to be very 'visual'. Indeed, I maintain the profound hapticity 'things' have and the possibility that photography offers for an 'unfocused vision' (Pallasmaa 2005). These surfaces and materials are best rendered by way of both taking photographs and criticising visual representation because of the priority it gives to vision in the hierarchy of sensorial experience (what I call 'critical photographic realism').

145 The scope of glass as an incredibly more popular material for construction is therefore not so much that of allowing more light in, but rather of dimming the outside world, which becomes an optional spectacle, a backdrop to the life of the inside (Benjamin 1999, [R1a, 7]).

I argue that in the context of our discussion 'old' and 'new' stand for 'working-class' and 'middle-class' people, and their cultural values or dispositions in relation to both the space of dwelling and to all the practices that irremediably come along: shopping, leisure, commuting, eating, etc. This is an important distinction to be made, because if we give to 'old' a strict temporal meaning, then we also have to admit that whatever is linked to this 'old' is gone or going forever. My argument, alongside many scholars (Skeggs 2004; Martin 2010; Allen 2008a; Fairclough 2000; Walkerdine 2001; Savage 1992), is rather that class and, therefore, working-class people are very present in Britain today (and in the western world more generally).

I maintain that 'old' Greenwich here means 'working-class cultural values', as they are hidden, pushed aside and evicted by 'new' middle-class ones in the gentrifying neighbourhood of East Greenwich. It is important to insist on this also because, despite having a decent income and a flat on their own right, Steve and Amanda still somehow feel dispossessed, evicted from their gentrifying neighbourhood. This again shifts the focus to the cultural aspects of scholarly arguments on class and gentrification.

In an other occasion, Amanda mobilises 'community' as a trope to narrate her fear of walking through deserted spaces and negotiating the huge roundabouts on the Peninsula, advocating mixed development as a possibility for successful streets.

*I feel a bit vulnerable around there...you know, if there were more shops, a bit more community feeling about it, I would feel fine. it's houses or flats but when you actually walk around that road, its not much out there. There are quite a few roundabouts...*

If we compare this line with what she first said about Greenwich (*The important thing for me is that I had to feel safe at walking home at night, and I do around here... You still feel there is a bit of community, as well*), we really have the sense of

a big shift in perception between the two parts of the neighbourhood under scrutiny.<sup>146</sup> In this context, talking of memories and 'community' can be a way of structuring a narrative about a sense of cultural displacement and deracination (Back 2009; Back et al. 2012; see also Ware 2008).

While Arthur's tale looks like a case of direct displacement, it seems to me that the residential position of this young couple is more subtle and complex. Steve and Amanda have been consistently affirming that their flat was never purchased as an investment but simply as a 'place to be', it is their 'home'. During the long interview they went back over and again, prompted occasionally by me, to the reasons for buying in Greenwich, and the reason was never any expectation of an 'up-and-coming neighbourhood' or of hopes of increasing their equity.

*S: We did not think of it as an investment, we thought of buying a home.*

For somebody who works in the City this is quite astonishing, I thought. Or were they maybe trying to please me, saying things I would have liked to hear from them? So I probed this further. Rather, they talked about and distinguished themselves from the attitude of others who do act in the market for houses as in a game for equity gains.

*A: A lot of my friends at the time went to live on their own and buy a place, 'Oh you will sell out in a couple of years and make a lot of money', and she did it, there in Bethnal Green. But for us, it was about buying a home.*

This attitude towards the market for houses seems to challenge, Allen's distinction between house as a space for dwelling – 'proper' working-class disposition towards the space for living – and house as an investment in equity – which is regarded as 'normal' middle-class behaviour (Allen 2008a). Drawing mostly on Skeggs' framework (Skeggs 2004) and partly challenging Allen's reification of class as an

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146 This is also reflected in my two photobooks (2009, 2011).

existential dimension,<sup>147</sup> I suggest that it is also important to point to how 'legitimacy' is re-produced. This is generated by the ability of converting taste into symbolic capital. Thanks to the work of professionals operating in the cultural, creative and media industry, as well as in real estate business, class identity in relation to urban residential and public space is reproduced over and again. In Benjamin's terms, they are the producers of a 'collective dream', the phantasmagoria of the city.<sup>148</sup> They create a form of 're-enchantment of the world' (Buck-Morss 1991) encompassed upon the theming of maritime Greenwich. Its 'maritime character' is often taken for granted and refashioned by present riverside uses for residential business and tourist attraction.

Instead, my participants seemed to be quite clear about the rules of the property game and were decisively rejecting them as not theirs. They were moving *in relation* to other people's expectations and at the same time feeling the strain of their own position because they were not able to match those very expectations. This contradictory space of class consciousness can be further unpacked by looking at their perception of riverside living. On the one hand, they see the nearby Dome-O2 as a way for future development. However, they position themselves as not being part of it, not-connected to a place which I describe as 'almost an island on the peninsula', a space for neoliberal exploitation of valuable land (Cardullo 2009). This is also expressed by Steve's following statement:

*It's a very strange stretch of land, it's a peninsula and it's in part derelict, and it's in an area where a lot of people would like to have houses and the land is used for nothing. And, it's odd. You know what they did? They built the Dome*

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147 See also the critical review by Glynn (Glynn 2009) which contests the essentialisation of classed behaviour in Allen's split.

148 This dream-work effect is obviously enhanced by computer graphics. On the other hand, digital manipulation reduces the capacities of imagination for it creates a distance between the maker and its object, 'by turning the design process into a passive visual manipulation, a retinal journey' (Pallasmaa, 2005:12). This reminds me of one architect in charge of the Cutty Sark refurbishment, who confessed to me that most of his partners, fellow architects, astonishingly 'did not want to come to this side of the river'. They did not need to be present in order to imagine and create their project.



*with the connections with central London in mind and not with Greenwich in mind. It's easier to get to the Dome from central London than it is from Greenwich...*

I want to stress that my analysis has been done with the spaces of the everyday in mind, the time of commuting, the spaces for shopping and leisure, of getting-by and coping practically: the space of spectacle instead is not something to be lived daily, but only in specific and special occasions. In the couple's interview there was no mention of the riverside as a space for any kind of mundane activity or dwelling. For them, as far as they are concerned, the riverside is the space of new developments; some demolition here and there of last bits of industrial estates, but nothing exciting. Amanda clearly sees the river as an excuse to make capital gains and speculations, and the new developments as quite dodgy places, lacking connections with the 'real' world of the everyday:

*A: We were quite noseey when we first built it [Lovell's Wharf]. They are charging an awful lot of money for one bedroom flat which has a sliding door in order to separate the bedroom from the living room, very small...*

*Q: Maybe it was the river view? Is it what you pay for?*

*A [louder and angrier]: The river view was a strip of mirror, positioned in a way you could see the reflection of the river in the mirror. You couldn't see it when you looked outside the window. You didn't get a parking space if you bought a one-bed flat, and if you buy a two or three bed flat you had to pay 15 grands. It's way overpriced, yes it's on the river, but it feels like...like it has been really greedy, you know?*

Steve was even more caustic about the Lovell's Wharf development, which stands right up the street where they currently live:

*S: [looking at my photographs] Greenwich is becoming less ... 'local', and it feels more like young professionals commuting into work. They built a lot of flats and not many houses. So you have got a lot of **young professionals moving in** for one year or two or buy-to-let, rather than families looking to settle in Greenwich...*

This couple seems to understand the rules of the game for the market of residential housing and sees Greenwich as increasingly split along class lines when it comes to

pubs and shops for daily grocery shopping. Despite what first declared (*'middle-class professionals'*) they distinguish themselves over and again from 'new' buyers (*'young professionals moving in'*). Moreover, they have a fairly accurate geography of local pubs and places to go for a meal, but they clearly dislike the feel of trendiness attached to new shops in East Greenwich.

*A: I mean this week, on Trafalgar Road, a French artisan bakery opened, it could never happen four years ago, no way! We would have...like... pound shops opening up four years ago, which since then have moved out...*

*The 'Theatre of Wine', they have a real niche, a very specialist one, they are doing wine tasting on Thursdays. I mean, it's packed! Lots of professionals in the local area and their friends who come from further away piling in there and they have a great night. That will give you an indication of **the sorts of people** living in the area.*

*People always say that Greenwich is quite nice, but it has never been considered in the same way as Shoreditch or Islington or Hackney now. It has, you know, nice middle-class people going to nice places. It's quite boring.*

When Amanda refers to *'the sorts of people'* she again makes an important distinction between the values and the tastes deployed by middle-class dwellers and themselves (especially those *'nice middle-class people going to nice places'*). The crucial division between 'old' and 'new', which came out over and again during our interview, was the expression of a cultural clash along class lines. I maintain that from their position along the 'old/new' divide, these professionals are less likely to have middle-class dispositions than first appeared. Class dispositions, or habitus, are structures of taste that adjust much slower than positions in employment structure. Further, they 'tend to guarantee the correctness of practices and their constancy over time' (Bourdieu 1990, 54). An approach to the study of class which takes account of ways of living, accent, cultural codes, preferences in dress and food, behaviours toward and distinctions from others, would be more holistic and comprehensive than one which exclusively considers the amount of capital (usually income). Walkerdine puts this beautifully:

*These are ways in which a kind of subject is produced, regulated, lived. Otherness is in the myriad large and small signs through which people recognise themselves and those from which they seek difference, distance. (Walkerline 2001, 39)*

In this respect, Steve and Amanda showed me a practical, fussy-free, approach to their 'art of living' (Bourdieu 1984, 376). They link Greenwich to family ties and good times spent there at Christmas with their families, rather than to World Heritage attractions and Olympic events, because: '*Greenwich is a nice place to be with the lights and everything*', and: '*My parents have friends and come to drink around here sometimes, in local pubs*'. The emphasis they put on Christmas lighting is very interesting and repeated three times in our conversation. Edensor et al. have suggested how important these practices are in terms of class identity, how localised they are, 'grounded, performed and embedded in local space', and therefore how they circulate within distinct social networks, such as pubs, groups of friends, charitable events, and so on (Edensor 2005, 104–105).

