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The Inbetweeners: living with abandonment, gentrification and endless urban 'renewal' in Salford, UK

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Structured Abstract

Purpose: to provide an account of the multi-dimensional injustices faced by public housing tenants in inner-city Salford, UK; a contemporary, post-crash 'austerity' UK city.

Methods: two phases of qualitative empirical fieldwork were conducted by the author between 2003 and 2016 supplemented by documentary research and analysis of media articles released since 2009.

Findings: the empirical data presented demonstrates the challenges of living in partially gentrified, partially abandoned, semi-ensnared spaces. Salford is a city where 'austerity' has hit hard; where household incomes, social services and public housing tenancies have been undermined to such an extent that many live in extremely uncertain conditions. This has occurred against the backbeat of longer term restructuring where the state has been rolled back, out and back again at a bewildering rate shunting residents from one logic of renewal and retrenchment to another.

Value of the paper: the chapter looks beyond what can seem like linear accounts of restructuring within 'planetary' accounts of neoliberal urban transformation and recognises the chaos of urban renewal and welfare state retrenchment in the global Northern urban periphery. In so doing, it argues we have a better platform for understanding the nuances of residents' responses, resistances and relations on the ever-shifting ground.

Classification: research paper

Key words: urban restructuring, neoliberalism, austerity, experience, public housing

Introduction

In the UK, 20th century council (public) housing building programmes came to play a crucial role in housing working-class and migrant urban populations previously at the mercy of slum landlords. However, as with much of the Global North, in recent decades whole tracts of municipal housing in the UK have undergone systematic privatization and demolition without adequate replacement, leading to chronic shortages, huge welfare bills and latterly, a fresh generation of housing and tenant struggles (Cooper and Paton, 2015). Today, council housing has been reduced to a residual bulwark against the commodification of shelter. Academic researchers have made two key observations about this process.

On the one hand, critical scholars inform us that public housing estates, established via Keynesian social welfare agendas, have gradually come to be dismantled by a process of capital accumulation by dispossession (e.g. Harvey, 2005; Watt, 2013; Hodgkinson & Essen, 2015). This means working-class, migrant and other precarious populations who dare occupy space in the contemporary UK city are now caught in an invidious position. Whilst their labour is intrinsic to post-industrial urban economies, they struggle to find space to live and belong as city governments double-down, where they can, on 'entrepreneurial' growth and investment agendas. Broadly speaking 'neoliberalized' urbanism (Brenner and Theodore, 2002) opens up land markets for property speculation and luxury home-building whilst hollowing out public services and shrinking low-income populations. Public housing has little or no place in this project so is typically curtailed and public tenures and units are downgraded in order to generate rent gaps, (e.g. Watt 2013 on state-induced rent gaps) catalyse stock demolition and diminish rights to urban life for the poorest. As a knock-on effect, those who want/need to move into the city but cannot afford to wait on lists for dwindling public stock or afford to buy on the open market are forced into what is, in the UK, a badly under-regulated and insecure private rental sector and/or have to travel to work from the urban periphery. Those who already live there have to live with increasingly insecure tenancies, circling developers and the threat of state-driven regeneration programmes ready to dislodge their communities. Clearly, a combination of pressures in this climate effects to form powerful displacement and exclusion imperatives whereby low-income people struggle to 'justify' their continued right to live, as opposed to work, in the city and their expulsion from coveted land is validated and accelerated. Scholars working in this vein have constructed clear critical infrastructures in response, exposing the dynamics of 'managed' neighbourhood decline, abandonment and 'regeneration' (e.g. Harvey, 1989; Peck, Theodore and Brenner 2013; Smith, 2002). They have also succeeded in exposing privatization and displacement logics and impacts, helped to resist demolitions and supported 'a right to stay put' around which communities can try and coalesce (e.g. Hartman, 1984; London Tenants Federation, 2014).

On the flip side, another batch of researchers have helped validate the deracination of public housing. Drawing in part on the conservative social science idea of a problematic modern 'underclass' concentrated in American public housing ghettoes (e.g. Murray, 1984; Mead, 1993), scholars – exploring the possible impact of deindustrialization on family and community life – began, in the 1980s and 90s, to highlight the deleterious 'neighbourhood effects' on individuals of living in ghettoes or on estates.[1] In producing these 'scientific' (though heavily contested) accounts of internal neighbourhood effects and risks, sociologists and others helped forge a narrative which transmuted the structures and dynamics of uneven capitalist development (not least its deindustrialising dynamics) which produce and drive urbanized inequalities into a story about the

[1] See Slater, 2013 for discussion of the multiple strands of 'neighbourhood effects' analysis.

