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Gentrification Interrupted in Salford, UK: From New Deal to “Limbo-Land” in a Contemporary Urban Periphery

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Abstract

This paper examines two potential lacunae in understanding how low income residents experience contemporary state-led gentrification using a case study of neighbourhood restructuring in Salford, UK 2004 - 2014. The first derives from the symbolic politics preparing the ground for neighbourhood ‘redevelopment’ and housing demolition. The second relates to the blighted social landscape which emerges with the subsequent stalling of this project. A focus on ‘before’ and ‘after’ is adopted in order to disrupt the linear policy and ‘effects’ temporalities that much qualitative gentrification research tends to reproduce. We see how state-led neighbourhood restructuring does not simply displace, but carries residents from ‘empowerment’ to abandonment and transfers their struggle into limbo. As such, the paper demarcates challenges and opportunities for resident mobilisation inherent in a vacillating urban renewal programme, powerful in its inception but which has since ‘hit the buffers’ (Lees 2013) in light of global and municipal fiscal crises.

Introduction

“Sensitivity is something to bear in mind on the issue of gentrification as it can polarise opinion.”
Yvette Cooper, UK Minister for Housing and Regeneration, Manchester 2004

In light of recurring fiscal calamities, there has been a surge in crises affecting cities in the early 21st century reflected in economic depressions, social unrest, savage disinvestment and multiple dispersals and exclusions. One important aspect of these crises in the Global North has been to unsettle regeneration projects, the capital accumulation processes they support and the urban governance landscapes through which they are managed. Whilst blight and economic depression are being felt keenly across numerous urban agglomerations, the specific focus in this paper is on those living through crises in state-backed urban renewal in a city which appears to be struggling to maintain a grip of its social restructuring levers in response to market downturns. As urban renewal programmes have ‘hit the buffers’ (Lees 2013) in the UK, it is deemed vital here that the impact on those communities previously constructed as ‘empowered’ partners or considered targets for regeneration must be considered. This presents fresh questions for analysing the harms of gentrification and resistance in a phase of policy and market flux. As we know, gentrification is inscribed with injustice (Smith, 1996) and displacements of numerous kinds (Marcuse, 1985). The goal of this paper is not to quarrel with, but to expand understandings of these inscriptions. To do so it looks at the temporalities, localised politics and operational precarities of state-led gentrification in the UK’s deindustrialised contemporary urban periphery. It does not foreground – as some critical gentrification scholars have – how low income populations are forced to live ‘with’ tangible gentrification and displacement effects per se, but how they must inhabit ambiguous and

vulnerable phases of ‘before’ and ‘after’ gentrification processes that engender transformations which they struggle to resist but which are also struggling to take root in a city particularly exposed by fiscal crises. By analysing the linkages and fractures between these two different, but interlinked phases, we can see how ‘communities’ are assembled, spatial transformations are institutionally formulated and populations are abandoned: all machinations of a gentrification programme – buffeted by mismatched policy and fiscal cycles – that envelops citizens, invites resistance but elongates its final blows to agonising lengths.

The paper emphasises how state-led or backed redevelopment and gentrification projects can be fitful, drawn out affairs, vulnerable to fiscal and market vagaries. Harnessing capital and securing agreeable institutional arrangements takes time as does securing resident ‘consent’. In highlighting the harm and injustice caused by gentrification projects within peripheral and vulnerable contexts, more attention needs to be paid to these lags and precarities. Some scholars have looked at the temporality of gentrification to do this. For example, research informs us that during the early, preparatory time period of state gentrification planning, resident resistance (where it exists) can be neutered by state-led intimidation, bribery or forced eviction (for example, Sakizlioglu, 2014), by a strategy of ‘divide and rule’ in which residents are encouraged to reproduce institutionalised social divisions (see Sakizlioglu and Uitermark, 2014) and through territorial stigmatisation of specific populations or localities (see Lees, 2013). For inhabitants of targeted districts, scholars have also documented a period of relative calm when residents struggle to come to terms with momentous redevelopment plans (see Gans, 1962) whilst in smaller contexts, there are still opportunities for well organised residents to subvert or resist demolition programmes by mobilising community and wider public support (see Watt, 2013).

In the neighbourhood under study in this paper – Charlestown and Lower Kersal (CHALK) in Salford, Greater Manchester – ‘regenerated’ between 2001-2011 by the New Labour government’s New Deal for Communities (NDC) programme, the early period of the intervention was typified by an ambiguous phase of intimidation and resistance as well as attempts at community consultation and empowerment – all against a backdrop of weakened community and class-based resistance. This seemed to presage a classic third-wave gentrification project governed through a state-civil-market ‘partnership’ (Hackworth and Smith, 2001) and there were similarities with Lees’ (2013) account of the ‘injustices’ of UK urban renewal policies. However, unlike in the more profitable, higher profile inner-London Aylesbury estate discussed by Lees, CHALK NDC, seeking to ‘renew’ the divested inner periphery of a provincial city, was less bold in its stigmatising of public housing. Importantly for this paper, CHALK NDC spent its early years trying to orchestrate a ‘positive’ case for neighbourhood change through the assembling of community alliances, discourses and ‘publics’ exploiting the diverse social and physical geography of the area and its disinvested infrastructure. This paper investigates these orchestrations as well as the forms, relations and weaknesses of residents’ resistance to them. I seek, following Sakizlioglu (2014), to insert a stronger sense of temporality into understandings of restructuring and displacement to illustrate how residents get embroiled in important affective struggles over symbolic, not just material, incursions or pressures on their homes and social fabrics.