This young professional couple of working-class origins are *indirectly displaced*, feeling the pressure of an increasingly gentrified neighbourhood. Therefore, they see themselves as losing terrain in the social geography of the 'new' Greenwich *in relation to* other newcomers, the ones aiming at the riverside glass buildings with panoramic views of the water. In other words, they express a sense of repression in their desire to live by the water, or to have a 'community feel' around, which can also be seen as and translated into a sense of displacement.

I propose to read Steve and Amanda's narrative with a more dynamic model on the study of class, which takes some distance from Allen's understanding of class (Allen 2008) and also a lot more from the Census-Goldthorpe approach (see Wright 1997). I argue for class as a lived position which hinges upon varying dispositions within changing fields and along axes of domination in both space and time, rather than as

a static attribute that one carries with them. Within this framework, classes are not fixed collections of individuals, who happen to have homogeneous social characteristics – either as an 'existential' feature, or linked to employment status. Class represents shifting relationships of power and domination between different people. Class is lived in specificities that are both geographic and cultural, its borders are porous and changeable, and it is made of socio-economic, cultural and emotional elements.

### **Some concluding remarks**

My analysis so far has shown me two things. One is that a different approach to the study of class analysis is needed. Here, I am advocating one which does not hinge upon statistical inference from Census data. As stated above, we could have ended up with a completely different story by only listening to the first few minutes of the couple's talk. They would have appeared as 'new' middle-class young professionals buying into an 'up-and-coming' neighbourhood. The use of extensive probing and the technique of photo elicitation have given my analysis a completely different depth, complicating their position in respect of gentrification and with rather unexpected findings.

I maintain that Steve and Amanda's case scenario proves that the housing policy, as recently driven in the UK, a state-led but private-developers-delivered gentrification (Davidson et al. 2005), does not work, leaving out or displacing an increasing number of people. Steve suggests that

*Greenwich is evolving and it's becoming a more affluent residential area. We have seen changes since we have been here. We have a lot more people, you can see it at Maze Hill station, going to work in suits, and you see less local people, people that were around here when we first moved in, and they are not*

*around any more...*

I have discussed the use of the term 'local' above, which clearly speaks a geography of class rather than representing residents' geographical location on the neighbourhood map.

The second thing that is evident for me is that the regeneration of East Greenwich has to deal with the heavy burden of its past, which seems to spill over from each corner, handrail, or window frame of this area. All participants had a point of view on this, they had to come to terms with the incumbent pile of relics that the river brings ashore at each tide, in both a figurative and material sense, as well as with a very visible pile of debris crushed by demolition machineries.

Whether by recalling it as a nostalgic dwelling (as Steve seems to do), or as an unresolved conflict (as I read the emotional storytelling of more elderly residents), or even as an attempt 'to resurrect the dead' into the marketing of place or into archives (as some people I came across as collaborators of the Docklands Museum try to do), centuries of busy activities, practices, and dwellings along the riverside cannot be ignored. Whose past and in what form needs to be preserved is not simply a matter of allocation of funding from Lottery or Heritage authorities.<sup>149</sup>

On the one hand, the increasing cultural conflict between 'new' Greenwich (which uses a relatively new material, glass, to bolster an *old* discourse of the imperial past) and 'old' Greenwich (which instead is made of bricks and accommodates *new* manual work in the service industry) is not over yet, as I address further in the next chapter. This is a class struggle fought at the level of the symbols which remakes and is made from this emotional, cultural, and material landscape.

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149 It is frustrating to read about applications, put forward by Industrial History enthusiasts on jetties, cranes, and other features, being rejected by the English Heritage for one reason or another. See also the discussion on the Cutty Sark fire at the end of the next chapter.

On the other hand, the 'new' East Greenwich cannot erase the industrial past of the area, all the efforts, inventiveness, and daily practices of generations of people who have lived around this area. Whether by advocating uses of certain materials for construction, or by sounding strong feelings about the closure of the riverside, or even by collecting splintered memorabilia washed ashore, local residents have expressed their feelings about this part of London as being intimately connected to the industrial history of the peninsula. As Mary Mills suggested:

*Most people only see Greenwich Heritage as being about a lot of kings and queens. I just wish they could see the role which Greenwich people played in the development of the whole world of new technology [Enderby's Wharf].*

That relationship between 'the height of a lamppost and the distance from the ground of a hanged usurper's swaying feet' (Calvino 1972, 10), that is that relationship between construction of space and preservation of the city's many pasts, has to be kept alive, somehow. From the voices of the people I met and the photographs I took over many years of walking and observing the changes in this neighbourhood, I contend that a 'new' East Greenwich will not be built satisfactorily without an 'old' one.

## **Chapter 5. Towards a 'Geography of Resentment'**

### **Introduction**

My analysis and visual work consider the concurring movements of the de-industrialisation and the gentrification of East Greenwich. This is a peculiar area of South East London for at least two reasons. Firstly, in public cartographies it is always squeezed between the splendour of the World Heritage for period films, wedding photocalls, and tourist attraction, on the one hand, and the dystopian representations of its brownfield, marshes and polluted industrial land as eternally awaiting redemption, on the other. Secondly, that same tension is also present in the form of dialectic rendering of its past, an uneasy balance in this part of London between publicly celebrated imperial nostalgia and oral histories spoken everyday in the present tense. I argue that the latter are exacerbated by the gentrification recently delivered in the name of the Olympic Games.

In the three chapters which form my analysis (3-5), I frame this drastic urban change from the lower ground angle and mundane perspective of working-class residents I met. My contention is that the affect that such encounters have generated is strictly contextual to the territory where people act. That is, affect is linked to their past experiences of place and their mundane social practices. In other words, I stress the emplaced and the nostalgic character of remembering, which is the other side of the coin of cultural displacement. Nostalgia is the flipside effect of indirect debasement, an intrinsic condition of modernity (Bonnett 2010; Fritzsche 2001) and of its cycles of 'creative destruction' (Berman 1983; Harvey 1990). Since we cannot appropriately

measure displacement, and even less the detrimental effects on people affected, I point here to one of its symptoms, an emotional reaction which is tinted by resentment. My argument is that this resentment manifests itself as a form of resistance to the symbolic violence of gentrification. It is therefore active and productive in the present, despite finding its space in emotional remembering.

In the previous chapter I discussed different ways of understanding place from the perspective of two sets of participants, distinguished by age group and class self-definition. In the present chapter, I maintain that the way in which they express resentment is intrinsically connected to their recollection of their own past: one nostalgic but territorial (Steve and Amanda), the other nostalgic but open and adaptable to the future (Joyce and Arthur). This apparent contradiction is due to the fact that resentment is, by its very nature, something related to the past essentially in two different ways.

On the one hand, resentment is an expression of longing for something which is perceived as not longer being what it used to be. An urban neighbourhood undergoing heavy regeneration (demolition, changes in viability, roadworks) is a landscape which is prone to the circulation of such emotions. The fact that the urban change I described is drastic and delivered fast can only exacerbate such emotional reactions.

On the other hand, resentment also expresses a position which follows the argument of 'it could have been'. It makes manifest expectations in the future tense, paths not fully realised but not completely closed either. This is important because it allows me to consider an active role for nostalgia and move away from the insidious territory of romantic remembering. It is true that resentment can be performative – and I have attempted to capture this by using urban walks and photo elicitation – but



it is also, in my view, a slow burn that almost unconsciously matures within and accumulates gradually by way of storing memories.<sup>150</sup> Crucially, it is dependant upon glocal urban cartographies that people imagine as well as their shifting temporal horizons. In this sense, nostalgic remembering can express some of the paradoxes that the urban is riddled with.