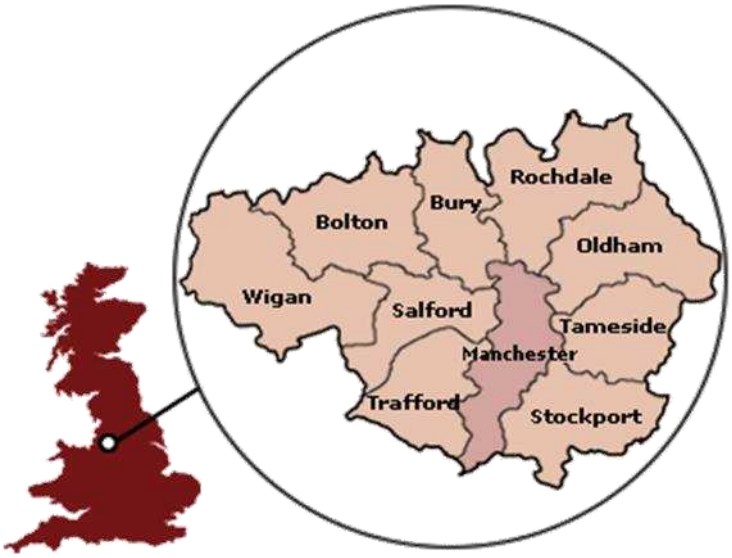
ability of public housing spaces to hold and spread moral failure. As Slater (2013, p374) points out, the question of why poverty became spatially 'concentrated' was drowned out by an obsession with the effects of this concentration; something he attributes to the enduring influence of the Chicago School's ideas of 'urban equilibrium' and consumer preference models. As a consequence, concentrations of poverty were 'naturalized', problematized and deemed in need of active 'de-concentration' rather than properly attributed to the rhythms of capitalist speculation and sorting. Therefore, rather than challenge the structural and symbolic forces which shape/name concentrations of poverty in the first place, the policy solution to allegedly deviant neighbourhood cultures was to 'de-concentrate' and demolish the mono-tenure communities which had mysteriously sedimented over time. One way 'de-concentration' was justified was through the promise of newly 'mixed' neighbourhoods. Programmes like the Hope VI program in the US and Housing Market Renewal Programme in the UK were predicated, in part, on the idea that low-income people should be moved into localities where there was a more explicit class and income mix and where the habits of middle-class people would encourage more responsible living than was possible in the low-value ghetto. Within the terms of such a 'civilising' solution, demolition, regeneration and gentrification of public housing estates was, again, not only validated, but was urgent and vital, despite limited evidence of the efficacy of social mixing (e.g. Colomb, 2007) and the harms associated with uprooting (e.g. Fullilove, 2004). It is here that Slater (2014) identifies a 'false choice' urbanism which presents a binary of continued abandonment to the fate of the pathological 'sink' estate and its 'effects', or its replacement by a mixed community utopia.

In this chapter, I explicitly side with the forces of critique and focusing on one case study UK city, draw together the multiplicity of ways in which council housing has become a site of injustice. By injustice, I am referring to how the relations of trust, certainty and attachment which secure tenancies once helped provide have become precaritized and undermined – not just dissolved. By 'multiplicity', I mean the various dimensions of harm which precaritize in situ public tenants – not just the threat of eviction. My case study is the peripheral, deindustrialized city of Salford in North West UK; a useful case because it offers an opportunity to understand multidimensional experiences of restructuring and regeneration beyond 'catastrophic' accounts of the inexorable displacement of low-income populations from the city. In this case, tenants are experiencing a four-way patchwork of harm: yes the promise/prospect of eviction but also regeneration failure, yes the stigmatization of their community and housing tenure, but also the outright reductions in services, infrastructures and incomes. As Salford has moved from its early 2000s regeneration boom through and beyond the 2008/9 crash with its attendant crises and retrenchments, we see public tenants here not only at risk of being restructured out of their communities, but enduring compound injustices on several fronts. This is reality for many social tenants who live in peripheral spaces: less a confrontation with imminent displacement, more a slow unwinding of their rights and attachments - their ability to make a life. The premise of this chapter, then, is that we need to do more to integrate and document this unwinding and understand its variegations. It is within and between the peaks and troughs of Salford's boosterism, its cycles of renaissance and its hollowing out that we find a large, residual working-class population experiencing a blend of fitful displacement pressure, limbo and cutbacks and it is on their experiences that the chapter focuses.