I also seek to understand how these struggles play out once the wheels of capital have stopped turning. Whilst gentrification scholarship has addressed a range of lived experiences including those of gentrifiers (Butler and Robson, 2003) in situ residents (Doucet, 2009) and displacees (Atkinson, 2000), this body of work tends to almost always take place once a gentrification / displacement process or programme is in motion. Even Sakizlioğlu (2014) and Lees' (2013) recent contributions to a temporal analysis of gentrification were rooted in neighbourhoods apparently changing inexorably and sequentially. This overlooks the impacts of state-backed gentrification programmes when they stall or fail to restructure and provide returns on investment, a feature of urban regeneration projects in light of recent, recurring financial crises. This is not to get carried away. We know that the state and its development partners can absorb such shocks and delay, pause then accelerate restructuring projects as necessary (see Sakizlioğlu and Uitermark, 2014), but perhaps, as municipalities have stretched 'urban renewal' projects into more precarious speculations in city peripheries (Hackworth and Smith, 2001) it is timely to consider how these seemingly relentless neoliberal extraction projects are faring and how they can be susceptible to interruption within a fractured urban governance landscape. Could we have witnessed a recent process of 'de-gentrification' in the deindustrialised North (see Hackworth and Smith, 2001; p468) or be seeing the ability of the state to back gentrification pushed to breaking point? Using CHALK as an example of this policy precarity, the paper seeks to attenuate considerations of gentrification-harm to include, not only tangible evictions and displacements, but the absences, limbos and opportunities occurring within these interruptions. The paper raises the questions of whether we can expect greater instability in urban restructuring projects, how this will affect low income residents seeking to resist and / or manage change and where it leaves local and national states, such keen supporters of gentrification in the pre-bust era.

Methodology

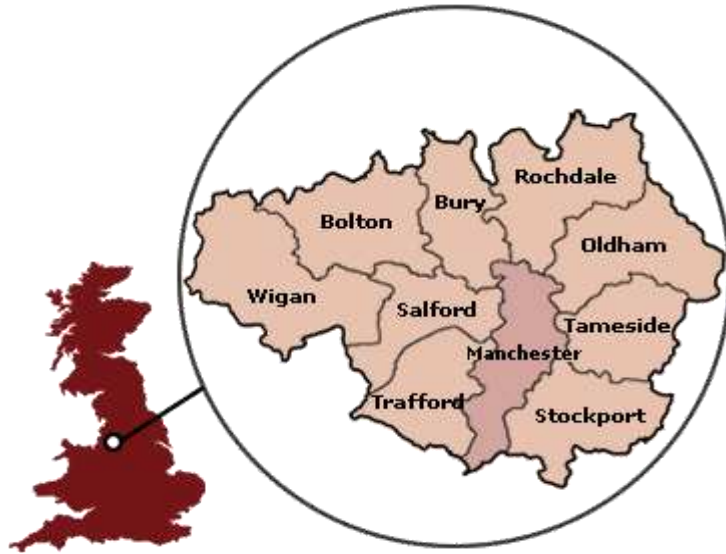
The paper utilises empirical data from two phases of research undertaken in CHALK, the first in 2003-4, followed up in 2013-14. The initial qualitative research included 45 interviews with a cross-section of residents, encompassing men and women in four age groups and three housing tenures (public tenant, private owner, private renter). The sample included those residents sympathetic to NDC (including 4 elected representatives on the NDC board), those critical of NDC and those without clear NDC-related positions or agendas. Reflecting the prevailing ethnicity of CHALK at the time all respondents were White British and the majority were in low paid or informal employment. The majority had also lived in CHALK for a minimum of ten years. This initial research also consisted of 11 interviews with stakeholders in CHALK. These included municipal officials, community liaison workers, paid community support workers and the local police sergeant. Phase two of my research in 2013-14 involved collecting official council documentation and newspaper articles as well as interviewing (to date) 5 residents and 3 ex-NDC stakeholders (1 community representative and 2 officers) to get their perspectives on what had happened.

In this paper, I draw mainly on my 2003-4 interviews with CHALK residents and more recent documentary research to offer a broad account of the contours of resistance to neighbourhood restructuring in one district. The analytical focus on temporality offered here therefore, is rooted in the spatiality of gentrification in one locality. Two caveats before moving on. Firstly, evidence suggests that fiscal crises will be absorbed and municipalities will continue to induce and exploit rent gaps and every signal suggests CHALK will be ‘successfully’ restructured along these lines in due course. I am suggesting it is worth reflecting on the vulnerability of one bombastic formulation of urban renewal policy and how its ebb and flow offers glimpses into the fluctuating injustices with which some citizens must reckon during state-led gentrification. Secondly, in terms of the data presented here I do not claim any unitary reading of acquiescence or resistance on the part of any social group on the basis of age, gender or even housing tenure, given both cautious support for and repudiation of the regeneration were expressed by a range of respondents. That is, I did not find any particular gender, age or ethnic character to the resistance in CHALK beyond some of the nuances noted below. In terms of class, temporary or fragile resident support for neighbourhood development from a deracinated working class lacking radical support in a city engaged in fundamental class-based restructuring (Hackwork and Smith, 2001) should not be a surprise or detract from the symbolic/structural violence being meted out in this case, in fact it intensifies the need for analysis.

Situating Salford, 2003

The City of Salford, Lancashire, England. The ‘third way’ New Labour Government has been in power in London since 1997 and at a municipal level, Salford city council has been controlled almost uninterrupted by the Labour Party since 1935. The population has been steadily decreasing since the 1940s but around 220,000 people are living in the city. Whilst there are pockets of wealth at the city outskirts, Salford as a whole is the 4th most deprived local authority area in the North West of England and the 28th most deprived (from 152) nationally (Salford Partnership 2002: 7). Salford’s industrial heritage is vast and still visible. Rapid 19th century industrialisation built up around the local cotton industry precipitating population expansion and urbanisation (Frow and Frow 1984: 3) and it is located on the edge of the Lancashire coalfield. It was visited, famously, by Engels in 1844 and the city was an important site for the British labour movement with the famous Chartist gathering on Kersal Moor taking place in 1839. As deindustrialisation took hold in the late 20th century, over one third of the city’s employment base was lost (Salford Partnership 2002; 7), a reputation for blight and decay was allowed to take hold and parts of Salford became peripheral and disinvested.