In the next section, I show how the dynamic between memories and emotions worked, in particular during the encounters with two sets of participants, elderly long term residents and a young couple who moved into the neighbourhood only a few years earlier. I will take some of their responses as examples of the way in which affect circulates alongside remembering, how memories are inherently spatial, and finally how the interplay between past recollections and current geographies can generate resentment. At the end, I merge these concepts in a discussion which takes into consideration theoretical insights on resentment, community, and a sociological understanding of 'affect'. I do that by briefly looking at the tensions between the construction of 'race' and its inscription in the urban via 'hierarchical belongings'. This will allow me to introduce a crucial discussion of Imperial nostalgia. Drawing on my own fieldwork and photography, I maintain that part of Greenwich is entangled in the melancholic bolstering of its own heritage<sup>151</sup>: paradoxically this happens at the same time as the very global and multicultural incoming Olympic Games.

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150 This is better addressed in Chapter 3, in which I showed how the idea that something was not completely fit with the mainstream discourse of good-for-all gentrification (its assumed 'trickle-down effects') progressively brewed deep into my own perception of place.

151 As well as drawing on theoretical underpinnings, such as Gilroy (cited).

## Remembering place

In this section I will argue that the way of thinking about space/place – what I call 'geography of resentment' - cannot just be concerned with forms of performance in the present, but it recalls a role for the past as central and active. The closure of the river path, whether permanent or temporary, has had a profound effect on some of my participants and on other local users.<sup>152</sup> In particular, I was impressed by Arthur's depiction of the surrounding landscape as following the architecture of his own life. I met him along the riverside path, just before its definitive closure, staring at the demolition work of the ex Tate&Lyle, his voice barely audible over the clangs of the powerful machinery tearing apart and flattening the large industrial complex. After recalling a few episodes of his working and leisure life along that very stretch of river side, he had a rather emotional turn:

*There used to be all sorts of activities going on here, barges, boat repairing, a lot of movement of people and stuff....now [vague gesture of arm] it has come to this....[hand pointing to the demolition works] Nothing. This all came up when I was little. And now this comes down, so I am about to go.*

This is a rather peculiar but very intense comparison, maybe triggered by his old age, or by the waves of memories that our conversation sparked. I never met Arthur again, but his insight dig deep into my perception of such a process of change that the neighbourhood was undergoing. For me, and for my camera, there would be no more an easy viewing of this landscape in transition, without considering the missed opportunity for a more inclusive and just outcome. From that moment on, the contemplation of what was being lost would stimulate also an understanding of what was not being realised. If we think of regeneration as a redistributive mechanism of resources, then there is also space for valuing the missed opportunity for a large section of the population (old and new) living or willing to live along the riverside.

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<sup>152</sup> According to latest blog posts I read about Greenwich, it is still having an effect, since the riverside footpath is still closed.

This is why I talk about 'resentment', one of the 'ugly feelings' that Ngai (Ngai 2004) equates to an antagonist response to a perceived inequality. These are proper of powerless people when a social injustice is perceived but also leaves not much room for action. If we put such forms of affection in a social context rather than leaving them to the affordance of the individual psychology, then we might start drawing a different portrait of the suffering experienced by powerless people. This is what I attempt to do by investigating a social geography, that is an emplaced and realistic portrait of my encounters with the everyday objects and practices which complement their lives.

Nostalgic contemplations as a reactionary form of understanding the past, versus more radical and dynamic forms of montage are almost common sense for contemporary art critics (Rendell 2006). Instead, I prefer a different reading of Walter Benjamin's metaphor of the storyteller, such as Friedrich Jameson's interpretation:

*There is no reason why a nostalgia conscious of itself, a lucid and remorseless dissatisfaction with the present on the grounds of some remembered plenitude, cannot furnish as adequate a revolutionary stimulus as any other (F. Jameson, in Rendell 2006, p.82).*

According to Jameson envy and resentment are the only agonistic emotions defined as having a perceived inequality as its object. Envy and resentment, then, are a sort of basic form of critical agency – 'as an ability to recognise, and antagonistically respond to, potentially real and institutionalised forms of inequality' (see Ngai cited, 128-129). Arthur's melancholia and remembering are also 'critical' in the sense that he recalls what it could have been, more than how it was: a sort of storytelling strategy, which is non-individualistic and becomes henceforth a more collective experience of the past. His way of dealing with loss implies contemplating a whole way of living which comes down at the same time that bricks, mortar, iron gliders

and jetties are being crushed before his eyes. The dismantling of a familiar industrial landscape is a catastrophe which piles up debris and memories, speaks of a 'something', a rather unconscious 'there' of History, which we cannot make clear sense of (see West 1982).<sup>153</sup> A plant closing down symbolises different things to people in different social positions.<sup>154</sup> For Arthur, the future of a whole way of life is at stake, and how social relations will be organised.

This emotional reaction is due also to the fact that urban change has been brought suddenly because of the Olympics and the delivery schedule attached to it. Such events have been delivered by 'contractual dynamics' and networks of technicians which have pushed politics out of this developmental process (Raco 2012). There is an increasing sense that the least powerful residents have been asked to pay the price of compliance with the Olympic episode through years of disruptions and no guarantee of the fulfilment of public interest (the promised legacy of the Games). As Raco has convincingly argued, the 'event' of the political has ended with the bidding process. After that moment, democratic consultation and negotiation have been replaced by discourses on efficient delivery and contractual governance. Voices like Arthur's would have no chance to be heard and would make no stake in such a process, in which commercial interest is presented as *the common* interest.

Similarly, another long-term elderly resident Joyce has been heavily affected by the closure of the riverside, which disrupts her daily practices, her sense of place, and the affective value she attaches to the place she lives in:

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153 Urban Sociology shows that communities in economic crisis rely on social ties and solidarities that are destroyed when people are forced to move home (See for instance Marc Fried's 1963 book: 'Grieving for a Lost Home').

154 See for instance the photo elicitation carried out around the closure of a mine (Byrne in Knowles et al. 2004).

*I have been here for many years, but now I cannot walk down the river path because of this [she points vaguely to the new riverside layout]; its appalling what they have done: destroyed the character of this beautiful landscape.*

It is very important to point out how Joyce always sees her own position in relation to other people, users of public space and neighbours. This is symptomatic of her disposition towards others, a truly communitarian and open character:

*I think we all should make a fuss about it, that the path has been closed down the river edge, we can make a protest about it... I feel very strong about that. A lot of people do as well, I think, people that come occasionally...you used to be able to walk or ride along the river there, and now it has stopped.*

I have prompted her use of 'we' throughout the interview and she talked both of more generic 'others', occasional dwellers, as well as of specific neighbours and their precise location in her local geography. I argue that Joyce was *feeling* a sense of solidarity in embracing other people who might experience the same discomfort and sense of dispossession as hers. She was making her sense of dispossession a collective event, a traumatic experience which could be shared with others. Moreover, she seemed to understand, as Arthur did above, the cause of such abrupt change in their daily lives. On another occasion, talking of the cranes on the Lovell's Wharf industrial site, she uses a similar collective view of the emotional reaction to their demolition, designing almost an affective landscape for East Greenwich:

*J: I remember two cranes, on the corner of Lovell's Wharf, and they came down a few years ago, to the great annoyance of us people who lived near. We also thought of a preservation order on them, and you know, without us knowing anything about it, they have already been knocked down...there would have been great protest if we would have known about it.<sup>155</sup>*

*Q: I think that there was an attempt to preserve them...I remember talking to Mary Mills about an attempt to make an application for preserving the cranes. It might not have been made on time...*

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<sup>155</sup> Industrial historian Mary Mills' blog confirms Joyce's narrative: 'Lovell's continued to use the wharf into the 1980s when the two cranes which were landmarks on the wharf were refurbished. These cranes were removed without notice by the site owners, Morden College, in 2001.' Apparently, local residents' complaints to English Heritage were dismissed on Health and Safety grounds.

*J: Apparently not, I did not hear about this till only afterwards when we were all very indignant, but I have heard that she had made an application for the preservation order. And that being known presumably...they knocked them down.*

Joyce has a collection of her own photographs of the above mentioned cranes and the stretch of riverside visible from outside her front door. The photographs were taken at different times of the day, usually at dawn or sunset, and are stitched along her walls in a panorama style with the date annotated in one corner (Cardullo 2011, 72). Joyce is angry and builds up a collective form of resentment ('we were all very indignant') while recalling a wealth of anecdotes, stories, fragments of her own experience and encounters with others along that stretch of riverside and reconnects those moments to the current situation ('we can make a protest about it'). Again, in the above passage there is a clear sense of dispossession without notice of a perceived common good, a feature in the everyday landscape. And yet Joyce is not stuck in a mindset willing to romanticise it. She wants to make clear to me that the place was also dangerous with teens hanging from the cranes, for instance.

*J: [showing photographs of kids climbing Lovell's walls] oh, well done! There, it was actually taking place! Oh, Gosh! This looks like a lady who is climbing...*

*Q: Yes, she is...*

*J: I wonder what they were doing...It was a good playground for the kids, but it was worrying for us people living here...they would not only invade the quay, but they would also invade the little garden over there, we had a tremendous lot of vandalism, glass smashed, tribes of kids coming in and...yes..it was quite a wild area, it wasn't civilised [laugh].*

Her worries on the state of decay of the area were also shared by the other elderly participant, Arthur.