In Salford, some locational specificities are important: historically an industrial hub city, deindustrialization means today wages are relatively low, structural disadvantages are entrenched and public housing is widespread but under threat. There is a large working-class population, there are swathes of the city where land values are relatively low in market terms and where regeneration projects have been vulnerable to fiscal downturns. However, being part of the city-region of Greater Manchester means Salford is proximal to global capital flows, most recently from China (see Silver,

2015), seeking lucrative British real estate. The municipality has leveraged this to exploit rent gaps, host prestige development and restructure the social class composition of the city (something it has been explicit about for a number of years). Public housing in Salford, therefore, has been vulnerable for some time to a range of programmes which have, at varying speeds, succeeded in reducing it whilst building relatively expensive dwellings to attract incomers. The key point here however, is that Salford's geographical and market position has rendered it eminently investable, but also a risk; this has knock on effects for resident experiences of public housing restructuring as they are buffeted between abandonment and the next big regeneration moment.

Salford: a Northern powerhouse?



The City of Salford borders Manchester in Lancashire, North West England. A city today of around 230,000 people, it initially flourished during the Industrial Revolution as a significant location for textile manufacture and shipping, with Salford Docks operating as a huge inland port on the Manchester Ship Canal. A city with a proud working-class heritage, Friedrich Engels' famously worked in the city between the 1820s and 1840s, whilst the Chartists had gathered there in the 1830s as they struggled for democratic reform. As deindustrialization took hold over the course of the 20th century however, over one third of the city's employment base was lost (Salford Partnership, 2002), a reputation for decline was allowed to take hold and the city's population declined substantially. During this period, slum clearance programmes ensured a lot of the city's Victorian-era terraced housing was demolished and replaced by new municipal housing estates and tower blocks. The relative poverty and ensuing disinvestment apparent in some of these new estates meant a reputation for crime and disorder was allowed to take hold into the 1980s and 90s and post-industrial recession helped Salford become a quintessential 'rough' Northern city. Today, unemployment, illness and poverty rates are still disproportionately high in the 'branch' economies of the urban North, including in Salford (Ivantcheva, 2012) and despite recent Government rhetoric about building a 'Northern Powerhouse' (Centre for Cities, 2015), the injustice of rapid deindustrialization is still sedimented in regionalized labour market inequalities and cultural memories of resentment and mistrust.

The empirical research on which this chapter partially draws was conducted in the Charlestown (in Irwell Riverside) and Kersal districts of Salford (see figure 2), officially designated as CHALK in the local regeneration literature. Data relating to the regeneration of neighbouring Broughton and Langworthy are also referred to here to build a picture of urban change across Central East Salford.

These were areas earmarked for the high-profile New Deal for Communities (NDC) and Housing Market Renewal (HMR) programmes in the early 2000s and have been on a stop-start regeneration journey ever since.[2] The research involved two phases of qualitative and ethnographic work, first in 2002-2005, then again from 2013 to 2015. 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 and participant observation of a number of statutory and community meetings (see Wallace, 2010a; 2010b; 2015) for complementary discussions of this initial research). Phase two of my research in 2013-15 involved collecting official council documentation and newspaper articles about the regeneration as well as interviewing a further six CHALK residents and three ex-NDC stakeholders to

[2] The NDC was focused on the CHALK district whilst the HMR covered the whole of 'Central Salford' and parts of Manchester. See CRESR (2012) and DCLG (2007) for overviews of HMR and NDC, respectively, from government-sponsored evaluators and see Allen (2008), McCulloch (2004) and Wallace (2010a, 2010b, 2015) for more critical perspectives on these programmes.

get their perspectives on what had happened. This research is supplemented here by documentary and media sources which have covered the regeneration aftermath in CHALK as well as in the districts of Broughton and Langworthy in detail, particularly interviews conducted by the Salford Star.