Figure 1: Location of Salford in the Greater Manchester conurbation



Salford, along with much of the deindustrialised English North, is in the course of being tortuously re-narrated as dynamic and cosmopolitan. Nearby, (see figure 1) the more illustrious city of Manchester has become the post-industrial renaissance city par excellence with the flourishing of new consumption spaces for loft-living, shopping and 'alternative' lifestyles (Binnie & Skeggs 2004) and is bidding to host mega-events (see Ward 2003). In Northern port cities such as Newcastle and Liverpool, the state is leveraging its boom-time windfalls into 'glamour' renaissance projects, whilst smaller scale, but equally controversial policy brainwaves such as Housing Market Renewal and NDC are restructuring both inner and peripheral urban neighbourhoods and districts (see Allen 2007; McCulloch 2004; Wallace 2010a). Salford is heavily implicated in these boosterist agendas. It's expansive quayside and docklands district, closed since the early 1980s, is now 'Salford Quays' and houses a five star hotel and arts centre, the Imperial War Museum North and soon, the BBC MediaCity complex. All of this is in keeping with the desire to *"reinvent the central Manchester conurbation as the major waterfront destination in Northern England"* (Environment Agency, 2007).

However, within 2-3 miles of this prestige hub, are a number of inner-city districts facing a shortage of employment and disinvested public housing stock. In response, the city council is seeking to align itself with the numerous 'competitive' regeneration funding opportunities emerging from central government and the EU. New governance structures emphasising market-led transformation are also seeking to change the image of Salford and leverage private sector resources (Christophers 2008, p2322). The forms of 'regeneration' offered by these programmes are varied and encompass remedial urban welfare but also third-wave gentrification projects (Hackworth and Smith, 2001) emphasising urban restructuring of the inner city (Henderson, Bowlby and Raco, 2007), allied explicitly to improvements in 'investor confidence' in Salford, Manchester and North West regions (Manchester Salford Pathfinder 2006). A city council rebranding narrative is also attempting to shift perceptions from sluggish and working class to stylish and dynamic to stem the loss of middle class professionals and instil 'aspiration' within poorer communities (see Henderson, Bowlby and Raco, 2007). Then-council

chief executive John Willis' states that the paintings by Salfordian artist LS Lowry¹ of a "grimy industrial Salford ... is not the image the council or I want to take into the 21st century...there is huge work to do to turn Salford into a place where people aspire to live" (Manchester Evening News 2003: 4).

A 'New Deal' for CHALK

CHALK NDC ran from 2001-2011². This 'community', branded as such for the purposes of gaining funding from central government was an amalgam of various housing estates and sub-districts that fell within the electoral wards of Kersal and Irwell Riverside and was not therefore the classic British 'sink' estate at which NDC was targeted elsewhere in England (see Lees, 2013). Salford Quays is situated in the nearby Ordsall ward (see figure 2).

Figure 2: Location of CHALK in Salford



The NDC programme offered funding for ten year neighbourhood initiatives in 'deprived' communities across England between 2001-2011 and was designed to stimulate 'partnerships' with local residents to deliver additional investment in public services.

CHALK is situated in a basin of the River Irwell (see figure 3). Historically a rural Lancashire 'out-township' (Garrard, 1983), industrialisation saw a large white working class settle in the area that then amalgamated with the Salford municipality. Workers were housed in classic red-brick Victorian English terraced housing near to cotton and flax mills and the local colliery. Over the

course of the 20th century, this housing became mixed with tower blocks and low rise 'Radburn'-style public housing as planners intervened to address the city's slum conditions and housing shortages. By 2003, CHALK had a population of approximately 9000 people, a relatively high unemployment rate and some sub-areas rated amongst the most 'deprived' in the country. It had a housing tenure mix of approximately 50% (highly concentrated) public housing and 50% private ownership (encompassing owner occupation and a smaller private rental sector). CHALK has been "*edged out of sight*" by the arterial A6 road built in the mid 20th century to improve access to the city centre (Mellor 2002, cited in Christophers 2008, p2323).

Figure 3: Aerial picture of CHALK



CHALK in 2003 was far from a gentrifying district. It did have a significant number of owner-occupied dwellings, including council houses purchased by tenants under Margaret Thatcher's infamous Right to Buy discount scheme, but it was also an area with poorly maintained public housing, substandard infrastructure and a scattering of light industrial units. It was a largely settled community; predominantly white working class encompassing multi-generational families. Residential mobility was relatively low although transience was growing within a buoyant private rental sector, home to increasing numbers of new immigrants and refugees.

Orchestrating alliances and legitimising change

Between 2001-2004 CHALK NDC set about engaging and consulting residents on local regeneration 'priorities' and setting up the appropriate committees and delivery boards. The 21 strong NDC steering group was comprised of representatives from various municipal agencies as well as 8 local residents, including the chair, voted in through community elections. These residents were well known from their involvement in previous community projects and stood for election in their respective sub-areas largely unopposed. They were all white, all over 40 years old, all long term residents, equal men and women (the chair was female) and lived in a mix of housing tenures. Other residents at this stage were, in theory, able to articulate needs and concerns through these representatives or by attending one of the 6 public NDC 'task'

groups. They were also canvassed regularly about their aspirations for the regeneration in a phase of 'consensus building' (Lees, 2013, p10). Addressing crime, unemployment and the quality of the built environment were the early priorities to emerge and one early NDC-sponsored consultation found that residents had 'no appetite for (housing) demolition, just renovation' (see Wallace 2010a, p65).

However, by 2004 these arrangements began to be challenged when the strategic priorities of the regeneration began to take on a different hue. An audit by Salford's Housing Market Renewal programme (a government initiative explicitly designed to restructure 'low-demand' housing markets) advised that CHALK would need significant demolition and surgery of its housing stock (Central Salford URC 2006). The local authority concurred, stating later that: "*a comprehensive programme of intervention was required to ensure the area's renewal*" (Salford City Council 2006). Many NDC across England produced housing 'remodelling' schemes in the mid 2000s, some supported by HMR funding (see NRU, 2004), and CHALK NDC proposed a 'Development Framework' masterplan in early 2004. A building programme of 2500 new dwellings (including 25% 'affordable' housing) was recommended to address the area's "image problem" including the 'clearance' of 351 existing properties to "maximise the relationship of new (and existing) development with the river" (NDC Development Framework, 2004). The Framework was publicly endorsed by the NDC board and its community representatives as a necessary step in CHALK's transformation into towards 'desirability' and sustainability.