*Yes it was horrid that part of the river walk underneath the silos. It was creepy, all sort of rubbish collected there... A cyclist went over the edge with his bike, landed down along the edge of the river, he wasn't hurt.*

Such declarations from long term workers and residents of Lovell's managed to displace my last sense of romantic attachment to ruins, showing me multifaceted perspectives towards industrial and derelict sites. These perspectives intertwine with situated senses of belonging, each having a peculiar history and a different degree of direct participation or affective engagement. What still holds on, in both my theorisation of such a place and in the photographs I took of it, is the sense of aesthetics proper of the uniqueness and the dense historical density embedded in such features. This is shared also by the elderly participants. Joyce is aware that such a place was, to some extent, derelict, but also that no developers' plan can bring back that combination of features that made such landscape so affectively unique for her. Commenting on one of my photographs I show her at the interview (Cardullo, 2011: 26-27), she states:

*J: Beautiful, it's very reminiscent....it reminds me so much how it was, it will never be again of course.*

*Q: Why do you think it will never be like that again?*

*J: Well, because part of the attraction was a bit of the decay, and this part [pointing to the path] was not very straight, not very smooth...and, well, partly, because things went wrong. I mean this paving was very badly laid (laugh), and these railings were very rotten, and didn't meet and things that were just supposed to open they never opened, and the writing on the wall that was just fading away...*

*Q: I have seen that they planted a lot of trees and shrubs...*

*J: That's very bad. It's very bad that [the walkable path] it's not on the edge of the water....yes...this pavement is not very old. I remember when they put it down. It retains a lot of character.*

The imperfection of the landscape is evidence for Joyce of its lived past and the mixed use it has been put for, as an intersection of place for work, retreat for leisure, and natural erosion from elements.

Steve and Amanda, instead, moved into the neighbourhood only a few years ago and have a completely different attitude towards the riverside and also a very different geography of their surroundings. On the one hand, their geography of Greenwich is etched along the line of leisure time (*'a peaceful river'*) and gastro-dwelling experience (*'we go out to eat a lot'*). They are able to name pubs and bars with precision and also provide a hierarchical review for each one of them. But on the other hand, despite living a stone's throw away from my field for nearly four years, they had never walked along the riverside towards the Dome on the East Greenwich peninsula. They hardly noticed the demolition of the Syral, the largest industrial site in the area, pointing to the presence of 'some cranes', far away in time: *'it was a long time ago'* (actually, only less than six months from our meeting). Talking about the riverside stretching eastwards towards the Peninsula, they suddenly changed the tone and the pace that had characterised the first part of our meeting. This is important because it shows the influence that place, or rather the lived perception of place, has on people's understanding of their own lives. They imagined it as a space for development and the place on which the symbolic war of residential space is fought. This is very different from the initial impression which they gave me about one of their reasons for moving to Greenwich (*'good transport links'*).

*Q: They are building a lot, aren't they?*

*S: They are planning to, but actually they haven't done nothing, since we moved in [four years]. They are building right at the top at the Dome and the tube, but from Greenwich to the tube I find it a very strange piece of land. The tube is too far out of the way, the tube is North Greenwich but it should be much closer to Greenwich.*

*A: yeh, actually that is really true...I think it's a real shame, a missed opportunity. They wanted to build the Dome, bring the tube, build some houses at the time of the Millennium, but they didn't really think beyond that.*

*S: They built it as a...satellite feature, and it doesn't quite form part of*



*Greenwich. Greenwich is from here to the river, and not along the Dome...*

It is Amanda who first interrupts the long but peaceful conversation by stating her resentment towards the Cutty Sark renovation project. According to her account, this breaks with a traditional way of building – and of being – in Greenwich:

*Take the Cutty Sark, opening probably next year. They probably get ready for the Olympics in order to get a lot of money from the tourists, but people are quite upset because they are building this big glass structure to hold it up so that people can see the underneath of it. Apparently there's a petition, it's not gonna do anything, they have agreed the design and everything...*

What I found most striking about this was the sense of powerlessness in the face of the machine of regeneration as she spoke of the impossibility of making people's feelings heard. The process of urban change is something *done to* people, in this case in the name of the Olympics, without people being able to express their thoughts. The arrival of 'new' London with its glass architecture is also understood as something beyond their own reach (unaffordable), or ability to intervene: *somebody else* is doing a petition against the design of the Cutty Sark, '*people*'. This particular manifestation of resentment has been associated with a form of criticism which has no escape because at stake is an outcome perceived as fatalistic (Scheler, in Ware 2008). In a way, this is a 'bad feeling' similar to the gap between perceived injustice and the impossibility of expressing own agency in the process of change.<sup>156</sup>

It is rather interesting that the two elderly participants had a more open and active use of nostalgic remembering. Both Joyce and Arthur in fact look and compare what it was before with what it is becoming now. Their resentment is expressed, crucially, along the line of 'ways of being'; that is, the social practices of walking, meeting people, working, and dwelling. It has to do with everyday concerns about social reproduction and leisure time, rather than with their immediate relational position in

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156 As seen in the previous chapter for the elderly residents (see also Ngai, cited).

the space of the market for residential housing.

On the other hand, the young couple who recently moved into the neighbourhood, both commuting to central London for work, saw the urban change as a mix of hope for future developments and a lot more as a form of resentment for what they perceived as the unfair allocation of social housing. Steve has deployed his memories of happy family gatherings in Greenwich to boast his supposed right to dwelling. *De facto* he had positioned himself at the top of an imagined 'hierarchy of belonging' in an imagined 'community'. Paradoxically, it was this young couple that invoked the symbol of 'community' whenever they talked about the locale, despite their geographies stretch daily to central and north London and, as they admit, they never walked eastwards along the very close-by riverside.

## **Fairness**

Talking about regeneration invariably leads to a debate about housing. The materialities and symbols of the city 'yet to come' (Simone 2004) are continuously reworked by the circle of creative, media and estate professionals working in and around the market for housing. Analysing participants' opinions and social positions in that respect is crucial in regeneration and urban studies. In this section, I compare Steve's position towards new and social residential housing with the one expressed by elderly working-class resident Joyce.

Lovell's Wharf regeneration brought in also a small share of 'affordable housing', as well as a mix of places for shared ownership or 'part-buy part-rent' schemes.<sup>157</sup> It

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<sup>157</sup> The share shifts between 31 and 38% depending on which document or area we look at. However, it is even harder to understand the criteria for defining the 'affordability' of such share.

was a share imposed by the Labour driven majority of Greenwich council, and they have recently been occupied by their first residents, as Mary Mills proudly reminded me last year.<sup>158</sup> In the contested spaces of the city, the possibility of encounters between different strata of local population, whether from the standpoint of class or length of dwelling, are extremely interesting from a sociological point of view. This possibility defines an important aspect in the study of gentrification, namely the chance for social mixing (Caulfield's 'emancipatory city'), or its opposite, the segregation and the inwardness of neighbours (Smith's 'revanchist city'). Either possibility might trigger different emotions, and these patterns of affection are very important because they are a way of expressing social conflicts on the grounds of race, ethnicity and class.

When I showed Steve pages in my book full of photographs of manual workers, muddy shores, and rusty barges, he strangely made no immediate connection with his grandfathers' land and work place. At first they seemed puzzled by the subject, which looked quite contemporary: the colour photographs and my brief introduction left Steve with no excuse to imagine it as a world, forever gone, of his grandfathers. Then they guessed that the photographs were taken on '*the other side of Greenwich going towards Deptford*', imagined maybe as a far away, quasi-exotic place of dockers (or immigration?) and manual work. I will never forget Steve's expression of surprise when I revealed how close in time and in space that scenario was to their daily lives.

*S: Who are these guys [the welders]? Are they locals?*

*Q: Funny enough they are not... they turned out to be Polish and could hardly speak any English.*

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158 Often it is the case, as it was in Lovell's 'affordable' part, that such schemes are highly advertised as having been made possible thanks to the charitable donations of many organisations; as something that is given to the poor rather than claimed on grounds of social justice and 'right to the city' (Marcuse 2009). Some local bloggers have noted that the 'affordable' part of the Greenwich development is inward-looking in relation to the river.