Splintering city

Today, it is clear that Salford is splintered by legacies and ongoing processes of state withdrawal, economic and spatial dispossession and dubious 'regeneration' projects. Over the last two decades or so, there have been several high-profile redevelopment programmes which have demolished council houses, evicted tenants and tried to gentrify neighbourhoods via new-build complexes. Some programmes have succeeded in transforming parts of the city into expensive private enclosures, whilst others have run into problems and been drawn out, error-strewn failures. This 'stop-start' restructuring of Salford, exacerbated by the 2007-8 crash (Burdett, 2014), has produced a significant hinterland of regeneration failure alongside continuing waves of glossy, multi-million pound property deals and high-profile 'renewal' narratives such as those surrounding the BBC's move to Salford MediaCity and the takeover of Salford City FC by ex-English Premier League millionaire footballers and international investors (Salford Star, 2014).

This stop-start cycle of restructuring has had ambiguous effects for residents. Back in the 1990s, Salford along with much of the post-industrial English North experienced a significant wave of post-industrial urban boosterism and residents' community newsletters were filled with promises of neighbourhood renewal. Nearby, the more illustrious city of Manchester had already become the renaissance city par excellence. The return of entrepreneurial capital to the inner city undergirded redevelopment projects which saw the middle classes wooed back to the city as cosmopolitan consumers of lofts, new shopping precincts and 'Madchester's' diverse night-time economy. Salford was keen to follow suit. As a city, it did not have the scale and density of industrial infrastructure that developers in Manchester were exploiting to great effect, nor did it have the retail and leisure space which could attract wealthy consumers. What it did have however was an expansive quayside and docklands district which was ideal for post-industrial 'glamour' development. By the mid-2000s, a new 'downtown' culture and leisure infrastructure had been established which was meant to be revalorising Salford. 'Salford Quays' was by now the site of a five star hotel and arts centre, the Imperial War Museum North and the MediaCity complex, which included BBC and ITV television studios. Away from the new prestige of the Quays, Salford City Council was also successful during the 1990s and 2000s in attracting streams of government regeneration funding targeted at the city's poorer residential districts. In these areas of serial disinvestment a pattern was emerging. Public-private partnerships, 'creative' consultancies and community-led regeneration vehicles were set up in a swell of New Labour optimism in order to restructure moribund local housing markets and address neighbourhood 'decline'. However, whilst there were investments in schools and other services as well as some focus on community development, it quickly became clear that not all existing working-class residents were going to find a home in the 'new' Salford. This was not to be a straightforward wait for displacement however.

Losing homes, losing trust

At the more controversial end of the regeneration boom were the Housing Market Renewal and New Deal for Communities programmes – rolled out in Salford between 2003 and 2011 – which both orchestrated and funded explicit plans to demolish some 'low-demand' (largely council) housing

stock in the inner-city working-class neighbourhoods of Charlestown, Kersal, Langworthy and Broughton and build new 'social' and private housing which would constitute new 'neighbourhoods of choice' (Manchester Salford Housing Market Renewal Partnership, 2006). Across its various regeneration initiatives, the city council was initially predicting central Salford was to set to see between 7500 and 15000 homes demolished by 2020 (Salford Star, 2009). As with many other such communities across England, the goal of most of these projects was to intervene in 'failing' housing markets and areas of 'decline' and build towards more desirable, 'mixed' communities with a greater proportion of middle-class homeowners. For example, the introduction of more market housing, which was thought to be generally occupied by a greater proportion of 'economically active' people, was explicitly argued by the city council to lead to improvements in the health of the residential population as a whole (Salford Star, 2009). In the beginning, both programmes made claims to be sensitive to the needs of in situ residents and said that the transformation of estates would be governed by an ethic of 'empowerment' whereby residents were to be consulted on future neighbourhood visions and given opportunities to participate in the management of the regeneration process. Unsurprisingly, given the disinvestment experienced in these areas, some residents were initially enthusiastic about the plans and got involved in various management boards and consultation exercises, other consultation exercises were tokenistic (see Salford Star, 2011). Some others, particularly those living on or near estates threated with demolition however, were already suspecting that the new developments being envisaged were not really 'for them' (Wallace, 2010; 2015, and cf. Watt, 2013), that local residents were not being adequately consulted and that long-term residents were at risk of displacement from the area. Sure enough, by 2005, homeowners were having their homes compulsorily purchased, council tenants were being told they were being demolished and moved from their communities and bulldozing began. Proposed new and replacement housing estates would see reductions in the number of social tenancies available as well as homes to buy at prices well out of reach for most. In response, resident campaigns in the districts of Charlestown and Broughton emerged which sought to disrupt and discredit the glossy neighbourhood 'renewal' process via community petitions, poster campaigns and sustained challenge to official accounts of resident support for demolition. The Charlestown actually campaign succeeded in 'saving' one street from proposed demolition. Another effect of the gentrification of these districts was the setting up of the Salford Star newspaper which has campaigned ever since to highlight social cleansing and municipal malfeasance.