During this period, the city council and NDC board clearly felt they had a job on their hands to persuade residents (and investors) of the need for this redevelopment. However, rather than narrate a stigmatising 'blight' and change logic as found in east Glasgow, east Manchester and in Rotterdam for example (Gray and Mooney 2011; Ward 2003; Uitermark and Duyvendank 2008) their public discourses sought to burnish residents' optimism about the area. They did this by repeating the 'strong' and 'stable' (that is, a settled, 'respectable' working class) community rhetoric deployed in securing NDC funding in the first place and arguing that restructuring was merely required "*...to transform the area into a popular and attractive neighbourhood*" (Salford City Council 2006) and that it represented "*...a real opportunity to open up this spectacular riverside site and to transform this part of Central Salford*" (CHALK-NDC 2010). Public literature emphasised "*repositioning*" the area as attractive to "*young families*" (Salford City Council 2006; 61) and turning the area into "*a neighbourhood of choice*" (Manchester Salford Pathfinder 2006, p36). Despite these major alterations, there were to be no losers. As with other NDC-backed housing restructures (see Lees, 2013), public housing tenants were told they would be able to move to another tenancy locally, those living in compulsorily purchased homes would be compensated and be able to buy another home in new developments, whilst owner occupiers would benefit from the influx of wealthier residents and new amenities.

In private however, a discrepancy with public narratives seemed apparent. For example, a NDC-linked council officer interviewed in 2003 confided to me that CHALK had a very "old Salford" mentality and a "culture of dependency", requiring a "dose of responsibility" and a better "balance" ('Christina', Salford City Council) suggesting the working class character of the area

was also viewed as something of a problem in its lack of aspiration and social mix. In an interview in 2014 the ex-chief executive of NDC, by now a senior city council officer, confirmed that the fear of 'blight' was actually pivotal at the time:

"And yeah, I think the whole concept was about mixed communities. So it was about making sure that we didn't let the inner city become ghettos of any kind... I think that that was the right concept."

If the positive change narratives coming from NDC and the city council were struggling to convince a CHALK public distrustful of state-linked institutions and more used to experiences of municipal neglect, then they were undermined further by the perceived imposition of the restructuring policy on the community as NDC's discourse of 'bottom up' regeneration was suddenly exposed (see also MacLeavy, 2009). This generated significant discontent for residents who felt NDC's ethos had been a 'cruel deception' (Lees, 2013, p9), that they were being denied genuine input into the most highly symbolic issue of them all - neighbourhood change – and who felt that the message from this exclusion was that they had somehow failed their area. A programme of transformation was always going to be controversial, but one imposed, even if allied to a process of 'consultation', raised bitter questions about neighbourhood belonging:

"...The council wants to turn this into like a Salford Quays, but they're not fucking people from round here. New Deal are meant to come here to look after us and alright bring new people into the area, but at the end of the day we [the local residents] are the main thing about New Deal" ('Jim', resident: 41-60).

The Framework was being interpreted as an attack upon the incumbent community, on their ability to exercise a right to place and was making something of a mockery of their attachments and commitments. One resident, addressing the symbolism of the riverside and its appeal to developers, echoed the respondents in the work of Doucet (2009) and Watt (2013): *"it felt like NDC were saying: "lovely river, full of fish and herons, but it's not for the likes of you!"*" ('Roger', resident: 21-40). Unlike residents alienated from mega-events (Watt, 2013) and new glamour districts (Doucet, 2009) however, this was alienation from the *narratives of change* intent on pulling the rug from under the extant community.

NDC in CHALK might not have engaged in explicit, public stigmatisation campaigns of its council housing estates but by aspiring to a future of renewal and prosperity through restructuring it conflated the past and present with stagnation, dependency and poverty. These were conditions which many local people either did not recognize, or if they did, felt were generated through economic and political neglect and not by them. In the course of this struggle, those NDC board members viewed as supporting the Framework lost some community credibility. Those officers deemed to not be 'from round here' were criticised for their lack of authentic community attachment, whilst some community representatives were perceived to be 'feathering their own nests' through beneficial demolition and compensation arrangements (see also NRU, 2004 p6). A perception grew that community representatives were not being sufficiently protective of residents and social tenants and that they, despite being "good

people” trying to improve the area, had been “bamboozled...by all the ideas, all the plans” (‘Jim’, resident, 41-60) so typical of New Labour’s *grands projets*. A form of ‘partnership’ that failed to comprehend the sense of loss bound up in the redevelopment agenda would struggle from then on (see also MacLeavy, 2009).

Unlike in the Netherlands (see Sakizlioğlu and Uitermark, 2014), UK urban renewal programmes do not necessarily require a mandate from residents, but NDC’s heavy investment in ‘partnership’ rhetoric meant such a mandate was a de facto necessity. Residents were invited to open days, ‘visioning’ events, workshops and interviews with local state officers, developers, consultants and planners in order to improve ‘understandings’ and integrate resident views into the masterplan. However, it did so against a growing swell of dissatisfaction. A long consultation process continued intermittently for several years as plans changed, but by 2005, after a controversial residents’ ballot³, the initial Framework had been approved by the board, the preferred developers were named and a process of ‘site assembly’ was well underway. However, within the interstices of this renewal juggernaut a set of resistances and tensions were to emerge which told us much about the landscape of effaced dialectics and alliances that NDC was viewed as engineering and exploiting.

Organising resistance

In seeking to understand patterns of resistance to gentrification projects, time, as well as symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1991) and divisive policies, it has been noted (Uitermark and Sakizlioğlu, 2014), is a crucial weapon in the state-backed gentrification arsenal as potential displacees can be made to wait anxiously to know their fate, resulting in a gradual weakening of their resistance. This was certainly something of a feature in the early days of NDC as residents were presented with the Development Framework some years before the first demolition order emerged. The passing of this time period forced a range of entanglements to the surface as residents negotiated what remained for several years predominantly a symbolic, rather than material restructuring process. What emerged was more a story of weakened, divided yet dogged resistance as NDC planned, ‘consulted’ and inhabited its own sluggish policy temporality.