*S: Hmm...they look Polish...that's it! Polish workers working in Greenwich, in Greenwich docks and boatyards! Surely they can't afford a place around here!...all these houses there [pointing to the cottages all around] were built for people doing these jobs, and now they are building for people working in the city of London.*

Finally, when we start looking at the 'sponsored' side of Lovell's development his mood dramatically changed and he started revealing resentment. He came out with a counter-intuitive remark: his neck became slightly more red, the tone of voice rose by a few decibels. Steve saw himself against all others, those others occupying the cottages, and those buying into the newly built developments, as well as those 'lucky ones' who would get the 'affordable' housing. That's how Steve commented on my photographs of Lovell's Wharf new development, at the very end of our interview:

*S: It's a strange concept: you put 'affordable housing' in to keep **local families** in the area, because they can't afford to stay here, they can't afford anything here, but we have to move out because we can't afford anything here, so the concept of affordable housing doesn't make sense here...It felt for me a bit disappointing, they used the area less for **local communities** and less for families and more for city workers, more for city commuters, people they are willing to live in Greenwich for one year or two or buy-to-let....but because I don't come below a certain income threshold, I have to move out to get a housing. We are **local families**, we have lived in the area, my parents have lived in the area, my grandparents!*

The idyll of Greenwich was gone for Steve, now that the city showed him all the contradictions and the struggles it is made of. Very problematically, in Steve's analysis the main policy goal of 'affordable housing' is the need to keep 'local families' in the area (repeated several times during our long chat). He therefore recalls once more his family ties as an insurance policy which links him with the land. The disputed meanings for 'local', for who belongs and who doesn't, become crucial to understanding people's positionality in respect of regeneration. In contradiction from what was stated before, 'local' assumes now the geographical meanings for territory. Rather than class belonging, 'old/new Greenwich' as seen in the previous chapter, it is autochthony which forms the basis through which an

indigenous claim to the land is put forth. It is also important to note that in this extract Steve expresses his sense of belonging to the 'local community' rather than to the 'city workers, city commuters', which he initially claimed to be part of.<sup>159</sup>

Life, and Greenwich, suddenly became unfair for Steve and Amanda. Their perceived location in the interstitial spaces of social positions looked quite ambiguous: on the one hand, they clearly recognised the mechanism through which private residential housing was created and distributed by private developers and class taste. They made that clear distinction which repudiates the attribution of symbolic worth in the space of residential housing. However, they did not feel able to keep up with the symbols attached to residential housing when coming to face the same values they rejected in the first place. The complexity of their position in the space of residential housing speaks of a sense of hurt dignity, a hidden injury of belonging (Sennett 1977). This took the shape of resentment towards people occupying a lower class position, new comers in the social housing quota of the new residential development.<sup>160</sup> Their position in the social landscape of East Greenwich shifts according to which space or field we take into account and from which perspective we consider them.<sup>161</sup>

For elderly, long-term, local resident Joyce, on the other hand, the presence of new neighbours seems to have been just one more practical thing in her life, something to get by and cope with in the same way she used to with previous residents.

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159 It is significant that Steve and Amanda – despite commuting daily to central London – are the only interviewees that explicitly invoke the word 'community'.

160 Steve's affective reaction was induced by a dialectical image, composed by: a) our encounter, which set the context for the viewing of the photobook; b) by the use of colour photographs, which displaced elements of his nostalgic remembering; and c) by the contextualisation of his past as a working-class culture within the competing spaces of the city.

161 As Skeggs (2004) points out, some bodies have more flexibility and can therefore move more fluidly than others in the spaces of social positioning.

Joyce might be aware of her status as an owner, in an increasingly 'sought-after' spot, but she never mentioned this. She once told me, while sitting on her chair in the semiprivate (*'it's open during the day, but I lock it at nights'*) garden she takes care of, *'Heaven seems a little closer in a house beside the water'*. The peculiarity of her 'charming' cottage on the riverside seems for her to have nothing to do with the market for housing, despite me prompting this aspect many times.

*J: This is a special spot.*

*Q: Why is it special?*

*J: Because it is hidden.*

Joyce sits in an exclusive garden, her raincoat almost blending into the greyness of the stones and water of the Thames, and sees the riverside changing. Her extraordinary photographic compositions on the walls of her cottage are a panoramic view of a lost landscape at dawn or sunset. These views seem to be imbued with romantic feelings and are taken from the same privileged observation spot that once belonged to the harbour-master looking for vessels and cargo ships. Where once stood cranes and workers, she now sees new buildings and the families of new residents:

*Q: Are they happy?*

*J: Yes, they look very happy, they just moved in...*

*Q: Social housing?*

*J: I guess so, they look like that, but I haven't asked that sort of question...kind of embarrassing.*

She will go along with new neighbours with the same practical sense of living, that 'art of living' which made her a popular, yet discreet, long-term resident on the riverside; someone who cannot tolerate the arrogance of developers, demolitions and closure of the riverside path, but maintains an extraordinary gentle and

welcoming attitude towards all sort of things and people surrounding her small cottage.

*J: [looking at my photographs] No, you can't get on it now...you are stopped here really.*

*Q: Why is that?*

*J: Well, because of that building, and the blocks of flats [Lovell's Wharf].*

*Q: Do you think they are going to re-open it?*

*J: They did promise they are going to re-open when they finish the building but that might be many years closed which is a great dis-advantage, and... I don't know, is that going to reopen when they knock down the silos? Because they have finished that work, haven't they?*

In order to fully absorb and appreciate the complexity of this last statement, suspended between past memories and future hopes, personal experience and collective practices, I ask the reader to take a detour on nostalgia and on its implications for social analysis.

The 'painful feeling of returning home' (from the Greek 'nostos' and 'algos') seems embedded with the very modernist ideal of the production of the 'new' and the 'different'.<sup>162</sup> This *collective* emotion is then unavoidable when drastic and sudden change occurs. I would argue that the challenge is to draw connections across the *class line* in the background of global urban processes of capital accumulation. Bonnett might then be right when he warns of the risks that a 'racialisation of nostalgia' can bring. He states:

*Without an understanding of the chronic nature of nostalgia within the modern imagination, of the inextricable ties between resistance to deracination and resistance to capitalism, the radical antiracist response to such fears is inevitably dismissive. The more difficult but, I think, necessary response is to admit that nostalgia is a shared and inevitable emotion in an era of rapid and enforced change. (Bonnett 2010, p.2366)*

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<sup>162</sup> According to Fritzsche, nostalgia is 'a vague and collective longing for a bygone time rather than an individual desire to return to a particular place' (Fritzsche 2001).

There is already an established literature critiquing rooted communitarianism, as an identitarian inwardness, stifling fixity of boundary-laden village-like communities. This tradition has convincingly highlighted the potential of densely packed urban places, the dynamics of city encounters, and more rightly the 'urban' as a stimulus to difference (for instance, see the writings of Keith, Back, Park, or Sennett).

Here, I want to produce an understanding of people's experience of displacement and gentrification, passing through the affective reaction to change. In doing so, there is a commitment to highlighting urban change happening *along the class line*, rather than through tradition or ethnicity. Displacement pressure is evident on the most vulnerable people, owning less capital or possessing forms of capital which are more easily devalued. Vron Ware maintains that,

*if resentment against migrants is felt most keenly by those who are poorest, then it is likely that there will be other material and psychological wounds contributing to the sense of injury. (Ware 2008)*

This echoes another extract of the already cited article by Bonnett according to whom,

*across different ethnic, age, and political groups, displacement and uprooting are painful processes (especially for the least affluent, for whom community and attachment to place are not dispensable aspirations).*

That is, class and inequality matter, especially when set in the backdrop of speedy urban change.<sup>163</sup> As Ware warns though, the concept of resentment is not neutral and its meaning can be mapped onto a political arena increasingly eager to find justification on ethnicity and 'race' grounds. She writes:

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163 They are always part of the unstable equation in which scholars frame social expectations of welfare rights and the city form imposed from above or imagined from below (see Keith 2008a). Similarly, in Les Back's fieldwork in Deptford market (Back 2009) there is an understanding of community and belonging that defies easy and straightforward conclusions. Using a multisensorial approach and the usual caution in trusting traditional ethnographic methods, Back exhorts scholars for 'thinking of community as a narrative achievement, a way of talking and telling life's story', whose outcomes are never given. Community might become the imaginary metaphor through which displacement is narrated.



*Resentment, like fear, becomes political when it refers to a collectively held emotion expressed in response to the threatened well-being of a particular group, especially where that emotion is readily mobilised by political forces.*  
(Ware 2008)

It is this instrumentalisation and mobilisation for political ends of perceived collective emotions, the politics of belonging, that radical antiracism needs to target.<sup>164</sup> My effort here is in decoupling resentment from the mainstream – often media related or politically biased – reading of people's interaction with urban change. There is rather the sense in which politics has filled the vacuum left by class with identity and 'race' politics (see Ware 2008). In other words, 'race' trumps class in the political arena, hiding the *'inextricable ties'* between displacement and resistance to capitalism. These might rightly generate affective reactions of anger, disappointment or resentment. When these are mixed with an understanding of 'race' as fixed and of belonging as 'hierarchical', then issues of class exploitation and inequality get easily by-passed.<sup>165</sup> Rescuing nostalgia and recasting it into a politics of affection is a highly risky affair. But leaving it unexposed because of fears of facing exclusionary notions of 'whiteness' or Britishness can only free spaces for a 'politics of resentment' (Nord, in Wells & Watson 2005) which is colour-, faith-, culture-, and an increasingly language-based way of dealing with the 'Other'.<sup>166</sup>

My fieldwork proposes 'resentment' as an almost haptic form of affection, linked to the practicalities of everyday movements across the neighbourhood; a 'geography of resentment', in fact. This is about the materialities and social practices of everyday geographies, and deals with textures of the surrounding environment rather than

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164 Also see Thrift (Thrift 2008, p.173): 'the manipulation of affect for political ends is becoming not just widespread but routine in cities through new kinds of practices and knowledges which are also redefining what counts as the sphere of the political.'