Nevertheless, the bulk of the housing restructuring across these districts went ahead and as the financial crash hit in 2007, both NDC and HMR projects were continuing to compulsorily purchase homes, evict tenants (some forcibly, see Salford Star, 2015a) and demolish hundreds of homes. Some of the people living in these working-class districts, it seemed, had no choice but to come to terms with being displaced by capital's return to Salford.

At risk here were not only the homes and attachments of residents in the spaces of regeneration, but faith and trust in the local state to provide services and support local communities. The largely working-class population of Salford returned the same party to municipal power (the Labour Party) since the 1960s, albeit on low election turnouts, but this was, by now, a fractious relationship. The city council, operating with an allegedly low tax base, a declining population and public sector borrowing constraints, was already ensnared in national policies which did not serve low-income communities well. Whilst the national New Labour government of the time did try and socialise boom time economic windfalls into social policy programmes, there was precious little change to the housing policies adopted from the previous Conservative government (see Hodkinson and Robbins, 2013 for detail on these continuities). As such, New Labour national policies provided no scope of council house building of any scale and were fully signed up to 'mixed community' and stock transfer

(demunicipalization) agendas (Watt, 2009; Watt & Wallace 2014)[3]. Further, the city council was forced, to some degree, to bid for national state funds via competitive and tightly managed allocative structures, in vogue since the 1980s, to leverage government resources for the city. However, the regeneration funding streams that were available to the municipality were variously geared towards re-inserting neighbourhoods into circuits of capital accumulation and had a restructuring logic knitted into them from the beginning. These projects were never going to offset the chronic lack of council housing provision and the downgrading of community infrastructures that some Salford areas had been experiencing for many years. Despite attempts to out-source the regeneration projects to public-private-community 'partnerships', residents continued to hold the city council responsible for their disinvested and now deracinated communities. This was unsurprising given the rhetoric of the city council in 2002-3, which so overtly talked in policy documents and speeches about transforming the city's image and social mix. This was essentially not only asking it's largely working-class population to accept new middle-class incomers, out-of-reach luxury developments and a whole city re-brand, but to give up their tenancies and homes in the process. As a result, this already parlous relationship between citizen and local state would only worsen once Salford's regeneration boom 'hit the buffers' (Lees, 2014) and the municipality's restructuring dream stalled.

Limbo-land

Salford's pre-crash regeneration experience is one which we see across post-industrial cities. People, already suffering from downgrading and disinvestment being directly displaced by demolition programmes and indirectly displaced by the changing social infrastructure of their city (Marcuse, 1985). The contributions of critical urban geography mean that this story of first-tier housing injustice is, by now, well understood and exposed for what it is: capital accumulation by dispossession leading to the cleansing of low-income populations from the city. However, the crash of 2007-8 and its ensuing 'austerity' drives complicated this narrative as we began to see the over-leveraged development programmes falter, stumble and in some cases come to a complete halt. Capital withdrew from its upgrading projects and the gilded renewal dreams sold to residents began to fracture. In Salford, the 'hinterland' of regeneration failure referred to above is one which has scarred the city by compounding housing shortages and by placing households and communities into limbo, ensuring they have no idea when or whether they will have to move. In CHALK in 2014, the planned transformation of the area had largely still not materialized amid aborted projects, dissolved developer contracts and the fiscal downturn. Nonetheless, approximately 200 households had been removed from their homes but little had replaced them. NDC formally came to an end in 2011 leaving swathes of empty land, empty, tinned up houses and tenants unsure when or if they would be evicted from their homes. We know that uneven development ensures that not all land can be a target for exploitation by capital, at least not simultaneously; hence the importance of processes of land-banking and the production of rent gaps (Smith, 1987). However, whilst the resulting spaces of 'abeyance' (DeVerteuil and Wilton, 2009) are products of the rhythms of capital, delays or interruptions in urban restructuring are often cloaked, as in Salford's case, in discourses of renewal and community development. This generates a sense of culpability and outrage at the failure of the regeneration agency and so it was with NDC, Housing Market Renewal and the city council in Salford. A familiar refrain from respondents in recent years has been that the NDC process was mishandled, abandoning residents to an uncertain future and dereliction:

[3] New Labour's urban renaissance programme was one which strengthened the burgeoning, urban boosterist tactics of the Conservative years, prioritising market-led urban growth, 'prestige' development and producing a back-to-the-city gentrified urban idyll (Colomb, 2007).