A divided, divested neighbourhood

Unsurprisingly, the development consultations elicited controversy and divided opinion. As Madden (2013) following Harvey (1989) has noted, urban neighbourhoods are structurally produced ‘spatial projects’ patterned, in part, by residential differentiation; something Somerville (2011), Wallace (2010a; 2010b) and Watt (2006) among others have observed through studies of the divergent voices, claims and social distinctions that can constitute ‘neighbourhood’ locals. Gentrification researchers have questioned the impact of this differentiation on collective resistance to residential displacement (Sakizlioğlu and Uitermark, 2014). My research found that around half of my respondents were opposed to the plans and the key distinction evident at the time was around housing tenure. This had been cemented in part by the Right to Buy policy which enabled some tenants to purchase their homes from the

municipality, some of whom then placed their homes in the private rental market and moved out of the neighbourhood. As a result, mobilisation around the protection of public housing was significantly weakened and was exacerbated by NDC's interpretation that it was specifically public housing that was an obstacle to redevelopment of the riverside (cf Uitermark, Duyvendank and Kleinhans, 2007).

The Development Framework brought some of these differences to the fore. The growing numbers of private rented sector tenants (and their landlords) in the area were largely non-existent in any resistance that emerged (only 1 of the 6 in this tenure I interviewed expressed a negative view), whilst those that did fight the plans tended to be council tenants allied with a handful of private owners and more middle class activist 'outsiders' knowledgeable and sympathetic to the cause. 5 from 16 of the private owners I interviewed expressed discontent with the plans, whilst 18 of the 23 public tenants said they were against. Further, there was no media coverage of the campaign at the time to galvanise opposition or high profile anti-gentrification campaigners to draw on like those in London districts undergoing similar experiences (Lees, 2013; Watt, 2013). The discontent that did emerge reflected negativity towards demolition allied with frustration at NDC's perceived lack of legitimacy. Some, such as 'John', an older male tenant who was not an active campaigner, thought that NDC was *"demolishing perfectly good houses"*, whilst 'Harry', another older male tenant, believed the new houses were about *"yuppifying"* the area and spoke of his neighbours who were against it because they had lived there *"for 40 years and brought up families"*. For these residents transformation did not offer any tangible solution or improvement to CHALK's problems. Similarly, I learned of a consultation with local young people to discuss the redevelopment plans. According to one youth worker, when NDC officers suggested that it would be the same community, just new houses, one young resident asked, *"will we be able to buy them?"* to which the NDC worker reportedly had no reply. Youth workers claimed young people were generally *"not happy"* at the plans, although none that I interviewed mentioned the plans specifically and none were active in the resistance campaign. Some did make the case for investment in the area (though not a 'new' community). One told me: *"we need new houses, the place looks like fucking Beirut"* ('Jacqui', female resident, under 21). This was a typical response seeming to articulate a 'sinister frisson' of 'living in a shit hole' (see Bright, 2011, p70).

Other residents made the case for investment in the neighbourhood in less stark terms, even if they knew they could not afford a home in the proposed development. This was articulated either through a sense of it being 'good for the area' or through a sense of their own aspiration. 'Jane', for example, confided:

"I think they are fantastic. I'd love to live in a river side house, I've got no chance! [laughs]...Sit and listen to the river lapping at night? Ooh what! How can people disagree with that?" ('Jane', resident; 41-60)

Another female resident 'Cath' said she could see why the redevelopment was being done and was *"not bothered about it"*. This may or may not have been because her (privately owned home) was unaffected by the plans. She supported the NDC narrative about the river being a

good resource that should be utilized and that new houses would be “nicer” and “bring in more families to the area”. She suggested presciently that the area would be “nice when it is finished as long as they don’t run out of money” (‘Cath’, resident; over 60). This was echoed by private tenant ‘Stan’ who argued that “something needs to be done to change the area...parts of it are like a hell-hole...families will move away” (‘Stan’, resident, 21-40).

A visible division emerged between tenants and homeowners. At a meeting of residents I attended on one of the estates facing demolition, there was a report from a delegation who had attended a NDC ‘physical environment’ task group in the hope of expressing resistance to demolition within a formal NDC channel. However, ‘Margaret’, one of the tenant ‘delegates’ reported that the NDC meeting had been “dominated by homeowners from the top estate” with few council tenants present, therefore there was little support for a ‘non-owner’ (i.e. critical) view on the plans.

However, the tension between owners and tenants was not the only weakness in collectivising resistance. Those trying to organize campaigns within some of the council estates ran into indifference among those tenants deemed transient and without long-term roots in the area:

“These people here don’t even wanna live around here. You can’t help that if they don’t want to be helped. So we never took this on because they didn’t want to know ... We did ask them and they said fuck off, couldn’t get involved, didn’t want to be involved” (‘Jim’, resident: 41-60).

A similar point was made by ‘Val’, an over 60 year old female resident with close ties to the local Catholic church, who told me how in a specific estate, many people (including her) were angry at the way the plans were handled and were trying to form a new residents’ group to challenge and resist them, but that many older people whom she knows could not get involved due to constraints on their mobility and energy or did not want to get involved due to a fear of repercussions from their landlords (both private and public).

Unveiled during the lengthy preparatory phase for redevelopment were illustrations of the fragility and weakness of collective mobilisation within a space divided by state policies of privatisation, disinvestment and now the amputation of large swathes of mainly public housing. Indeed, the disparate and vulnerable historical, social and physical geography of CHALK seemed to work in NDC’s favour as residents struggled to mobilise and sustain collective claims to ‘stay put’ (Hartman 1984). NDC amplified tenure differences through its vision of greater private home ownership and concomitant improvements in ‘responsibility’ and ‘quality’ in the area and a desire to ‘mix’ (or dilute) social housing provision (cf Sakizlioglu and Uitermark, 2014). This deracination of networks and operationalising of difference is likely to have repercussions for any working class residents who survive eviction and have to live ‘with’ gentrifiers if and when they arrive (see Atkinson, 2000).