165 It might be the case then that 'the white working class' become, in the political and media imaginaries, a sealed off and easy to define caricature of 'indigenous' people which can be portrayed either as abandoned victims or endured racists.

166 Class and race are categories of thought that intersect at many levels and there are overlapping territories in which the two categories can be seen almost as synonymous (see Hall et al. 2009).

with ideological constructions. Non-representational geographies have rightly insisted on present aspects of daily lives, on performance as a favourite analytic tool in order to capture the richness and creativity of social life. But this strategy has the risk of showing the present moment as a *pure event*, 'life in (extreme) present tense' (O. Jones 2011). Therefore it has often fallen short of looking at the weight that the past and its recollection have on current social practices. People's narratives often appeared non-linear on my recorder's timeline. When I approached my participants I asked them about their everyday practices of walking, playing, or working along the riverside. Instead, I had a wealth of stories and fragments of past experiences which mixed objects that the river had washed ashore, rusty ruins and wreckage of previous working practices with the general sense of the huge transformation this part of London is undergoing. Something about which those people seemed to be only bystanders, caught in between events they had very little control over.

To return to the last extract of this section, memory, direct experience, and sense of becoming are intertwined in complex and uncertain ways:

*We are conglomerations of past everyday experiences, including their spatial textures and affective registers, ..., memory is a fundamental aspect of becoming, intimately entwined with space, affect, emotion, imagination and identity. (O. Jones 2011)*

In this sense, for instance, researching shopkeepers' talks as a performance *here and now*, as a truthful snapshot of social reality (Wells & Watson 2005), might have some limitations or some methodological flaws (see Ware 2008; Back 2009; Back and Lyon 2011; for a wider perspective).

## Cutty Sark and 'Traders'

In this section I expand on the argument around 'race' and belonging, which I started unpacking in the previous one by doing some critical discourse analysis of Steve and Amanda's narrative. Despite 'race' not being my main research focus, their responses opened up a new strand of enquiry. I turned my attention to the most famous and visited part of Greenwich, where I found some objects of great interest. Here, I also came across some rather unexpected histories (plural). With the aid of two museum curators, I will be exploring the missing link of many talks on 'whiteness', that is the contested histories which support a reading of nostalgia as 'the way things used to be'.<sup>167</sup>

The convivial atmosphere in which my initial interview with Steve and Amanda was set – local pub, warm environment, hoppy ale – instigated a process of nostalgic remembering. The biographical take in Steve's narrative was typically linking place and memories. However, guided also by my photobooks, resentment started coming out. This was *simultaneously* directed at affordable housing *and* the 'new' Greenwich of glass buildings facing the riverside. What happened, I have kept asking myself, in those last few minutes of our chat which triggered an angry resentment towards other new comers in the social housing part of Lovell's Wharf? The way I explain this is by looking at how an element of discourse is built through the mutual intersection of other predominant discourses. These work together and re-enforce each other. So, for instance, Steve connected the sense of community, linked to his remembering of his own childhood and family gathering, to a particular territory. All he was trying to convince me about was that by buying in Greenwich he had just come back in his parents footsteps, he 'returned home' (in Greek 'nostos', from

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<sup>167</sup> As Michael Keith remarks, 'Nostalgia sits in that space after history ends and biography begins'. (Keith 2006)

which 'nostalgia' is derived). However, when finally 'home' he found this to be quite a different place from how he remembered; with some people in 'affordable' housing that he is not entitled to or in glass buildings that he cannot afford.

There is a discursive flaw to be considered here: ethnicity, always lurking at the margins of our conversation on authentic 'old' Greenwich (*'proper EastEnders' pub*), is necessarily put into a hierarchical scale of entitlement to place. This is because of a selective reading of history and a systematic exclusion of narratives concerning the 'Other'. Georgie Wemyss has detailed this process, arguing that there has been a double process of amnesia and subtle bolstering of what she calls the 'Invisible Empire' (Wemyss 2009). There is a sense in which legacies of the Empire and colonial pasts are carefully mastered in the everyday racialised practices which form Englishness (see also Tyler 2012). I want to briefly contribute to this by analysing two episodes which happened during my fieldwork, the encounters with the 'Star of India' at Cutty Sark and with the Diwali celebrations at the National Maritime Museum, both in Greenwich town centre. This part of London in fact boasts a rather overwhelming postcolonial landscape and yet its legacy on everyday life is completely erased.

The Cutty Sark is a famous ship. Not just because her masts tower over World Heritage Greenwich, where she is preserved. Indeed, she has been famous since her construction. The official historical narrative (from the National Maritime Museum) proclaims that an eccentric man with a white top hat invested a considerable sum of money in 1869 in order to own the fastest ship on the planet. This tale also insists that the man's determination followed his own personal 'ambition to win tea races'. In fact, the ship's large number of sails and her 'slim

shape' would make the Cutty Sark a 'celebrity' of the seas.<sup>168</sup>

Suddenly, a few years ago the ship was discovered to be in a state of advanced decay: worms and other marine growths were destroying its timber, rusty and corroded beams were the norm, and the hull was almost falling to pieces under her weight. What looked worse, the 'fine line of her shape' seemed compromised. Moreover, in 2007 a mysterious fire with no conclusive evidence broke out in the building site around the ship. Fortunately, the wooden parts of the ship had already been removed and therefore the fire brought no major damage to the rest of the hull on site.<sup>169</sup> The drama was widely advertised, claiming a collective emotion of sorrow, and more money (Lottery Funds but also private donations) poured in.

The renovation of the Cutty Sark follows a pattern all too familiar to urban regeneration studies.<sup>170</sup> First, parts of the city-body are pathologised and, subsequently, a set of policies is put in place in order to repair what had previously been seen as fallen into disgrace. Besides, gentrification is increasingly presented as a winning choice which will spill beneficial effects to all, a 'rising tide' lifting everybody up,<sup>171</sup> just to keep it in maritime terms. Equally, the new Cutty Sark is offered by the official rhetoric as a venture for the benefits of all: school kids, admirers, naval enthusiasts, property developers, organic gourmet business, accommodation industry, and 'community' at large.

Whilst working on the gentrification of East Greenwich, I came across a symbol carved on the stern of the Cutty Sark, the so-called 'Star of India'. According to the

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168 Most of the above information are retrieved from the Cutty Sark Trust website, National Maritime Museum website, Greenwich Council website and newspaper, local blogs, and tourist pamphlets.

169 'Much of the damage was to a temporary wooden roof installed to provide cover for the 65 carpenters, shipwrights, fabricators and other conservationists currently working on the project.' (Sturcke 2007).

170 Two complementary discourses are put in place there: diagnosis and cure, 'the perfect marriage both geographically specific', as Keith writes (Keith et al. 1991).

171 (Allen 2008b). Others prefer 'trickle-down' effect, see for instance Slater (2006).

Trust curator:

*The design represents the badge of the Most Exalted Order of the Star of India, an order of chivalry founded by Queen Victoria in 1861 to honour Indian princes, as well as British officers who served in India. It will be re-displayed to the public when the ship re-opens next year.<sup>172</sup>*

The way she phrased it, like a Wikipedia caption, seems to me rather amazing. From her position, she completely unquestioned colonialism, rather projecting it through this symbol as some kind of colourful history. I imagined myself being one of the many thousand tourists visiting Greenwich during the Olympics and not being able to understand much more beyond the celebratory.

The Cutty Sark was built with the only scope of winning tea races across the world. The winner would bring to Victorian tea rooms the freshest and newest crops from East Asia and therefore command the highest prices in the Tea Exchange auctions, in Mincing Lane.<sup>173</sup> If a Londoner made a huge investment in building the tea clipper it was because, as a capitalist, he foresaw a chance to make huge profits, and not because he had a sportive 'ambition' to win sea races. There is no room here for a romanticised narrative of an eccentric figure with a white top hat whose family greatly donated to the ship conservation Trust – including the original 'Star of India', which was taken from another of his ships inspiringly called 'Punjab'. Annual races were not sporting events as such, but a lucrative exercise of time-space contraction, or what is generally today understood to be 'globalisation'. In this context, the Cutty Sark was a new technology at the service of capital, for as long as it lasted, that is before a new technology – the steam ship – made her obsolete. We know very little of what happened on the other side of the globe, and this is not coincidence. Tens of

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172 Inspiringly, Cutty Sark was officially re-opened by the Queen on the same day she opened an other important exhibition at the National Maritime Museum: *Royal Rivers: Power, Pageantry and the Thames*.