> *'Where did the money go? What have we got to show for it? And the answer would appear to be, not a lot. There's grassed over areas where there used to be peoples' homes. There's estates that have been told, "Yes, you're being demolished, don't decorate. Oh, actually yes, you're not being demolished, but don't decorate yet, because we don't know." And that's been going on for a decade.'* ('Joy', council tenant in Kersal)

Tenants living on one of the non-demolished estates spoke about the feeling of uncertainty that this limbo engendered. 'Donna' was a single parent, living with her daughter who had just started the local primary school:

> *'Because I thought, well I've got a kid, if they're going to move us somewhere decent, whatever…I don't mind. But like I say, it's nine years, nearly ten years and it's still not happened. We still hear like every now and then that we'll be coming down… But you go there (to the town hall) and there is never nothing there…so I don't even go up there and look anymore.'* ('Donna', council tenant in Charlestown).

During the years of limbo, a sense of community fragmentation seems to have taken hold as residents have moved out but are replaced by households not able to put roots down. One owner, living nearby to the affected 'limbo' estates, was anxious about this:

> *'When they came along with the Demolition Orders in the beginning and saying it's going off, people went, 'I want to go', so they just left… So of course then you've got loads of other families moving in who knew they were only on two or three year plans (tenancies)… because they were still under Demolition Order… the people who were moving in weren't planning on moving in long-term. They were here short-term... So in their eyes they didn't have to invest in the house, they didn't have to invest in the area…'* ('Paul', owner occupier in Charlestown).

In some districts where there have been new houses built, there also a sense of a fragmenting community:

> *'The new people who have moved in don't give much to the community…the houses were bought by landlords and let to students – which we were told wouldn't happen. It's not people like you and me and my son who are buying houses to live here. It's a moving population and that's why there's no community because it's not stable. One lot of students come in and after a few months they're gone and another lot come in.'* (Female resident, Broughton, cited in the Salford Star, 2011).

In a number of ways then, decelerations, interruptions and failures in the regeneration process produce neighbourhood 'limbo' effects and precaritize tenants' attachments as they await the resurgence of paused projects and experience a range of uncertainties while they wait. Displacement is only one of a range of fears at play here.

Shame, regret and stigma

Amid the anger at either the failure of regeneration programmes to progress as they said they would or to have the gall to displace and evict, was a sense of shame and embarrassment about living in derelict and half-developed estates. Residents spoke about the 'scruffiness' of their district how it was 'sad' to see rats amid the piles of rubble from empty building sites and how it felt to live in such a degraded environment:

> *'Pathetic, absolutely disgusting. I'm self-employed; I work up and down the country and abroad. People come to pick me up, "what's happening around here, what's this about?" I'm ashamed of the area. And I've worked all my life as well. I'm not on benefits, claim or anything like that, I never have been. Never, ever have been and neither has my missus, you know what I mean. We work all the hours god sends, and we end up with an area like this around us.'* ('Jack', council tenant in Charlestown)

Residents were unsurprisingly angry in the face of this degradation. One told me he thought it was evidence of 'land-banking':

> *'It's a fucking dump. It's not secure, at the end of the day… because it looks like it is people will dump on it, it's the usual thing isn't it? People will dump shit on it. It's a fucking disgrace. It really is a disgrace honestly… it just seems like the Council's soaked us totally dry. They sucked out what they could, knowing it was a short-term thing and they've now land banked this like Tesco [supermarket] for ten or fifteen years' time when the market and the space gets that bad that they've got nowhere else to go.'* ('Paul', owner occupier in Charlestown).

Reflecting on the stigma that commonly gets attached to council estates and working-class neighbourhoods, this resident also expressed anger at the residents getting blamed for decisions made by the regeneration authorities:

> *'The area was a mess because of Salford Council pulling two schools down, the car wash, the nursery, the CAB (Citizens Advice Bureau)[4] …everything was taken away, demolished and left to rot with nothing put in its place… It was never cleaned up, it was just left like bomb sites. Everything was taken away from around us and then it was blamed on us.'* (female resident, Broughton; cited in the Salford Star, 2011).

