

The London School of Economics and Political Science

The austerity of time
living with neoliberalism, financialization, and difference in
London's Docklands

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Declaration

I certify that the thesis I have presented for examination for the PhD degree of the London School of Economics and Political Science is solely my own work other than where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others (in which case the extent of any work carried out jointly by me and any other person is clearly identified in it).

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Abstract

Based on twenty-four months of ethnographic fieldwork that drew upon relationships cultivated over several years, this thesis explores how abstract time is materialized in the everyday lives of people on the Isle of Dogs in London. Bound by the Thames on three sides and a series of interlocking quays on the fourth, the Isle of Dogs is the geographically distinct heart of London's Docklands that had historically been home to a homogeneous white, working-class community for nearly two centuries. This changed with the closing of the docks, the financialization of the British economy, increased (im)migration of finance professionals alongside the proximal construction of the Canary Wharf financial hub in the 1990s, and the austerity policies of recent governments. Against this backdrop of a shrinking state, market competition, and political upheaval evidenced by the UK's departure from the European Union, the thesis argues and investigates four core points. First, that issues of time are vital, though often taken-for-granted and underexplored, aspects of social life that deserve explicit ethnographic engagement in various registers of lived experience. Second, that constructions of time, continuity, and money are mutually constitutive of each other and generative of widespread impatience exacerbated by a sense of time lack and imminent rupture. Such anxiety manifests in various interrelated social issues seen in part in housing, crime, ideas of belonging, and class tension. Third, given the above, that time and money share congruent notions of transaction and management, which form particular social practices and interpersonal relationships. Finally, that these points underscore a tension between competitive accumulation and social accommodation (and the conditions under which people vacillate between the two) amid desires to create or prolong desired actualizations of lifestyle and social reproduction within an ultimately finite (differentiated) living present. The thesis examines these themes through the lens of a pub with a precarious existence and the life courses and rhythms of its landlords, staff, and patrons. It follows an overarching narrative that concludes with the pub's closure, an event that encapsulates and exemplifies the key points discussed throughout.

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List of named characters

Adelaide	pub regular, financial analyst and entrepreneur, from Kazakhstan, Vinny's former partner, gated complex resident and co-habitant with me
Alana	pub regular, primary school aide, Pierce's former partner
Albert	pub regular, retired boiler technician/diver/handyman, Cat's neighbour
Amber	pub regular, healthcare administrator, Mandy's friend
Babs	pub staff, nanny, Jason's partner
Bashir	property agent for the gated residential complex that I, and others, lived in
Bethany	pub regular, financial product manager, Timothy's former partner
Big Bill	pub landlord/electrician, Pam's husband, Jason/Shauga/William's father
Cat	pub regular, manager of a contract management team, from Northern England, Albert's neighbour
Dapper Del	pub regular, cab driver
Diego	restaurant worker from Spain, Perla's partner, gated complex resident and co-habitant with me
Frank	former pub regular, retired dockworker
Fred	pub regular, handyman/electrician who aspires to open his own business
Gabija	pub regular, Lithuanian, department store worker who aspires to help her mother open a Lithuanian restaurant, Sofija's partner, gated complex resident and co-habitant with me
Grant	pub regular, lorry driver
Jack	occasional pub patron, handyman, former drummer
Jason	painter, part-time film extra, Big Bill and Pam's son, Shauna and William's brother, Babs's partner
Jimmy	Construction worker, Amber's partner
Joe	karaoke host, Roberta's husband

Judy	pub staff, Tommy's sister, close friend of Maxine and pub landlords/family, has her own small-scale travel agency business
Kasia	retired finance professional from Poland, allotment plot-holder
Kevin	pub staff, from Northern England
Leo	semi-regular pub patron, friend of Albert, father of my initial residence's owner
Luke	pub regular, mortgage broker, former greengrocer
Mandy	property developer, Amber's friend
Mary	nanny, Young William's partner
Maxine	pub staff, close friend of Judy
Nora	pub staff, data entry clerk, primary school aide, from Northern England
Pam	pub landlady, Big Bill's wife, Jason/Shaula/William's mother
Perla	West End bartender, Diego's partner, gated complex resident and co-habitant with me
Pierce	pub regular, army veteran, private bodyguard, Alana's former partner
Posh Phillip	pub regular, finance contractor who helped the pub financially
Reg	pub regular, retired from merchant navy
Roberta	karaoke host, Joe's wife
Rodney	pub regular, building maintenance manager
Ronny	pub regular, informal economy operator
Sandra	landlady of a pub near the one that is my primary fieldsite, Luke's aunt
Scottish James	pub regular, retired regional sales manager for a piping supplier
Shauna	entrepreneur of children's gifts, Pam and Bill's daughter, Jason and William's sister
Sofija	pub regular, department store worker, Lithuanian, Gabija's partner, gated complex resident and co-habitant with me
Tarquin	pub regular, gardener/painter
Tibor	pub regular, shop detective, Hungarian
Timothy	pub regular, finance professional, Bethany's former partner
Tommy	pub regular, Judy's brother, considered a 'wannabe gangster' by some
Victoria	student at the LSE, co-habitant in my initial house share, from Mexico
Vinny	advertising/marketing professional from India, Adelaide's former partner, gated complex resident and co-habitant with me
Wayne	pub regular, retired dockworker
William	Pam and Bill's son, Jason and Shauna's brother, Mary's partner

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List of music: a curated playlist

The following songs are mentioned in this ethnography. Music contributed heavily to the social fabric of my fieldsite, providing not only content and form for discussion, enjoyment, contention, and performance, but also moments of serendipity when words spoken during conversations and various social situations aligned with musical lyrics. The ‘Fieldwork Playlist as a musical artefact can help us to reflect on the discipline of anthropology and the fieldwork experience’ (Fenby-Hulse 2018: 65), and I include such an artefact here for the reader to use as they wish. The Spotify playlist can be accessed through this link:

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/5Tx3fXvcgnj1uIrsJGBJc1?si=v6APhsJzRjiq7ahiliIUjg>

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Prologue

a story of arrival and the embedded self

Thursday, 10 October 2013. A clock hanging above the far corner of the bar in the Lord Nelson public house (pub) on the Isle of Dogs in London confirmed that my fellow house-seekers and I possessed more time than we had reckoned. We were indeed early. The relief felt from a sense of having time was a luxury we had not been accustomed to amid the disorientation of the several weeks prior as we navigated what for all five of us was a new city, with rhythms, tempos, and logics different to those in the places in the various countries we had come from: Chile, Mexico, the Republic of Ireland, and the United States (US). Such disorientation made ethnographers of us all. A reflection on these initial experiences of London and what would emerge as my fieldsite allows me to establish themes and tensions that the following chapters discuss. Such discussion reveals how this ethnography itself has become actualized through various processes in which I am entangled as both researcher *and* social actor. As this ethnography explores in detail, such actualization involves processes of differentiation. ‘Arrival stories’ mark not only ethnographic authority by establishing presence, but are also a ‘strategy of differentiation’, for ‘to arrive, you have had to leave somewhere. By arriving you are not to be mistaken for those already there nor for those you left behind’ (Edwards 2000: 16).