Doing time in ‘dirty spaces’ of resistance

The 'before' phase of state-led gentrification in this case was not just lengthy, but was one that saw the reconfiguration of neighbourhood publics. Not only did this operate through a landscape of pre-existing division and differentiation, but it orchestrated and (de)legitimised particular scripts and practices of belonging and citizenship in the course of an emergent 'renewal'. Registers of the everyday such as civility and contribution were invoked to organise the governing of change, all mapped onto a complex space of compound inequality. In light of this, a notable feature of the resistance organised by activist residents in CHALK was that they were making visible an alternative 'public' within CHALK, one that was increasingly 'out of place'.

These residents (a mix of tenures but predominantly public tenants), launched an insurgent campaign to challenge the prevailing regeneration agenda. They canvassed and surveyed local residents, held local campaigning events and launched a poster campaign which sought to publicise to other residents and to NDC in no uncertain terms what they perceived as an illegitimate assault on public housing. In light of NDC's domination of media about CHALK at the time and its capacity to sanction spaces and practices of community action, poorly resourced campaigners looked to alternative means and sites of activity. Spray-canned slogans on posters and graffiti such as 'not another urban snatch', 'renovation not relocation' and 'No to New Deal' began to appear in some parts of CHALK, signs which the city council resorted to confiscating. As 'Jim' informed me:

"So I created signage, all sorts of things. Every time they had a fucking meeting, signs were all over about gentrification...you know, social engineering...you know, like Notting Hill and all that...and they hated it. They used to have fucking vans taking them down, so I took them to court...and got all my signs back. Because they were thieving them" ('Jim', resident, 41-60)

The programme of resistance that was organised operated partially through existing tenants' and residents' organisations but also through informal alliances and networks formed through street-based encounters and utilising community spaces such as pubs and the local boxing gym. This resident encountered a typical sentiment of the time when he was in a local pub (now closed) near to one of the area's condemned estates:

*"'Jamie' took me into the ***** (pub) and shouted 'what do we think of New Deal?' and everyone in there just shouted back 'fuck off!'"* ('Henry', local resident: 41-60)

CREST, a small community centre run on a shoestring budget in one of the most hard-pressed areas of CHALK, offered residents an informal space for developing challenging narratives about NDC's approach to regeneration. It was used to hold informal meetings about the redevelopment and to advertise and promote community resistance. The Salford Star – what was to become an award-winning community newspaper – had an office there when it was set up from 2005 to give voice to critical perspectives and hold NDC and the City Council to citizen account. In the opinion of 'Karen', the community worker who helped run the centre, NDC was consciously trying to change the social mix of an area "that doesn't pay for itself", referring to its low tax base, and was nothing more than a "sticking plaster" being placed over the area's

socioeconomic hardships. It was hard not to recognise the symbolism of CREST closing down due to funding cuts when it, along with other key community facilities, began to fall away in the late 2000s. This was unsurprising for one resident who told me that:

“NDC never liked CREST. It was too informal and uncontrollable. You know, it was messy, dirty and humble. NDC preferred shiny new buildings” (‘Henry’, resident: 41-60).

This ‘shiny’ metaphor for NDC was repeated an ex-board member whom I interviewed in 2014: *“Yes, they (NDC) loved the gloss, yes, yes. Big and beautiful, yes that’ll be a place in its heritage, yes”* (‘Hilary’, ex-NDC board member, 41-60).

Here was an example of how residents and their ‘dirty’ spaces operated during this ‘before’ period as sites not only for fulminating active resident resistance, but for enacting identities, experiences and politics which did not sit comfortably within the landscapes of engagement and transformation that NDC was delineating within its events and spaces. Residents attempted to claim and defend spaces which were explicitly ‘outside’ the formal scripts and trajectories of NDC-led regeneration by organising their own petitions, publications and community events. Indeed, Henry argued that even those residents who were ‘participating’ in the early NDC consultations ‘inside’ the process were doing so on their own terms:

“Empowerment is a gut thing. It is not about some twat from outside teaching you to stick a sticker on the wall.⁴ The best thing about NDC’s engagement was the buffet. People went for the buffet!”

Velasquez Atehortúa (2014) has recently noted how female activists in Chacao, Venezuela were successful in evolving ‘invited’ spaces of urban renewal and civic engagement into ‘invented’ spaces of radicalism and insurgency and there were modest echoes of this in CHALK’s splintering into ‘clean’ and ‘dirty’ spaces of social action. However, the fragmentary resistance across CHALK was not a mobilisation which concretised, at the time, alternative ‘invented’ political spaces. This lack of broad mobilisation was perhaps because NDC still retained a degree of legitimacy in the eyes of most residents at the time, collective action was unfamiliar for many and because most residents in CHALK were already protected by public housing tenancies, even if increasingly residualised and stigmatised. Reflecting on why residents at the time had not been more resistant, ‘Phil’ made the following observation, suggesting that this history of relative stability, perhaps entrenched by the 20th Keynesian welfare settlement, had left some residents unprepared to respond to the sudden incursion in their lives from NDC’s Development Framework (cf Gans, 1962):

“...when they decided to knock down these estates you had families who’d lived in them for thirty, forty years, with kids who had moved away. Mams and dads lived on their own. They’d been through a working class life, so it wasn’t something that was really upmost in their mind if you know what I mean, you know, to fight. And having the skills to fight” (‘Phil’, resident: 41-60).

The state's abandonment of its social reproductive function had obviously come as a shock to some residents (see Hackworth and Smith, 2001). Of course, one can ask why they should have to 'fight' a battle they did not start, particularly considering how resident disruptions were dealt within what was surely an attempt at 'post-political' orchestration (Mouffe, 2005 and see Lees, 2013, p10). As 'Jim' recounts:

*"I went into the first meeting and I got surrounded by the police because I was challenging ***** (local councillor). It was fucking horrible... by the third meeting I was a BNP (far right British National Party) member. That's how they tarnished my name, or tried to in the beginning"* ('Jim', resident, 41-60).