173 Mincing Lane, between Fenchurch St. and Great Tower Hill, was also the centre of the British opium business (comprising 90% of all transactions), as well as other drugs in the 18th century. In 1888, for the first time, sales of Indian tea surpassed Chinese ones (from Booth, M. (1996). *Opium: A History*, St. Martin's Press).

thousand of 'lascars', pejorative idiom for Indian sailors, were employed and exploited on imperial mercantile and military ships for centuries, mostly as indentured labour. Unsurprisingly, statistics about their presence and early settlements in Britain are very hard to collate.<sup>174</sup>

There is a sense in which globalisation and multiculturalism are celebrated when they can be either observed at distance or are a source of income: tourism, especially within the Olympics context, is in fact both temporary and remunerative. What is instead made invisible is the process through which globalisation has worked. As the Jamaican born Stuart Hall famously suggested,

*People like me have symbolically been in England for centuries. I am the sugar at the bottom of the English cup of tea. (Hall et al. 2009)*

Equally the 'Star of India', instituted only seven years before the clipper was built, becomes a perfect symbol of the intersection of class and 'race' in the history of Greenwich. Engraved as it is in the stern of its most famous relic, it stands as a powerful reminder of an exceptionally prestigious distinction consigned by the Empire to its trusted circle of servants and lackeys on both sides of the world.

Indeed, this famous clipper could symbolically carry the Olympic torch along the tea route which made her notorious, connecting in an original and interesting way the latest Olympic site in Beijing with the new one in London. Along such routes the texture and the material social practices of globalisation can be revealed (Knowles 2010; Knowles 2011). Global connections comprise in fact shipping containers and people whose work makes their movements possible, more than abstract flows of financial and informational capital.

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174 'Often for working-class Indians we must piece together scattered fragments...but even the lives and words of higher class male travellers or settlers must be recovered from various primary sources since they have been largely ignored in conventional secondary histories of Britain and India' (Fisher 2006).

Following this clue I went to the National Maritime Museum for a Diwali celebration. The rich programme in fact boasted two talks on 'lascars', making me think that I was wrong. It turned out that the talks were almost privately organised by Sayer<sup>175</sup> who spoke to me about his struggle to make events like these happen. The celebration of this Hindu festival coincided with the opening of a new permanent exhibition called 'Traders'. The focus of this, as Sayer recalled, was on the mercantile, entrepreneurial and courageous spirit of the East India Company. Opium war, renamed 'Anglo-Chinese war', and 'lascars' became bracketed as marginal occurrences of a much more exciting and glamorous adventure.<sup>176</sup> Equally, a talk on curry focused on the relationship between Queen Victoria, apparently very fond of curry, and her Indian servant, Abdul. The author of the homonymous book gave a talk, hinting at 'a tender love story between an ordinary Indian and his elderly queen', between 'Victoria and Abdul'.<sup>177</sup> I contend instead that the flat reciprocity and mutual admiration suggested by the talk/book hide a more violent process of exploitation, as well as a power relation of patronage between two non-peers.<sup>178</sup>

It may indeed be the case that celebrating Diwali is one way to also recognise the contribution of South Asians to British history. The problem with recognition politics of this type is that by locating their stories within the context of festivity, the stories of 'lascars' can also act to celebrate rather than critique colonialism and mercantile trade. As Priyamvada Gopal reminds us, there is no room for fictional accounts and romantic narratives in the history of the British Empire:

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175 The name has been changed in order to protect the anonymity of the participant.

176 The blame of opium consumption seems to be put on its victims (as being an 'Asian vice'), an aspect of the 'dark side' of tea trade, as Sayer informed me.

177 <http://www.shrabanibasus.co.uk/AbdulAndVictoria.html>

178 See also Knowles and Harper 2009, 157.



*Colonialism – a tale of slavery, plunder, war, corruption, land-grabbing, famines, exploitation, indentured labour, impoverishment, massacres, genocide and forced resettlement – is rewritten into a benign developmental mission marred by a few unfortunate accidents and excesses. (Gopal 2006)*

### **Some concluding remarks.**

My interviewees expressed a sense of being displaced by the speedy urban change of their neighbourhood. This awareness generates an affective reaction very similar to resentment. In Chapters 1 and 4, I developed an argument around symbolic (or 'indirect') displacement, maintaining that this is not a sudden phenomenon, such as evictions, but it is rather a slow and pervasive process which people with less resources – in terms of quantity and composition of their cultural, economic, social and symbolic capital – are more likely to incur. In Chapter 3, I narrated how my longitudinal fieldwork encountered – and also generated in my own understanding of place – dissatisfaction and resentment along the way to a 'regenerated' East Greenwich. In this present chapter, I argued that this process is made up of a sort of 'memory stack'. That is, it involves an almost involuntary process of recording of fragments: experiences, encounters, disruptions of practices, and of what on the whole evokes displacement. Previous forms of displacements that left behind a trail of physical and emotional ruins in the form of traces of belonging have a crucial role in the making of the present.

The collection of such fragments is always nostalgic to some extent, referring to aspects of place, situations, and people 'the way things used to be'. However, to the extent that memories get actualised on the gentrifying landscape they determine an active emotional response to urban change. That is, nostalgia becomes productive *in the present*. I have called this affective reaction to gentrification, the 'geography of resentment'. The reason for using the term 'geography' is rather pragmatic: people's

understanding of urban change in East Greenwich, in particular what I have pinpointed as their 'resentment', is not organised. Nor is it functional to the political sphere, at least in the way in which it is expressed in the first place.<sup>179</sup> Neither can it affect the symbolic realm of mainstream discourses, predominantly bolstering the positive effects of gentrification for all, particularly on the eve of the Olympic Games. Yet resentment is a feeling that might surface in informal talks, in silent tours, and in (the repetition or impediment of) everyday social practices. It concerns the spheres of daily movements through landscape, encounters between what is known and what looks new. It hits very 'banal' things, such as ways of doing shopping and going into work. In other words, resentment is built upon the practicalities of dwelling. Resentment is, I maintain, one of the many geographies to which people stick, everyday.

The sense of place which affect occupies in my research is contextually urban. Because of their size and density, cities force encounters and stimulate senses to an extreme level. The pace and diversity of city living also encourage old settlements to mix with the stories and traditions of newcomers. They inspire people to move on and to forget. Urban places also resemble ancient stories with their monuments, memorials (official or vernacular), and the very architecture they are made of. As Pile observes, cities work both as a hindrance to remembering and as the social organisation of remembering, they are 'thoroughly ambivalent places, constitutively, and dynamically, ambivalent' (Pile, in Hillier et al. 2005, 243). Cities are packed with uncanny feelings always walking the tight rope between being and becoming (Keith, 2008).

Framing remembering in the complexity and density of urban living helps me to understand better how affect circulates. Emotions are not the property of actors or

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179 Rather, as Ware suggests, it can and often it is manipulated for political ends (Ware 2008).

are they simply transmitted to them by events (Ahmed 2004). In this sense, resentment does not express a deep feeling for an individual loss. Nor is it a widely shared, organised form of resistance, out there, ready to be picked up and made the property of individuals. The people encountered during my fieldwork are not resentful because they are miserable by nature. From what I could see, the opposite is true. Steve and I became sort of friends and we sometimes linked up for a pint. Joyce is a very popular person in her neighbourhood, while Amanda is an active charity fund-raiser. It is not the case that everything has gone wrong around East Greenwich either. Resentment is rather one of the *interfaces* around which personal stories, splintered memories, quotidian social practices, process of urban change, material sites, found objects, encounters and a sense of belonging coalesce. It was the alchemical combination of encounters, photographs, and memories that brought resentment up in our talks. Without me deploying photo elicitation, our interview could have been resolved in a cordial chat about the rights and wrongs of regeneration, but more seated feelings would not match the stories told.

This chapter plotted the contours of an emergent field of enquiry and, at the same time, of a form of critical analysis, what I have called the 'geography of resentment'. It is a *field of enquiry* because, like all human and cultural geographies, it is strictly context-based and connected to place, with all the possible forms of spatial and social interactions between humans, objects, and landscapes at large. It is a form of *critical analysis* because, by its own nature, 'resentment' implies the adoption of a critical perspective towards changing landscapes or perceived unfairness. It is *emergent* because it is given by the unfolding of urban change, which at times has dramatic outcomes, such as demolition or the invention of the Olympic landscape. Despite being grounded in everyday encounters and practices, like all emotions, deep seated resentment is not easily detectable and needs intense and imaginative

fieldwork in order to be revealed.

## Conclusion

The starting point underscoring this research is that the East Greenwich neighbourhood has been experiencing gentrification. My findings show that this kind of urban change – which I understand as a state-led and private-capital built process – has caused some resentment among local working-class residents. The affective reaction to urban change passes, in my narrative, through the insidious trail of remembrance of past experiences. At times, it turns into the nostalgic recollection of memories. The contention of this thesis is that this nostalgia is not just a romantic form of remembering, 'the way things used to be'. Rather, it is a reaction towards the symbolic violence of (mostly cultural, or indirect) displacement. I argued that nostalgia can also take on an active role in the everyday experience of place amongst the people I encountered. I named this emotional mundane experience of class and place, the 'geography of resentment'.