Having all arrived in the United Kingdom (UK) at the end of September, my companions and I had searched all corners of the city for a place to live, all the while beginning our respective master’s programmes at the London School of Economics (LSE) and sleeping in hostels or on friends’ sofas and floors. One of my companions benefitted from the European Union (EU) treaty agreements and the Common Travel Area (CTA) arrangement between the Republic of Ireland and the UK that enabled his free movement, right to work/study, and residence in and between the two countries, although he chose to wait and enter the UK with his Chilean partner. Those of us from the Americas had had to wait for bureaucratic timeframes to process our visa applications. Various conditions had precluded us from applying for our visas earlier, which inhibited our ability to travel to the

UK sooner. We were not in financial positions to pay additional service fees that would have magically expedited bureaucratic time. None of us had been successful with our applications for accommodation in the LSE's student residence halls, which would have been the easiest route to secure reputable and relatively affordable housing before arrival in the country. Two of us met through a Facebook group that the LSE had provided for the purpose of connecting its new recruits for the 2013-14 academic year after we had tried without success to secure accommodation with private landlords and agencies through various online channels. We realized quickly that we would not be able to manipulate time through a circumvention of a processual sequence: documentation first, arrival second, and housing third. The legal requirement that those who let property must authenticate right-to-reside documents in person, coupled with blanket refusals to hold vacant rooms for us until our arrival in the UK due to the speed at which rooms can be let to someone else in the current housing market, rendered such a feat impossible.

Victoria, the woman from Mexico I had met in the Facebook group and with whom I had Skyped on several occasions, greeted me at Heathrow airport on the night I arrived. She had made the journey a few days before and had developed an affinity for the other three people from the LSE who would comprise what we called our 'London family'. She joined me at the hostel I had booked for £6/night (increased to £12+/night at the weekend due to the alleged 'supply and demand' of weekend travelling). The five of us began our collective hunt the following day, with the rationale that we could obtain more value for money in a larger property with the size of our 'family'. After nearly two unfruitful weeks, tensions rose as a few of us prepared to split from the rest of the group to go our own way and settle pragmatically on any affordable room available in any flat share in order to end the search, vacate the hostel, and dedicate time to our university work. Others remained steadfast in what I felt were unrealistic expectations of property quality and low price.

Then emerged a gem greater than what any of us had imagined we could find and what our somewhat self-deprecating, socially-shaped logics told us seemed 'too good for us students'; students who all relied on a mix of financial support from our respective families and governments. The gem was a three-storey, semi-detached house with generous rooms, a skylight above the top floor clawfoot bathtub, and a spacious garden with a hot tub – and, extraordinarily, well within our collective budget. What we would have saved in money we would have spent on travel time; the catch was the location over one hour away from Central London/the LSE via public transportation, pointing to how money can buy time in the form of spatial proximity to desirable locations. We decided that we could manipulate that travel time to our advantage and use the journey to read our course texts.

To our dismay, we were one viewing appointment too late. The people who viewed the property with a different letting agent just before we did – and who we saw depart the property as we arrived – paid a holding deposit immediately afterward to remove the house from the market. I recall that one of my companions remarked with exasperated humour that ‘time [was] not on our side’ – in this instance, a reference to the interplay of processes that prevented us from being ‘first’.

In agreement with this sentiment, I could not help but feel senses of impatience and competition set in, exacerbated by increasing desperation and stress to find a place to live at a time when others had already simply depleted most of London’s housing stock for university students at the start of a new academic year cycle. Put another way, we shared the sentiment that we were players in a zero-sum game: there was limited good to be had, limited time in which to find it, and hence competition to obtain it. I knew from personal experience, media, and education that these obstacles we faced paled in comparison to what other people have been forced, and continue to be forced, to endure in other situations. Still, such knowledge and reflexivity did little to change the immediate material conditions we found ourselves in. Victoria tried to assuage the situation by reassuring us with her life motto: ‘I might not always win, but I’ll never lose’. In other words, not everyone can always be a ‘winner’ and obtain what they desire and need at the *precise* moment and manner in which they desire or need it. At the same time, she refused to submit to the possibility that she might not achieve at least her *general* objectives in the end – and hence, be a ‘loser’.

Fortunately, two days later, some family members of my companion from Ireland managed to put him in touch with a distant cousin who was a lawyer and who sat on the advisory board for a property agency in the Canary Wharf/Isle of Dogs area of the city. This cousin arranged a house viewing for the next day. We arrived at the property the following afternoon with nearly an hour to spare until our appointment with the letting agent. With stomachs expressing their resentment of our missed breakfasts due to our prioritization of social schedules/rhythms over our bodies’ biological rhythms, we noticed a pub some 300–400ft down the road and reckoned we had time for a quick lunch. As we approached the building’s double set of doors, little did I know that my step across the Lord Nelson’s threshold would prove to be my entry into a social world that has led to this moment of writing about that world ethnographically.

A middle-aged man behind the bar – the only other person in the space, characterized by its dark wood floor, furniture, and panelling throughout – looked up as we entered and kept his gaze on us as we approached him. We enquired about food after a glance up at the clock to ensure that we did in fact have the time to eat. We had just

consulted our mobile phones for the time before we entered the pub yet could not help but double-check in the presence of the wall clock. So socially engrained and habitual is a need to know and measure clock time. The barman instructed us to sit wherever we wished and to return to the bar and place our orders after a look at the menu. We decided on a large round table in the front corner, well-lit by two adjacent windows, and situated beneath a dartboard and an impressive 3-ft model of a sailing ship displayed on a high shelf along with sound system speakers above the dartboard. A black leather-bound A4 menu was propped up in the centre of the table, and we had a look inside. The sheet on the inside cover informed us that the pub had been constructed in 1855 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar on 21 October 1805. This battle marked a significant British naval defeat of combined French and Spanish forces during the Napoleonic Wars, which resulted in the death of Vice-Admiral Horatio Nelson, the pub's namesake. A national hero, a statue of Lord Nelson stands atop a prominent pillar called Nelson's Column in the middle of Trafalgar Square in Central London. The brief history in the menu added that another life-sized statue had surmounted the corner of the pub, nestled within an aedicular niche overlooking the crossroads where the pub stands, but it had been removed for unknown reasons a century earlier. The history also claimed that Lord Nelson and a woman called Emma Hamilton, with whom he had an affair, often met in secret on the Isle of Dogs and reminded the reader that the popular quote that 'England expects that every man will do his duty' is accredited to Nelson.