This sense of blame and pathologising fits well with what we know about the framing of council housing in viscerally negative terms by political and media elites. A powerful ideology of disgust come into play which helps to constitute council housing as ugly, substandard and dangerous and 'benefit' claimants as a deviant and dispensable 'other' (see Tyler, 2013). It is a tenure/system that no self-governing, responsible citizen should want to access and those that do ought to feel ashamed. This helps to render council housing and its occupants as 'out of place' in the contemporary city, in need of physical/moral transformation (if the capital gains are available) and if they must exist, exist in the most unforgiving cultural climate possible. Rather than being understood as a struggle between rentier capitalism and social justice politics therefore, the fate of council housing is typically narrated as a Modernist calamity birthing criminal and welfarist pathologies that demand intervention. The refrains are familiar: council housing estates are deviant no-go areas filled with benefit 'scroungers' ergo council house building is a policy non-starter for 'aspirational' cities and 'rough' council housing estates must be policed and, ideally, demolished. This is a cultural climate in which estates and their working-class inhabitants can be more readily dismissed and traduced. For those caught up in the restructuring a sense of esteem and worth can be fatally undermined by such disregard. As one resident told me in private correspondence:

> *'I have lived on ********* for 5 years I have seen for myself the desperation and the lack of self-belief among the community. I see no hope or aspiration, which for me is the saddest of the saddest (sic)… the people of ******* feel truly worthless as a community. I understand*

[4] Citizens Advice (formerly the Citizens Advice Bureau), is a charitable network which gives independent, walk-in advice on legal, consumer, financial and housing problems. There are over 300 branches in the UK, often funded by local authority grants. An unknown number have closed with the advent of austerity.

that you need more than someone believing in you to change your life, such as resources and local accessible services but without it, self-belief has to be a golden thread running through anything we do.' ('Sara', council tenant).

Cuts and retrenchments

Living in limbo or in an environment where regeneration has run into problems has a range of implications for residents, then. The degraded environment and seemingly thoughtless authorities enhance a sense of stigma and stress, whilst the uncertainty around housing undermines relations of security and attachment. Unfortunately, amid the post-crash climate which saw the withdrawal of capital from such projects, there has also been an austerity drive in the UK which has further precaritized citizens by reducing incomes, cutting services and extending programmes of workfare and conditionality. For those on low incomes, 'housing benefit' (state rental subsidies available to low-income households which go straight to landlords) has been 'capped' and a new 'tax' has been levied on housing benefit claims where households are deemed to 'under-occupy' their homes (that is, have a one or more spare bedrooms). These changes are reducing incomes (Moffatt et al. 2015) and presenting real dangers of rent arrears, evictions and homelessness from the city if households cannot make up shortfalls (Garvey, 2015; Salford Star 2013a). Locally, in response to central grant cuts, Salford City Council has introduced a number of additional cuts to its services which are affecting low-income people, particularly those in social housing. For example, it has reduced its Council Tax Benefit provision (a state subsidy to help with payment of the local property tax), thus reducing already low incomes of households even further (Salford Star, 2015b), cut the budget of its welfare advice services thereby shrinking support for welfare claimants and appeals and cut back its Social Fund (monies available locally to support residents in arrears or who have lost incomes) (Salford Star, 2013b). At the same time as residents are experiencing these cutbacks in state support however, there are extensions of state supervision of working-class lives through workfare initiatives for the unemployed such as the 'Work Programme' and an assortment of 'Fitness to Work' tests for disabled people, whilst the 'Troubled Families Programme' seeks to intervene in the lives of families showing signs of 'defective' behaviour. Just as state supports are cut, private providers such as G4S, which manages the Troubled Families in North West England, have won contracts to run punitive and disciplinary programmes which seek to question the living conditions of people managing the cuts outlined above.

In addition to these cuts and extensions which are enveloping low-income people, we see the restructuring of council housing continuing apace. A process which began with Margaret Thatcher's 'Right to Buy' subsidy programme, continues to this day with flows of council homes being lost to the private market. Since the early 1980s, Right-to-Buy subsidies have led to over 2 million council housing tenancies passing into private ownership, leading to waiting lists reaching crisis levels (Osborne, 2016). In response to this crisis, successive governments have refused to build council houses and have instead insisted on the 'transfer' of stock to quasi-private housing associations, arms-length management vehicles or tenant management organizations as well as the loosening of tenancy protections. The Conservative Government has brought this into explicit focus with its recent promise to abolish 'life-time' secure council tenancies (Mason, 2015). In Salford, the latest stock transfer of council housing stock is imminent, accompanied by new restrictions in allocations policies and tenancy conditions, all in the cause of managing waiting lists for affordable housing (Salford Star, 2015c). As council housing continues to be abolished and inadequately replaced and life in this tenure is precaritized, it is difficult not to conclude that low-income people are being cleansed from Salford and being asked to live with an intolerable array of harms. We have a contemporary instantiation of 'austerity' in the UK, but this should be seen as part of a longstanding