This peculiar geography sits at the intersection between an uncanny cartography of place – mapped by fragments of previous experiences, details of past (hi)stories, and objects washed ashore – and the present performance of everyday practices. It is exactly this gap, between personal expectations (built in social and collective history) and the perceived distribution of resources (such as urban regeneration), which generates 'bad feelings'. These are complex, memory-laden, and slow brewing emotions which require deep ethnographic analysis and an innovative multisensorial approach (in the present work, photo elicitation and walking tours). It is the alchemical combination of gentrification, encounters, memories and photography which makes resentment manifest, beyond the 'street talk', the facile racist utterance to which media and political discourses have made people accustomed.

I have positioned my findings in conflictual city space as the privileged site for identity formation and class struggle. The idea of 'the urban' that I fostered is one packed with signs from conflicting pasts and uncertain future trajectories. My data, made by the mix of interviews, photographs, and participant observation, showed that the struggle at the level of the symbolic between 'old' and 'new' East Greenwich is very intense. This juxtaposition stretches over the 'way of being' at the pub all the way to materials used for new-build construction. In this paradoxical city, overlapping pasts fight their way in order to emerge in museums and heritage discourses while new waves of migration challenge more settled communities.

The other side of this model of gentrification is, in fact, the cultural theming of Greenwich. Some of my findings show how 'bundles of silence' on the legacy of the British Empire are fabricated and kept safe.<sup>180</sup> Sometimes I thought that my thesis was somehow too radical, that after all a huge effort has been made to regenerate parts of Greenwich. Yet, when I went to see the magnificently restored Cutty Sark, I was immediately drawn to the Star of India, on the stern of the clipper. It is a tiny, almost unnoticeable, detail in a forest of symbols bolstering the conservation project and the Olympics. When I excitedly pointed it out to my young son, he asked what India has got to do with Greenwich. No explanation is given to an eye untrained to read the fading or hidden symbols of the British imperial legacy. While one version of history is victorious and fabricates themes for 'the city yet to come'<sup>181</sup> – sponsoring *de facto* the cultural and material displacement of working-class residents – the other is pushed aside, hidden or neglected. Of this we can only collect fragments hinting at people's everyday experience of social reproduction and urban life. Or we can hope for uncanny ghosts to open new possibilities for our senses, trained at

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180 See Wemyss, 2009

181 This expression is borrowed from Simone (2004).

thinking that the Empire is something far away in time and space.

Throughout the thesis, I discussed current debates around gentrification and focused on indirect displacement. This takes into account changes in accepted codes of behaviour, replacement of material practices, and the devaluing of historical accumulated assets – such as use-value of dwelling, practices of social reproduction and haptic sets of skills. Thanks to photo elicitation, I was able to collect more deep-seated feelings about 'place'. However, photographs are powerful and ambiguous artefacts which speak both of a moment in the past, frozen by the shutter speed, and of the understanding that viewers have of it in the present. This process is a reflective assemblage made of photographer's intentions, symbolic appropriation, and audience's previous experiences.<sup>182</sup> Viewers relate to their own history in order to decode photographic meanings. People remember. Their memories are always about a 'where' more than a 'when'. The topographies against which memories are projected often present an uncanny edge, fruit of imagination, dreams, desire and repulsion. A bit like photographs, which are always about something specific but they never speak of any truth. At the junction between conflicting perceptions of past experiences and photographs' trembling meanings, ghosts make their appearance. They sometimes recall fragments of past injuries or bring sudden illuminations. Ghosts convey affection.

In the last chapter I investigated the complexities of remembering. Drawing on some critiques of non-representational geographies, I engaged with a notion of nostalgia that is active and critical of the present. A contention of this research is that, at times, resentment is expressed as a form of resistance and refusal of mainstream discourses and cultural codes infused in gentrification. In other words, nostalgia generated by dissatisfaction can be an important form of awareness of the 'symbolic

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182 See Berger and Mohr 1982.

violence', which gentrification is understood to perpetrate, an aspect of the 'emotional politics of class' (Skeggs 1997).

There is a long-standing suspicion within radical thinking around nostalgia, rightly being seen as a generator of conservative positions. It might be the case that this critique sometimes falls short of generalisation and that, moreover, does not take into account a model of class analysis which is dynamic and context-based. Paradoxically in fact, class is seen as a homogeneous category while it also becomes place-bound. It takes more than one metonymic association to move from a generic idea of the working-class to a specific geographic location, the 'community'.<sup>183</sup> What's worse, this 'communitarian' set of discourses works together with legacy of British Empire and with its fading impact on the formation of the everyday from public memory. It becomes then 'normal' for social scientists and the media to produce caricatures of 'White EastEnders' as either forgotten victims or endured racists.<sup>184</sup>

However, it is not around racism that I conveyed my analysis, although this is not excluded from some of the participants' responses. In my findings, it is rather 'class racism' which generates resentment. By that I mean a systematic, discursive and institutional, devaluation of working-class social practices, values, and cultural heritage as a necessary pre-condition for gentrification.<sup>185</sup> This is particularly evident in my research in relation to the uses of the riverside as a space for leisure, entertainment, social reproduction, work, social activities, and local knowledge. To the extent that the 'gentrification frontier' has advanced in this part of London, a

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183 See Back 1996.

184 See Michael Keith's response to Dench (2006) in Keith, 2006.

185 As Balibar has it: '[class racism] is maximum possible closure where social mobility is concerned, combined with maximum possible openness as regards the *flows* of proletarianization (Balibar 2010, 376).



process of devaluation of working-class people's own dispositions, towards the previously unrestricted and accessible spaces of their neighbourhood, has occurred. I was able to map this with the aid of a longitudinal observation through the lens of my camera. I hinted at how activities along the riverside have been increasingly restricted under Health and Safety regulations, work opportunities eroded by the de-industrialisation of the area, and how spaces of socialisation are being converted into trendy and organic privatopias ('greasy spoon' cafés become European bistros) for tourists or gastronomy-dwellers. In this process, there is not just a direct reduction of possibilities for local residents (e.g. their access to the increasingly expensive market for houses or to public space), but there has occurred a violation of a whole 'way of being' of working-class residents, that is, of their dispositions and social practices. Therefore, I insist that gentrification is not the neutral or beneficial phenomenon that some literature and government agencies attempt to project. Rather, gentrification is a class based reorganisation of the urban space for the benefit of more affluent (in both cultural and economic assets) middle-class people.

It is somehow refreshing to read and participate in the debate between Chris Hamnett and Tom Slater about the nature and effects of gentrification. In Chapter 1, I contended that the main reason of disagreement between these scholars is in their distinctive idea of class and the indicators from which this idea derives. For the former, class fits neatly into a structural statistical framework, a 'Goldthorpean type of employment aggregate approach to class analysis' (Hamnett 2010a, 182). Social class is an empirical question there, 'one that involves totting up the amount of people who fit into (dubious) occupational categories' (Slater 2010: 173). Instead, Slater never clearly and conclusively defines class as a category, keeping the concept open and fluid, as a social relationship and a process non reducible to measurement.

My analysis seeks to contribute to this debate in three ways: firstly, it wants to hold on to the critical edge in gentrification studies, by re-establishing the centrality of class displacement. Secondly, it encompasses broader meanings of displacement, by discussing the affective perceptions of changes in the everyday practices of working-class residents in East Greenwich. Finally, it rejects positive appraisals of gentrification by focusing on the hidden injuries that such a displacement inflicts.

I suggest that digging through the pile of wreck that progress has left behind may fruitfully be understood as part of a radical attempt to recover working class experience. This effort should contest dominant representations of working class people and places. Making visible what has been forgotten or purposefully erased in terms of public policies is then the aim of this research, which looks at the texture of displacement from a working-class perspective. I agree with Slater that words such as 'relocation', 'reurbanisation', 'residentialisation', and other sugar-coated definitions of urban change have the sole intent of 'stripping the process they are describing of its social class character, meaning and implications' (Slater 2006, 214).

There is a sense that the affective reaction to gentrification that I picked up from my encounters, resentment, is strictly linked to nostalgia. However, as Bonnett (2010) maintains, it is about having an understanding of the 'chronic nature' of nostalgia within the modern imagination, of the 'inextricable ties' between resistance to displacement and resistance to urban process of capital. This has gained space to thrive because certain urban change (gentrification, de-industrialisation, the commodification of public space, the Olympics, the privatisation of riverside, the precarization of labour) is passing and will not, or cannot, take everybody on board. Resentment might be the outcome of the awareness that this history has been repeated in the past, and all the other pasts have crashed into it. This is what, in Benjaminian terms, re-opens the present to the previous struggles (and falls),

whenever it is possible to awaken the dead and accomplish part of the work that the Angel of History has not been allowed to start (Benjamin 1940, IX). I come away from this research experience with the certainty that a 'regenerated' East Greenwich will not be an exciting place without a strong presence of working-class residents alongside new buyers in the private market for houses. My latest photobook (2011) evokes spaces and ghosts through which the culture of the former can find a possibility of being; where 'the performances of memory remain visible, audible, and kinaesthetically palpable to those who walk in the cities along its historical rim' (Roach 1996, 285). In this city, however, tensions between being and becoming (Keith, 2008) and between authenticity and syncretism will keep haunting us.

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