We made our meal selections and returned to the bar. The barman introduced himself as Kevin after we ordered and asked us about the nature of our visit. We explained, and he enthusiastically showed us leaflets in a table-top display box that advertised various nearby attractions and activities in the event that we secured the house and moved to the area. These places included the Museum of London Docklands in the nearby Canary Wharf financial district and the Cutty Sark clipper ship permanently moored in a dry-dock just across the Thames in Greenwich, also home to the Royal Observatory and the Old Royal Naval College. In short, the embeddedness of the pub and surrounding area in Britain's maritime and imperial history as a hub of global trade for centuries was made vivid.

Our anxiety re-emerged when we noticed that our surplus time was nearly out, and we had yet to receive our food. The cook's tempo and rhythm were out of sync with our own. Kevin kindly provided boxes to take our meals with us and invited us to his birthday party celebration at the pub in a week's time. Victoria told him that she hoped we would become the house tenants and that the pub would then become our 'local'.

We moved into the house two days later. The owner's father was present with another man who quickly finished his repair of a bedroom radiator. This technician soon departed, and I pursued a conversation with the landlord's father, Leo. With pride, he said that he had been 'born and bred' on the Isle of Dogs and recommended various restaurants in the area, as well as the Lord Nelson. He added that the Isle had been bombarded heavily during the blitz of WWII due to its position as a supply hub for the country, and it was consequentially common for construction workers to discover undetonated bombs. This was my first exposure to the strong social memory of WWII in London through the lives of my companions on the Isle of Dogs, a handful of whom recall leaving the Isle as young children to seek shelter in the city's underground transportation network during the German air raids. There is a strong pride of having endured as individuals, families, and nation, and this reflected in the man's face as he shared bits of history of the Isle of Dogs. He mentioned that change and development had enveloped the area, with pubs particularly affected. Lifting up his shirt to show a sizeable scar across his stomach, he lamented with some humour that he could not 'do [his] bit' to help sustain the pub trade due to his wife and daughter forbidding him to consume alcohol after a recent cancer scare. He asked what had brought me to London, and I told him. Leo smiled and said that his daughter, the homeowner, had studied anthropology at the LSE as an undergraduate. He shared that she had moved to the Spanish coast with her husband, who had been given his entire pension from his high-profile finance job in Canary Wharf after being diagnosed with terminal cancer, which he had since overcome. Leo gave me his own mobile number before departing and advised me to contact him if we needed anything for the house.

The following weekend, I was the only member of my new household to return to the Lord Nelson for Kevin's birthday. I continued going back. Discussed further below, I became embedded as a social actor to the extent that when my initial research project did not work out for a multitude of reasons, my acquaintances in the pub (including the above radiator technician) offered to be part of a new project in order to help me complete the PhD.

My positionality – access, rapport, and ethics

I include a brief discussion of my interest in the pub here because of how often ethnographers seem to omit such conversations from descriptions of ethnographic encounters. Narratives about 'entering the field' and 'first arrival' are common, but there is little discussion about why those occurred. Aside from, as one example, Malinowski

being essentially stuck in the Trobriand Islands during WWI, I find myself asking *why* and *how* do anthropologists develop interests in their respective and often foreign fieldsites while rejecting various sentiments of ‘romanticization’, ‘saving’, and cultural ‘salvaging’? *Where* might an alternative interest come from that manifests in desires to study particular and often ‘other’ places? Based on the findings of one of his students, Bourdieu (2003) writes that ‘our seemingly most personal, most intimate, and therefore most cherished choices, namely, our choice of discipline and topics...our theoretical and methodological orientations, find their principle in socially constituted dispositions’ (283-4). Exploring such questions and how these dispositions are constructed can potentially raise a spectrum of thorny and even uncomfortable issues that are familiar to anthropologists and which I cannot explore here in detail. It hopefully suffices for the present discussion to fill in this perceived gap with my own candid and reflexive narrative as best I can.

Perhaps my frequent visits to the pub were due to Deborah James, course tutor for the MSc programme and an eventual PhD supervisor, suggesting to my master’s cohort that we engage mildly with the British pub culture since the ‘programme is not only an MSc in Social Anthropology, but also an MSc in Social Life [in London]’ as encouragement to attend departmental social events. Perhaps my patronage was due to a confessed romanticization of having a ‘local’ to drink in while living in London – echoing the lived experience of Dickens, Marx, Orwell, Woolf, and others – that often led me to reflect on the rich history of London and the immediate area of the Isle of Dogs. Here in the pub, people would have experienced *epochs* and the cultural manifestations of such periodizations; the sailors’ sea shanties that possibly filled the space during the nineteenth century; the heavy bass and synthesizers that several interlocutors reminisced had defined music for them during the Thatcher years (and which music comprised a considerable portion of the pub’s Spotify playlist). Perhaps my patronage came from an embedded need to establish some small degree of belonging to a new place that grew from the conversations and eventual friendships with people I had met, and continued to meet, in the pub. These interactions also sparked an intellectual curiosity in the space/place and the wider community as sites of knowledge against the backdrop of various social tensions this ethnography unpacks and discusses. My continued patronage most likely came from a confluence of all these elements.

I attended Kevin’s birthday party the following weekend after my ‘first encounter’, but he seemed a bit too distracted by the other people and loud DJ music to recognize me. His prior enthusiasm shown for the pub and for the local area, coupled with the apparent regard that others had for him at this party, led me to believe that he was the pub landlord.

I scrambled several other people's roles and relationships during my first several visits, thinking the landlady was a part-time cook and a member of the bar staff when she brought a chicken pie to my table on a chilly November night as I sat reading Maurice Bloch's (1986) work on the Merina. I also believed that one of her sons and his partner were siblings and the children of an actual member of the bar staff. Such is the nature of being 'thrown' into a new environment and the exhilaration of piecing the puzzle together, not only as an ethnographer or anthropologist, but also as an 'ordinary' person engaging with the world.

After a few months of weekly or fortnightly visits to the pub, Kevin invited me to join his pub quiz team. A decades-old aspect of British pub culture, a volunteer host wrote and presented weekly quizzes that comprised a wide range of 'general' knowledge questions. I use quotations here because of the competing ideas about what constitutes 'general'. One pub quiz team, for example, placed each year in a national pub quiz competition, whereas one member of another team repeatedly asked for 'fairer' questions or even an entire themed round about gas boilers, his area of expertise. This person, Albert, in his 60s, is the boiler/radiator technician I had met when I moved into the shared house on the Isle of Dogs and whose quiz team I joined. The quiz is how I first engaged in habitual conversations with pub regulars and the landlords, in addition to receiving a job behind the bar during the summer of my MSc year (cf. Tyler 2012: 434). I eventually became the pub quiz master during my MPhil year at the LSE before beginning fieldwork for a much different project, and several of my family members visited me and met people in the pub during these first few years of my living in London. The pub was also the site of my 'mini-ethnography' that colleagues from my PhD cohort and I each had to write as part of our training. I developed close enough friendships with the pub landlords, their family, and the bar staff that I could freely admit myself behind the bar to add music to the pub's Spotify playlist and was told by the landlady that I could call her 'mum'.