attack on the broader Keynesian welfare rights system of which council housing was always an important, if 'wobbly', part (Torgersen, 1987). The restructuring of council housing from an available and secure resource to scarce and insecure has and continues to come from several directions and in the urban periphery, this should be understood as a multi-dimensional housing injustice.

IN THE BELOW PERHAPS RETURN TO THE THEMES OF MIXING AND BRINGING IN THE MIDDLE CLASSES AS PER ABOVE DISCUSSION

Conclusion

The number of people renting directly from a municipality or social landlord in the UK today has declined dramatically since the introduction of Right to Buy and we live in a political and social climate in which council housing is considered deviant and disposable. Post-crash and in the peripheral spaces of neoliberal domination we see capital accumulation via the dispossession of public housing and working-class communities operating in violently tumultuous ways. Firstly, we see fairly straightforward processes of displacement where the city has been able to leverage regeneration. Secondly, we have spaces of regeneration failure and limbo where capital has retreated from degraded and temporarily abandoned communities. Third, there is the ongoing restructuring of housing and places which reduce incomes, reduce the availability of council housing and undermine the security of working-class people and neighbourhoods. This is a chaotic and unruly storm which leaves residents and especially tenants struggling to know how to respond; are they being abandoned? What scrutiny is on them? Who is supporting them? Reflecting on the behaviour of the municipality, we can see a humiliating (momentary) retreat from the grand visions of the regeneration boom years (with its quiet gentrification impulse) to a position where it is forced to pretend it is interested in protecting the people it once tried to uproot. The Labour Party-controlled municipalities of the England's inner cities are finding that their accommodations with neoliberal urbanism are coming home to roost with some now locked in constant struggles with their once 'core' constituencies (e.g. Hill, 2015).

Whilst we can detect a prevailing trend towards disinvestment, quasi-privatization and demolition/displacement, in cities like Salford a slower-moving, more unpredictable experience of council housing decline is perhaps in evidence, intimately bound up with its position in the UK's uneven economic geography with knock-on effects for welfare and housing policies at a local level. This is an experience that does not receive the same coverage as working-class displacement from high-profile estates such as the Heygate, Aylesbury and Carpenter's in London (see Lees, 2014; Watt, 2013), but one that offers a salutary tale of the lengthy and unpredictable agonies that continue to afflict the deindustrialized North; a North that because of the changes to the social security system and the lack of affordable housing in London is ironically increasingly seeing low-income families arriving on its provincial doorstep (Hancox, 2015).

As ever, the challenge for critical scholars of financialization and the urban strategies to which it relates, is to avoid falling into spatial or local 'traps', whilst interpreting and applying theory to specific empirical contexts, thereby refining and finessing understandings of change and impact. In the spirit of this challenge, this chapter has examined how the regeneration boom of the 1990s and 2000s, the crash of 2008 and the subsequent emergence of 'austerity' agendas has driven, mutated and compounded the slowly unfolding narrative of working-class expulsion from the neoliberal city. What this reveals is that the injustice meted out to council housing tenants and those on low incomes in need of affordable housing is a multidimensional patchwork. Amid the visible

displacements, a set of policy decisions are rendering low-income urban households extremely precarious. Here we see not only demolition and displacement, but gradual and uneven processes of abandonment, privatization, management transfer, land-banking, retrenchment and policy failure where the state is rolled back, out and back again at a bewildering rate. Furthermore, none of this can be disentangled from austerity and stigmatization as residents see their incomes reduced, tenancies shamed and anticipate possible demolition and upheaval. As a consequence, we have a reminder that council housing is a space which is contained and managed in particular ways to produce interlinking harms for residents, even those left in situ, for now. Critical urbanists as well as policymakers need to take heed, therefore, of the way in which citizens are ensnared in, not just expelled from, the prevailing neoliberal imagination. As for Salford, the City Council's 'casual disregard for the history, personality and culture of its city' is poignantly clear (Salford Star, 2009b).

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