In spite of this, campaigners appeared to have what regeneration jargonists would call a 'quick win' when it was announced by NDC in 2004 that one street, not far from the disused colliery and identified for demolition would be 'saved'. As 'Jim' explained, campaigners conducted an alternative residents' survey and used this data to challenge the demolition pretext of an estate over-run by 'antisocial behaviour':

"(They said) ...f"uck off, there nowt up with round here, the houses are good, we love them, we don't want to move, there's no crime, there's no anti-social behaviour, it's bollocks..." ('Jim', resident: 41-60).

This reprieve from demolition led to the slightly bizarre spectacle of the NDC leadership praising the local 'passion' shown by residents in thwarting parts of a redevelopment NDC were promoting. Without denigrating this achievement however, the NDC board and municipality are likely to have afforded some scope for this form of pushback from residents in the pre-redevelopment phase and tellingly, this street was some way removed from the prime river-side zone and was mostly privately owned.

As time passed in the 'before' phase of the NDC-backed gentrification of CHALK, a contrast emerged between the "clean and shiny" regeneration project and the frayed and dirty corners of resistance and refusal. This was a symbolic struggle as well as a material one as residents sought to inhabit and express alternative socialities to those offered and reproduced by NDC. An alternative 'public' emerged to that which NDC, as a register of 'consensus' politics and promoter of neoliberal restructuring, had sought to configure within CHALK. It was one that had some success in terms of challenging demolition rationales and protecting some residents from eviction. However, as time passed the bases, sites and vocabularies of these informal alternatives gradually disappeared or mutated, not because they were displaced out of existence per se, but because the neoliberal restructuring of CHALK stumbled to a state of limbo.

Epilogue: Living in 'limbo-land'

"It is not always possible to improve places to the benefit of all existing residents" NDC National Evaluation (DCLG 2010).

The restructuring of CHALK has been, to date, tortuous and piecemeal. In 2014, the planned transformation of the area had largely still not materialised amid aborted projects, dissolved developer contracts and the global fiscal downturn. NDC funding came to an end in 2011 and New Labour's urban policy programme was resolutely discontinued by an 'austerity'-fixated Liberal Democrat-Conservative Coalition government. The qualitative neighbourhood impacts of austerity politics and the global financial crash are an urgent research gap and here I attempt to demarcate one case where market and state retrenchments have had a clear and notable effect, particularly in light of the previous sunlit policy landscape. The municipality in this case, appears only able or willing to respond weakly to market failure presumably because it has little option now but to wait and hope for an upturn in land values.

Approximately 200 households had been removed from their homes in 2014 in CHALK but little had replaced them. NDC formally came to an end in 2011 leaving significant gaps in its redevelopment vision. These were taken up by a controversial 'legacy' organisation called Inspiring Communities Together which continues to work on bringing the transformation to fruition. The legacy group is headed by the former chair of the NDC and maintains the positive transformation narrative through a regular glossy newsletter and, building on its NDC-experience, now operates as a community development consultancy organisation working across the city. This is not a spectacle appreciated by some (see Salford Star, 2013a)

Three important new developments had taken place by 2014. A new-build development had been completed, albeit late, on the site of a closed secondary school (see figure 4). This estate contains 202 new properties for private sale and 28 'affordable' homes (managed by a housing association, not the municipality), although this tenure ratio appears flexible and susceptible to market change. A four bedroom house in Unity Quarter was priced at a minimum of £187,000 in late 2013. The median annual income per person in East Salford, as calculated in 2011, is £11,714 whilst unemployment and educational attainment is significantly worse than regional and national averages <http://www.partnersinsalford.org/income-eastsalford.htm>. One of the ex-NDC officers told me in 2014 that the vision of this estate had changed slightly in the course of its development from being mainly apartments to being mainly family homes with knock on effects in terms of its profitability.

Figure 4: Unity Quarter development in CHALK (source: photo by author)



Most of the residents of the estate are 'incomers' to CHALK although a proportion moved from the other NDC demolition areas. The new estate has no amenities, is isolated from bus and train links and is clearly designed for car owners. It is one mile or so from the centre of CHALK and there is little evidence currently of significant interaction between new and incumbent residents and, as yet, certainly none of the boutique amenities that can typically accompany new-build gentrification (Doucet, 2009). As 'Alexis' – a council tenant – told me in 2014 when I asked what impact it had made on the area: *"Nothing...I still live in a shit hole and they live up there!"* ('Alexis', resident, 21-40).

Secondly, 184 homes across 7 streets were demolished in one area of CHALK near the riverbank in 2009. However, in light of declining land value caused by global financial crises, this demolition site was still empty (see figure 5) in 2014 awaiting developers to begin building work.⁵ This amid an acute affordable housing crisis across Salford and the UK as a whole (Salford Star, 2013c).

Figure 5: Overgrown 2009 demolition site in CHALK (source: photo by author)



The city council claim 20 of these households (including the chair of the NDC) moved to the new estate (with some Right to Buy leaseholders reverting to shared equity arrangements) and the rest out of the area but it has not been recorded where this group moved to.

Thirdly, in the housing estate earmarked from the beginning of the 2004 Framework for significant demolition, no demolition has actually taken place yet (see Salford Star 2012), again a strategic decision in light of declining land values and housing markets since 2008. However, 35 homes remain earmarked for demolition and several Right to Buy leasehold homes have been compulsory purchased to deliver this. However, these properties have been left vacant with tinned up windows (see figure 6). Further, the policy regarding tenants has shifted towards a housing upgrading programme due to problems securing a site developer. This is in advance of the proposed ‘transfer’ of these tenancies from the city council to a quasi-private housing association later in the year. However, tenants who are now being allowed to stay (not that they have a choice: as long as they are not served with an eviction notice, they do not qualify for another tenancy) do so in a neighbourhood that is degraded by not only long term disinvestment, but recent intensifications of injustice through cuts in welfare support and the closure of local shops, the CREST community centre and all local pubs. Whereas many residents in 2004 were keen to stay in this area, it has been degraded to such an extent that some are now resigned or keen to leave. This at the precise moment that the city council offers to upgrade rather than demolish their homes! Others are being forced to move due to the Coalition Government’s ‘bedroom tax’,⁶ which in areas like CHALK is financially penalising tenants who ‘under-occupy’ homes they have been told they cannot leave. They also continue to face an extremely uncertain future with some homes ‘under review’, which almost certainly means eviction at some stage *“because the land that they occupy might be needed for a new housing layout”* (Salford City Council tenants notice).