My friends and new acquaintances in the pub helped me finish a new project when a previous one did not work. I recall writing fieldnotes and a supervision report in the pub, having just returned from an event with my previous interlocutors. A pub regular, who is a finance professional and a member of the nationally ranked pub quiz team, approached me. He contended:

Take a look at this pub. All of these characters in here. You couldn't write it (make it up). You have the working class, finance people in Canary Wharf up the road, Tibor the Hungarian, Scottish James, and you – an American – all in an East End boozery that's in a financial wreck. I'm telling you mate, *there's* your bloody anthropology! [Your thesis] would write itself!

I ultimately agreed with him and was fortunate enough to have already established considerable relationships with many people on the Isle of Dogs over four years at that point. One of the bar staff joked that if I hurried up, wrote, and published the thesis as a book, then perhaps it would attract readers to visit the pub out of interest and sympathy, which might have helped its financial struggle.

The quality of ethnographic research depends to a large extent on the relationships constructed, and rapport established, with informants (Smith 2006: 355). When I transitioned to the new project, nearly half of my adult life had been spent in the UK living on the Isle of Dogs, which then became the majority of my adult life over the course of fieldwork. As the husband in the joint husband/wife proprietorship of the pub put it when I asked him whether he would like to be involved in the study, 'Definitely, if it 'elps you, but you already know everything about us. But I don't know why you want to'.

'Yeah, you'll fail for sure mate. We're the most boring, miserable bastards!' his friend chimed in before also consenting. This interaction is one of many in which I had to emphasize to my interlocutors that they had something valuable to say by virtue of being themselves. These instances point to the social structures that are inherent in the 'common sense' of social interaction, an assumption that a researcher could not possibly be interested in their lives (see Charlesworth 2000: 144) coupled with scepticism of, and often outright disagreement with, expert opinion. This theme reoccurs throughout the study. For Edwards (2000), 'it is clear that aspects of social identity such as ethnicity, social class, gender, sexuality, and age play a part, to a lesser or greater degree, in the kinds of relationships anthropologists forge (or not) in the field' (17). I cannot comment at length on all of these elements here, but some of them come up in a discussion in Chapter 3 about relationships built around issues of belonging, reciprocity, and time. For the most part, people enjoyed the comparative discussions of what 'life is like in America' and having a sympathetic ear. Some people, such as the landlady, enjoyed engaging in political debate with me before fieldwork. I told her that in transitioning to fieldwork I would merely play the devil's advocate rather than disagree outright as in previous conversations. 'Yeah, good, you might learn something then', she said with a smile and wink.

A few people said that I was 'posh' (well-to-do; wealthy; fancy), a term that can be used to describe people, places, things, and experiences. This points to a lack of congruence of the American and British class systems/structures. As a generalization that is riddled with possibilities for critique, but is perhaps helpful here nonetheless, I suggest that ideas of class and perceptions of social stratification are *primarily* (not exclusively) income-dependent in the US compared to the British class system's social embeddedness.

The fact that British citizens ‘are subjects of the British Monarchy rather than citizens of a United Kingdom by its very nature means that [the country] cannot escape the hierarchical politics of class’ (Mckenzie 2017: 266). Such embeddedness manifests in particular forms of cultural consumption, accents, and ways of speaking that shape presentations of self and associations with particular regions and other geographies of class.

I grew up in a low-income, single-parent household, but other people in my family are, as Americans say, ‘comfortable’, so I can be said to have experienced and even straddled different American class positionalities at various times in my life. Other than a lack of financial angst and perhaps some lifestyle elements, there are few social or cultural markers that differentiate me from those other family members. In contrast, several interlocutors told me that in the UK, ‘once working class, always working class’ (cf. Evans 2006). They meant that despite financial gain or receiving a white-collar job, their embodiment of what they perceive to be particular immutable social markers would always signify themselves as members of the working class to others. This aspect was exemplified when a woman mentioned in conversation that someone had given her ‘the ‘ump’ (annoyed her). Not having heard the expression before, I asked for clarification, and she replied, ‘It’s because I’m common (working class)’ (cf. *ibid*: 17-51). She thought that I was asking her why she had ‘dropped the H’ rather than saying ‘hump’, indexing an East London working-class accent and manner of speech, whereas I was asking her to explain the expression.

There is also a certain stereotype of the British working class that combines a ‘salt of the earth’ respectability, ‘stiff upper lip’ and ‘keep calm and carry on’ perseverance, and hospitality on the one hand with wily and entrepreneurial ‘streetwise tricks’ that implicate illicit behaviour on the other. These characteristics will be evident in the ensuing pages, in which I show their internal logics as a point of cultural relativism. It is worth stating here that such stereotypes were not only *not* denounced, but warmly embraced and actively actualized. I was cautioned not to replicate stereotypes at a writing seminar in which I participated in London, which perhaps indexes a double standard and general issue with the anthropological study of ‘home’, where colleagues can more often harbour preconceived ideas about ‘the voices and lives of those that live just around the corner’ (Degnen & Tyler 2017: 24; see also Fox 2014: 29-32). I asked a research companion about their views on the matter in terms of the stereotypes I mention above. Their response was, ‘‘ave your mates ever *been* [to the Isle of Dogs]?!’’, implying that portrayals of what might be interpreted as stereotypes of the working class are perhaps inevitable. The stereotypes that *did* trouble many interlocutors include those that accuse them of racism, other social intolerances, and lack of intelligence. This ethnography addresses these and other concerns.

Introduction

an exploration of time and the ethnographic enterprise

At its surface, this is a story about a British pub in London. Yet neither alcohol consumption nor gender dynamics, which have become predominant pub culture tropes, are the main focal points. More deeply, this is an ethnography about a shifting community, city, and world. The pub and the people who craft and perform society within its walls are embedded in, and display evidence of, widespread economic and political fluctuations; bubbling tensions that involve class, belonging, work, and divergent lifestyles; and everyday anxieties concerning ideas about competition and winning that correspond to broader social tectonics and constellations. Through conversation and other everyday activities these effervescent stresses spill over and flow between what is, superficially, a site of ‘mere drink’ and a fractured society at large. Rampant financialization and neoliberal governmentalities that include austerity measures shape this local and national setting, to be sure. At the root of these structures and processes, however, and the everyday lived experiences and practices that both reflect and inform them, is something more ubiquitous and fundamental, abstract yet materialized – time.

Time forms the dominant and overarching theoretical frame for analyses, and my arrival story of navigating the London housing market and UK immigration bureaucracy captures many of the different ways that some more-explicit temporal issues manifest in quotidian and other activities. Money can buy time in the form of accelerated bureaucratic process given the stresses and frustrations felt about operating within various tempos and rhythmic constraints – what anthropologists have referred to as the time-reckoning of capitalism (see Bear 2014b: 7). A long-standing ‘need for speed’ is symbolized by the Cutty Sark just opposite the River Thames from my fieldsite, which was prized as one of the final and fastest British clipper ships before steam propulsion, a key vessel of the nineteenth century tea trade races and marker of the financial rewards to be had for being first back to port with the supply of the season’s tea. Such angst exacerbated by issues of time-reckoning and a sense of time lack index broader concerns among residents of the Isle of Dogs that

include perceptions of scarcity and limited good (Foster 1965), competition, and what many Isle residents discuss as ‘winning’ in everyday conversation. My arrival to the Isle of Dogs that revolved around an urgent need for housing intensified a sense of competition, yet this is but one source of social tension about time that this ethnography discusses. Another source is in a register different to everyday time-reckoning and such immediate concerns; it is an anxiety about the perceived duration of broader imagined social configurations. My landlord’s father, for instance, possesses an unshakeable sense of pride in the nation having endured WWII, a sentiment shared by many research companions that intertwines with a desire for an imagined local ‘way of life’, which includes business interests such as the pub trade, to endure in the face of substantial private development and gentrification in the area. The education my fellow housemates and I sought as foreign students was part of our own class mobility and lifestyle projects that interwove our own life courses with those of many people on the Isle who are rather reluctant to embrace the very gentrification and change that my housemates and I represented.

Change is a thorny concept not only for analyses, but also as an aspect of lived experience. Many interlocutors grapple with the often-contradictory desires to continue a ‘way of life’ on the one hand and to improve that way of life and living standards on the other. This dissonance is met not with a feeling of apathy but rather of resignation about the shifting social, political, and economic terrain in the area and country at large. Writing in *The Guardian*, columnist Jane Martinson, who grew up on the Isle of Dogs, documents how the local working class have been excluded from the neoliberal, privatized development initiated by Margaret Thatcher in a bid to rejuvenate the redundant docklands during the 1980s. In an article that was brought to my attention in the middle of fieldwork through its circulation among interlocutors in an email chain, Martinson (2018) notes:

The past three decades have not only tracked the boom and bust of the UK economy but have left the Isle of Dogs a microcosm of the social revolution that has changed the face of Britain. At the same time, the extremes of income inequality – from great wealth to desperate deprivation – have revealed social tensions that bedevil the country as a whole.

Before the construction of the proximal Canary Wharf financial district, the Isle had been home to a working-class community employed on the docks some 40-plus years ago. This all changed with the docks’ closures by 1980 and the construction of the financial district in Canary Wharf during the early 1990s, which has had significant social, political, and economic consequences for the Isle: social housing options for the working class have narrowed with widespread privatization and financialization, and residents and businesses

have been squeezed out. Of special relevance to this thesis, there are now fewer than ten pubs whereas there had been forty in the area. In the one I selected for my fieldsite, or which rather ‘chose me’ through the emergence of serendipity, talk often centred on the changes of the last few decades that have resulted in a complete reconfiguration of the local class dynamics. The housing market has skyrocketed as the people who work in finance in Canary Wharf have created a demand for local housing, and several gated residential complexes equipped with leisure centres have sprung up. The construction and launch site of the SS Great Eastern, the hybrid sail/paddlewheel/propeller steamship that laid the first lasting transatlantic telegraph cable, is now the site of one such gated housing complex. In analyzing these relationships and tensions, I draw on the literature discussing gentrification and belonging, situating it in the wider context of discussions about time that I flag above.

The help that my fellow house-hunting students and I received from our Irish companion’s cousin points to the importance of family/kinship networks in navigating what is often analyzed erroneously as an exclusively individualized, neoliberal social order in which state and market are prioritized ahead of household and family (see McKinnon & Cannell 2013; Kuper 2018b). These networks are both embedded sources of mutual help and care *and* points of contention when people do not adequately reciprocate – when relationships formed through both the exchange of clock time and tangible things become imbalanced. One way of reckoning such a balance can be seen in the way long-standing residents proudly declared that they were ‘born and bred’ on the Isle of Dogs. There is an element of time here taken up in Chapter 3, in which the phrase evokes a sense of duration that signifies long-term reciprocity and contribution to a particular place, which along with territorialization can establish social legitimacy and belonging in the eyes of many interlocutors.

In exploring this material, I go beyond the more macro political economy approaches to explore everyday rhythms and everyday epistemologies – the political economy of the everyday (cf. Adebani 2017) – in order to illustrate the divergent lifestyles and attitudes of the interlocutors with whom I interacted. I explore the sense of resignation that I mention above, which is so often expressed with the phrase ‘it is what it is’. I also analyze people’s attitudes towards criminal activities, showing how a kind of vigilante attitude to the law intersects with attempts to determine again ‘the right balance’, whereby a certain level of petty crime and illicit behaviour is tolerated while other kinds are viewed with reproach. What I present and analyze throughout is the humour and pathos with which the consequences of financialized, capital-driven gentrification are experienced in this global city. I attempt to humanize a topic that has long been of interest to policy

makers but less often made audible to the ‘man on the street’, by bringing into it the nuance of everyday interactions and by showing how the more political-economic aspects are imbued with human feeling – sentiments that are filled with anxieties about time in various registers. In addition to showing mundane impatience and everyday angst about time-reckoning and rupture, I am, quite literally, documenting what many research companions believe to be the threatened extinction of their way of life; the pub in which I conducted my research closed down in 2019. The Nelson has since reopened under new management, but the question remains of whether it and other pubs in the area – and indeed, in the entire country – can remain viable. This precarity has only intensified since fieldwork concluded, with the issues present at the time of writing posed by the Covid-19 pandemic and the UK Government’s restrictions on sociality aimed at minimizing the spread of the virus.

Touched upon already, the social tensions I discuss are intertwined with issues of time; political and economic upheaval in East London against the local and national backdrop of neoliberalism and financialization; and everyday practices, particular within a pub, but which are indicative of concerns in other spaces that include the household. I now expand on each of these topics in turn, followed by a discussion about methodology and a chapter overview.

About time – epistemology, ontology, phenomenology

I have provided a rough outline of a neoliberal setting that I fill in and discuss in more detail below. Purely neoliberal frameworks, however, do not provide all the required tools to see the broader picture in greater detail. Particularly with regards to austerity, recent anthropological work that examines the political economy has demonstrated how the *rhythms* of state fiscal saving are incongruent with the life courses not only of people, but also those of infrastructure and finance capital (see Muehlebach 2016). Hence, in order to understand such complex social configurations and phenomena, ‘the answer will lie not in neoliberal or uncertain futures, but in concepts of productive agency and time’ (Bear 2014b: 27). I endorse this argument and frame the ethnography as first and foremost an exploration ‘of time’ not only because of the pervasive implications of time I encountered during fieldwork, but also since, as an analytical focus, it provides a helpful way to contend with the fragmentation and socio-economic diversity found on the Isle of Dogs. Issues of time were perhaps the most underlying commonalities and ‘properties’ of social interaction with which to ground the ethnography, and the very social *differentiation* that makes this ethnographic endeavour challenging contributes precisely to an exploration and discussion

about time. I turn now to craft an epistemological model for investigating time and illustrating how pervasive and powerful time is.