Figure 6: “All materials of value removed”. A tinned up home in CHALK, 2013 (Source: photo by author)



It remains to be seen if the public housing tenants in CHALK are being subjected to an ‘effective temporal politics’ (Sakizlioğlu and Uitermark, 2014, p12) in which the restructuring process is accelerated after a period of abeyance. It is certainly the case that a three-speed restructuring process has emerged reflecting the various land values, opportunities and resistances across CHALK. This may highlight a freshly resilient and flexible (rather than an ‘interrupted’) gentrification strategy in deindustrialised urban peripheries. Certainly, the view of the NDC legacy group is that the river should still be exploited in order to build houses for more desirable newcomers:

“Well, I mean there is a need for houses. You know, we have 3000 students come every year and then they all go away because there’s nowhere for them to aspirationally live. They’re seeing people coming in for BBC Media City...if the site is designed in a way that it could be, you’ll have properties looking at the river, they’ll be really nice properties. There’s lots of green space and lots of river where the site is, it’s just getting the balance of what looks right, what will encourage families to move into the area” (‘Gill’, NDC legacy group member, 41-60).

‘Gill’ did not mention a lack of social housing and the impact of this enduring development strategy on existing tenants was dismissed:

“They’ll be obviously the trucks and...at the moment they’ve got a beautiful view of the river. But they’re not going to have a beautiful view of the River when the houses go up and they’re going to probably have to live with that disruption for probably about five years”.

For some public tenants on this site, it would seem that the challenges of living ‘with’ a community divided by gentrification (see Smith, 2002) could still be a future reality. For now, patience has been exhausted by constant meetings and delays:

“He (housing officer) said they were coming down. Then we went to another meeting...and we were called, liars...he denied all knowledge of the meeting and everything. Said we’d not been

there, he'd not had a meeting with us...denied the lot of it...it's a pain in the arse...I've got a daughter, I've got to think about schools and all that, you know what I mean. And it is, it's one minute we're coming down - like I say, we've give up caring now...nobody knows what's happening" ('Alexis', resident, 21-40).

Community mobilisation during this current limbo has fractured across more pressing issues affecting the city such as welfare cuts and urban fracking although the Salford Star continues to track the regeneration. Some residents, including ex-board members, have become disenchanted with community politics, whilst other activists are currently channelling their energies away from housing issues and into other strategies, for example running a charitable trust managing community sports facilities. Others, less active, have no choice but to hope the tide will turn and their option of degradation or displacement will soon be resolved. In the mean time, some well known residents have died before they knew the outcome of their limbo; others have contracted serious illnesses, whilst many of those who are structurally immobilised experience shame, stress and anxiety about the unknown fate of their homes and futures. As 'Col' told me recently:

"It is pathetic. Absolutely disgusting...people come to pick me up, "what's happening around here, what's this about?" I'm ashamed of the area" ('Col', resident, 41-60).

If a challenge for low income residents' living 'with' gentrification is to maintain their networks and alliances amid middle class encroachment, then those who survive in CHALK are likely to feel this challenge acutely. Many of the people, amenities and institutions that sustain these networks have already gone (see also Atkinson, 2000; Newman and Wyly, 2006), whilst unemployment is high and stigmatisation of the poor in the UK is generally rife. There is little indication currently of how or whether this local struggle will re-emerge but one thing is certain: if it does, it will be testament to the fortitude of local people and nothing more.

Conclusion

The key goal of this paper has been to examine the impact of the 'before' and 'after' phases of a state-led gentrification project. The main body of the paper argued that in order to gain further insights into the realities and harms visited on low income populations by state-led urban restructuring, we need to take fuller account, firstly, of gentrification *planning* and how it operates well in advance of material change. This trains our gaze on the alliances, narratives and publics inherent in 'renewal' which ensnare and embroil citizens before the onset of tangible evictions and displacements. By focusing on the ensnaring of citizens in these pre-projects, we can then highlight how resistance is forced to confront the questions of identity, affiliation and belonging that 'renewal' seeks to exploit and co-opt. Secondly, as demonstrated by the contemporary picture in CHALK, when projects end and the political-economic context changes these forms of resistance and (re)affiliations can be left cruelly exposed by a stalled process, a partially restructured neighbourhood and raw abandonment as investors and policy actors wait for land values to increase and gentrifiers to arrive. This underpins a repositioning of tenants from empowered ally to lumpen problem as the vicissitudes of capital and vagaries

of regeneration politics shape-shift to embrace abandonment. Further, the downgrading of infrastructures, the suspending of populations and the dismantling of alliances, sites and tangible causes of resistance is likely to have implications for those working class tenants when redevelopment is accelerated again and gentrifiers eventually do arrive. As for Salford itself, the site of this ebb and flow of peripheral and precarious gentrification, we can begin to understand the city council's "casual disregard for the history, personality and culture of its city" (Salford Star 2009).

Endnotes

¹ LS Lowry was born near Salford in 1887. His most famous works are industrial, urban pastorals populated by 'matchstick' figures. Ironically, a collection of his work hangs in The Lowry gallery in Salford Quays.

² See Wallace 2010a for a critical overview of the NDC programme in Salford and DCLG 2007 for a sympathetic overview of the NDC programme as a whole by government-sponsored evaluators.

³ When the Development Framework was put out to resident vote in 2004, NDC were pleased to be able to claim majority support for the plans by stating that 75% of residents had voted in favour. However, campaigners contend that less than 10% of CHALK residents actually voted in the ballot and they point out that it is not known how many social tenants voted in the ballot.

⁴ Henry is referring to the consultation technique used in the course of 'participatory appraisal'. See Oxfam 2005.

⁵ See Salford Star (2013b)

⁶ The 'bedroom tax', or 'under occupation penalty' was introduced in the UK April 2013 to reduce benefit entitlements for those public tenant households who occupy homes with more bedrooms than they are deemed to need.

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