The burgeoning literature on the anthropology of time has taken many turns since Gell (1992) and Munn (1992) each provided assessments of the field and proposed ways forward in the early 1990s. Though theoretically and often philosophically sophisticated, anthropological writing on the subject can render studies to appear almost devoid of ethnographic richness and lacking any resemblance to the substance and textures of actual human lives that such analyses claim to better explicate through their theoretical discussions (see Gell 1992; Fabian 1983). I aim to make ethnographically informed contributions to theory, capturing what I hope to be the subtleties and intricacies of sociality; the life courses of individual people and their hopes, aspirations, and frustrations; and perceptions of broader historical continuity and rupture. Rather than work towards an original conceptualization of time, I instead choose to work from a supply of nuanced epistemological and ontological tools already made available in order to present original ethnographic insights into how issues of time shape sociality/lived experience, implicate inequality and political orientations, and mediate constructions of value and difference.

Bear (2016b) offers an overview of recent anthropological literature about time and a starting place to construct an ethnographic epistemology by highlighting three general spheres in which both anthropological writing on time, and lay perceptions of time, can be categorized. They are: everyday labour and market ‘technique’ (work and production); expert ‘knowledge’ (of bureaucratic, scientific, and corporate institutions); and ‘ethics’ (or ‘accounts of what time is and what it should be used for’ (ibid: 494)). Literature involving technique and work examines the timeframes of market exchange, time management in places of work, and how conceptualizations of ‘time passing’ are harnessed by businesses to generate capital (ibid: 490-92; see Boellstorff 2008; Riles 2011). Rather than focus exclusively on capital, the literature on expert time ‘knowledge’ recognizes ‘the finitude of human life spans, nonhuman forms, and social institutions and are associated with policies that aim to intervene in and sustain life’ of people, as well as of infrastructure and other entities (Bear 2016b: 493). This work discusses, for example, short- and long-term bureaucratic planning (see Abram 2014). The third sphere, time ‘ethics’, includes literature that contends with ideas about the ‘characteristics of materialist, secular ethics of time’ (Bear 2016b: 495). These ethnographies contain discussions about agency and interlocutors’ perceived reversals of time amid ruptures to taken-for-granted linear economic growth and prosperity (see Knight 2015; Knight & Stewart 2016). Other ethnographic accounts deal with the ethics and agency of ‘time-tricking’, in which people

seek to ‘outmaneuver, overcome, or manipulate time’ (Bear 2016b: 495-96; see Moroşanu & Ringel 2016) in various settings for diverse reasons.

The concept of a material ‘timescape’ is a useful heuristic tool that enables the integration of these three spheres – as well as how they exist in space – and allows us to trace and visualize ‘their dialectical interrelationship in mediating action on the world’ (Bear 2016b: 496). This ethnography can be said to examine the timescape of the Isle of Dogs, showing the ways that various rhythms, tempos, and temporalities (what I reframe below as ‘actualizations’) converge and influence each other. The pub, for example, is not merely the site of a business, whose sustained viability depends on various rhythms of cash-flow and the time management of staff and of inventory that can spoil, or ‘go off’ (particularly ales). It is also embedded within a community that has felt the continued effects of private development planning in the nearby financial district and local housing market since the late 1980s, which has created various socio-economic rhythms that affect the pub’s business. As I explore in detail in Chapter 6, the pub is also a site for people to trick time, by which patrons attempt to stretch and slow their experience of time while trying to foster a sense of continuity and endurance in various registers.

Aside from employing a ‘timescape’, illustrated briefly here with these quick examples, as a heuristic tool for the important task of constructing an explicit and delineated epistemology for knowledge about time (as per Bear 2014b), I must also make explicit my ontological assumptions about what time *is* (as per Hodges 2008: 422). This will enable me to be as precise as possible in my exploration of time, even if it requires an ethnographic attempt to bridge anthropology and philosophy on the one hand and epistemology, ontology, and phenomenology on the other. I will accordingly incorporate a variety of theoretical perspectives in order to understand a specific, context-contingent, and arbitrarily delineated ethnographic zone and to recognize the plurality of the world (Gardner 1995: 4). Before presenting an ontological orientation for grounding this ethnography and its epistemological framework, I must contend with some voices that would seem to advise against doing so.

Anthropologists have cautioned against employing notions of time that are ‘presumed as an ontological given’ (Ringel 2016a: 407) or models that, without sustained reflection, ‘become the universal truths of time’ (Bear 2014b: 15) or the ‘correct ontology’ that might leave little room to explore the diverse social *times* to be found in the world. In other words, one runs the risk of becoming too immersed in philosophy and/or physics (or in debates between the two disciplines about which one gets to establish the true nature of time) that they lose sight of the more ethnographic and anthropological task of investigating

how specific understandings, technologies, and representations of social time inform and mediate practice, value, and other social categories. It still seems to me that I must make explicit an ontology of time as part of my epistemological framework for two reasons. First, to challenge other anthropologists' own ontological assumptions, albeit if they are implicit or unintentional. Even those who are uneasy with a more philosophically informed ontology of time have not avoided employing language that indexes an implicit ontological bias. This language includes such ontological assumptions and Western common-sense evocations as 'contents of time', 'logical sequences' (Ringel 2016b: 24, 27), and time's 'inevitable passing' (Bear 2016b: 490). The task of writing about time removed entirely from an ontological orientation would be a challenging one indeed. It is thus not enough to make only our epistemologies clear; we must also take care to disclose our own ontological assumptions that might remain evident in our writing, even if that requires additional reflexivity and/or borrowing from philosophy in order to state precisely these orientations.

Second, I have adopted a particular ontological framework that enables me to theorize with enhanced precision my own analytical understanding of time that emerged from having conducted fieldwork. Of prime importance here is that this ontology allows me to make the argument that lived experience and its ethnographic study cannot be separated at will into 'temporal' and 'non-temporal' components, which means that there cannot be a discrete anthropology of human time experience, as this is precisely lived experience and sociality (Hodges 2008: 414). This ontology also helps us to be more exact and better equipped to examine human and non-human interactions and their material and political ramifications. For the sceptic reader who might be uncomfortable still with adopting an ontology of time, one might perhaps find solace by thinking of my framework not as a matter of ontology, but rather as an etic theoretical perspective that was extrapolated from ethnographic material and assists to conceptualize comprehensively the various phenomena that this ethnography documents, even if it is at odds with local emic understandings of time. Although I choose to frontload this ontology rather than allow it to emerge through the ethnography, I did not 'make the material fit' a presupposed ontology, but rather later found this framework helpful to make sense of what is 'going on' on the Isle of Dogs through its conceptual power as an ontological tool for crafting ethnographic knowledge about time. I employ the term 'emerge' here for very precise reasons germane to a discussion of what Hodges (2007, 2008) proposes as an ontological framework for anthropological investigations of time, which I use to ground the epistemological framework for this ethnography and now present.

Many of my research companions could be heard accusing others of ‘making it up as they go along’. By this, they meant that someone was improvising when faced with a particular (usually thorny) situation or question. Confronted with such an accusation, an interlocutor once retorted that ‘making it up’ as he went along was ‘all’ he ‘*can* do’. This brief banter captures the essence of the ontological argument that time is a property of material emergence, which is ‘made up as it goes along’. Yet what is the ‘it’ that ‘goes along’? In developing a comprehensive ontology of time that provides a more precise analysis than the prevalent loose notions of historical ‘flux’ and ‘flow’ (see Bourdieu 1977; Giddens 1979) that anthropologists have otherwise adopted, Hodges (2007, 2008) contends that the ‘it’ is the Bergsonian notion of *la durée*, as expanded upon by Deleuze (1991, 1994). I do not have the luxury of space required to present all the nuanced detail with which Hodges adapts this ontology for anthropological use. In order to employ this framework as an ontological tool for this ethnography in relation to the timescape discussed above, I summarize the key points.

La durée is defined as ‘consisting of concrete, qualitative multiplicities, which divide continuously. These multiplicities ...comprise the life and matter of the universe’ and form the ‘origin of the phenomenon we subsequently call “time”’ (Hodges 2007: 34). The essence of *la durée* is non-chronological and does not consist of a sequence of successive moments (ibid). While many of my research companions consider time to flow or pass and that the past might be said to exist somewhere ‘back there’, the concept of *la durée* proposes that time does not pass, nor can it be filled as a pre-existing container. Instead, time *emerges* within *la durée* as the differentiation of multiplicities which actualize the virtual (ibid: 34). The ‘past’ (even the most immediate past action such as a breath), for example, exists only in memory and through acts of remembering in the present, since the past ‘has nowhere else to be’ (ibid: 38). In other words, the past does not exist in actuality, but rather virtually, in what might helpfully be conceptualized as a continuously differentiating ‘living present’ (*la durée*) (Hodges 2008: 411). Allow me to elaborate on this living present.

On the one hand, ‘there is no time but the present’ (Hoy 2009: 41), since the past has been and the future is not yet, which aptly captures the ‘seize the day’ mantra of several interlocutors who try to ‘live in the moment’ since the past ‘has gone’ and ‘tomorrow is not a given’. On the other hand, we might ask, as St Augustine did, ‘whether the present is so instantaneous as to be practically nonexistent’ (ibid: 41). We are confronted with the idea that ‘as long as the present has duration, any duration at all, it can be divided into the bits of it that have been, and so are not, and the bits of it that are to be, and so are not yet, so

that the very duration of its existence consigns it to nonexistence' (Currie 2007: 8). To resolve the issue, 'the nature of *la durée* is such that the present is not, the "living present" being merely the continuous differentiation of *la durée*' (Hodges 2007: 37).

Illustrating this concept might be helpful by examining movement, which forms the units of measurement for calendar time. This time is of course the measurement of planetary rotation and orbit, broken down into sub-units, which means that what many of my interlocutors rely upon to indicate their perception of time passing is based on repetitive differentiation. The measurement of a 'passing' day and year is but a measurement of Earth's rotation about its axis and orbit about the Sun; a measurement of movement – of (repetitive) differentiation, to be more precise. This is the same if we consider another measurement of time – speed. Whatever unit is used, it is contingent on/based with respect to another standardized unit of movement/differentiation. The speed of drinking in a pub, for example, can be measured in pints per hour. This is movement/differentiation (the biophysical act of consuming) measured against movement/differentiation (the standardized measurement of planetary orbit) and hence, is relational. Hours, minutes, and seconds, are in the end quite arbitrary. What unit are they measuring if not, ultimately, differentiation? The official scientific definition of a second, for instance, is a measurement of the atomic vibration (or intense repetitive differentiation) of the element caesium (Wyller 2020). There is no 'time' or tenses, as such, involved – merely differentiation within the living present/*la durée*.

Such movement/differentiation is subject to biophysical properties of – and socially constructed ideas about – creation, interaction, destruction, and decay. The latter two in particular create a sense of forward linear time passing due to their ostensibly irreversible nature, but which is merely differentiation created by properties that have themselves emerged through differentiation. An archaeological artefact, then, has not 'come from' or belong to 'the past', but is rather a material assemblage that has *endured* within the living present. The individual consciousnesses of the deceased might be said to have emerged and then differentiated in this living present rather than existing or having existed merely 'in the past', and the bodies that harboured them were formed by the same continuously differentiating matter – the stardust – that continues to be shared within this living present.

In this sense, the past and the present are cotemporaneous. Memory, or time consciousness, creates the perception of sequence and of 'time passing' (Hodges 2007: 38). If we did not have memory, it would be easier to experience sensorially and cognitively the ontological argument that actualization through inevitable differentiation in a living present

is time, rather than a chronological and linear sequence of events that ‘inevitably passes’. Take, for example, the common belief that a goldfish has a three-second memory. Although untrue, the idea of such a short memory helps to illustrate how the being that possesses it would experience more continuous differentiation. Humans, with a higher capacity for memory, can be said to *actualize* the *virtual* past through remembering, which includes processes of institutional/bureaucratic and other forms of memory, and through acts of repetition and habit. However, ‘an approach grounded in *la durée* stresses that no repetition in the reproduction of social life is ever “the same”’ (Hodges 2007: 165), as ‘habit itself is continuously open to the eruption of novelty’, with differentiation winning in the end (ibid: 40). In the pub, for instance, the ostensible daily repetition of the same people discussing the apparent same set of concerns was never *actually* ‘the same’, which this ethnography makes evident.

In this way, *la durée* ‘is potentially compatible with prominent’ theories and ‘paradigms in modern physics regarding energy and matter’, as the differentiating ‘pulsations of organic and inorganic matter that constitute the universe and life in it’ (ibid: 39-40). As for *la durée*’s implication in everyday lived experience, Hodges (2014: 46) summarizes:

The actualization of an event is immanent in time – time is not the transcendent measurement of the event. ‘Past and future’, Turetzky writes, ‘and consequently all time, arise in the moment. This moment is not in time as one moment among many in a container, it is time’ (1998: 109). Time is likewise not a flowing or flux-like backdrop for anthropological analysis, but an emergent property of events. It is a differential multiplicity, materialistic, multi-vectorial, complex, aleatory (Deleuze 2004; Hodges 2008).

Time and ‘temporal issues’ are consequently vital to all social interaction – sociality – amid processes of actualization and differentiation within *la durée*. It follows that all issues and everyday practices must then be ‘temporal’ ones. Such actualization and differentiation *is time itself* (Turetzky 1998: 109) and can be continuously (re)produced or ruptured. The perceived and desired *endurance/duration* of particular actualized social configurations, habits, relationships, experiences, and even thoughts – represented and measured among my interlocutors on the Isle of Dogs through clock time and annual calendars – is a chief concern in this ethnography. I use the term ‘*epoch*’ to refer to the perceived duration of particular habits and perceived social configurations within *la durée* (see Hodges 2007: 54-59). Given these assumptions and parameters, everyday practices, social (inter)action, and sociality do not merely implicate time or exist against a temporal backdrop but must

necessarily *be about* time as they exist within *la durée* (Hodges 2007: 60). It is inescapable, as this ethnography seeks to make vivid. Such a framework thus does precisely what Munn (1992) argues *against* in terms of collapsing various phenomena as temporal issues, but it does so for a very precise reason (Hodges 2007: 46). The totality of these phenomena actualize/enable the emergence of time ‘and require analysis of their contingent, dynamic orientation towards *la durée*’ (ibid). I use the word ‘explicit’ on occasion throughout the ethnography to denote when certain tensions and anxieties had or have a clearer relationship with time than others – what might have been referred to as the ‘temporal’ aspects of daily life before the above discussion that suggests how all dimensions of lived experience are about time.

Given this orientation, ‘temporality’ is a term that needs to be discussed and assessed, in accordance with work that challenges its usefulness as an analytical unit (Hodges 2007, 2008; Ringel 2016a). Both Hodges and Ringel agree on the limitations and theoretical conundrums posed by the usage of ‘temporality’. Arguing for a ‘presentist’ approach for anthropological studies of time, Ringel (2016a) uses the example of buildings to show that temporality, in terms of a particular endurance as a temporal property, is not an *innate* property that can be replicated but is instead *contingent*. In order to incorporate this approach into the discussed ontology of time, I would add that any duration/endurance, or ‘length of time’, is a relational measurement of a perceived lack of differentiation with respect to another reference point of differentiation, such as the planetary orbit of clock and calendar time. The main point here is that ‘what matters is how people attach meaning’ and value to ‘whatever “temporality” they construct’ for particular things and social configurations in the present (ibid: 403). In this presentist approach, interlocutors’ evocations of the past and orientations towards the future can only ever be grounded within the present, since the present is ‘all there is of “the future” at any given time’ (ibid: 401; see also Adam 1990: 38; Gell 1992: 288; Munn 1992: 115-116), as well as all there is of the past, which, again, exists virtually until memory and acts of repetition might actualize it. The terms ‘temporalize’ and ‘temporalization’ can thus be replaced with ‘actualize’ and ‘actualization’ (Hodges 2007: 52-53), as this is the process that allows time to emerge and which grounds all everyday practice within *la durée*. There is another point of mutuality between Ringel and Hodges:

As Hodges (2008) might agree in his Deleuzian inspired temporal ontology of flux, endurance is not a property of a given object, but something continuously made and facilitated. Change, for that matter, does not happen randomly due to ominous temporal or historical forces;

like continuity it is also subject to ever new and indeterminate presents (Ringel 2016a).

In fact, Hodges's framework of a continuous 'living present'/*la durée* appears to offer just as much, if not more, of a presentist approach than Ringel's, and it seems to me that the two approaches are compatible aside from Ringel's concern about endorsing a particular ontology. I venture to suggest that Ringel even offers us a way to think beyond the notion that 'the best way to make sense of *la durée* is to understand the concept as a phenomenology of temporality' (Hoy 2009: 130) in order to ensure *la durée* remains securely an ontology of time.

Ringel's (2014) focus on interlocutors' attempts to establish senses of maintenance amid their desires for material, concrete permanence contrasts with other approaches whose theoretical limitations are revealed by focusing only on the more idealistic notions of novelty, becoming, and emergence (68). By following Ringel's examination of how people perform maintenance amid their desires for a sense of duration and even permanence, I suggest that we can bring phenomenology into conversation with an ontological framework vis-à-vis materialism. This can be done through an exploration of how these thorny navigations of maintenance, change, and endurance within lived experience are not simply a matter of human or social time, but an interrelationship with concrete non-human matter and rhythms created by the differentiation of *la durée* that mediate both concrete material conditions *and* the (inter)subjectivity of phenomenological experiences. This is taken up in Chapter 5 through a discussion of what I term differentiated phenomenological accumulation, as shaped by materiality, class, inequality, and their politics. Implications and critiques of capitalism, and its impact on subjective perceptions of duration, throughout this study further articulate the ontology of time with a materialist anthropological orientation that makes visible some of the effects of divergent rhythms, senses of heterochrony, hierarchy, conflict, and inequality within capitalism (cf. Bear 2014b: 17-21).

Before we can finalize and summarize our epistemological framework, let us explore briefly the idea of heterochrony and how *la durée* enables us to integrate both a single time (temporal monism) *and* multiple relative, local, and individual times (temporal pluralism). The key lies in the idea of a virtual Whole. This Whole is 'indicated as a plurality of lines' of differentiation and actualization 'that do not converge on a single point' (Hoy 2009: 135). Deleuze's concept of the virtual thus creates a version of *la durée* that works around the notion 'of a single substance and closed universe' (ibid: 135). Our ontology of time then 'reconciles unity and multiplicity in a way that transcends the contrast between monism and pluralism' (ibid: 135). Time becomes 'braided' with

‘layered’ and ‘intertwined strands’ of material things and bodies, cognitive processes, and movements with various durations, but which collectively form an emergent ‘global time’ (Grosz 1999: 17) rooted within and actualized from a virtual Whole. Now that we have completed this summary exploration of our ontology of time, we can further conceptualize the timescape discussed above as a delineated ethnographic zone created by various ‘lines’ of differentiation and actualization within the living present.

We have now finished assembling and can summarize our tripartite epistemology. This framework consists of (1) a timescape as a heuristic tool that allows us to construct (albeit somewhat arbitrarily), name for analysis, and investigate particular processes that ‘drive’ lines of differentiation/actualization created by an (2) ontology of time that, through continuous differentiation, produces material conditions and *contingent* (inter)subjective phenomenological experiences, as opposed to a consciousness that constitutes time (see Hodges 2007: 3, n3). By integrating these two points with a (3) materialist position that examines issues created and exacerbated by capitalism and the political economy in everyday life, we can gain ethnographic insights that contribute to our understanding of a range of issues that include social alterity, political orientations, belonging, value, inequality, class, agency, and ideas about competition and ‘winning’. Moreover, through this ethnographic work and concrete anthropological epistemology that borrows from philosophy, we can try and integrate different anthropological-cum-philosophical traditions, locate compatibilities, and examine interrelationships rather than compartmentalize various approaches, of which more in the methodology section below and in the Conclusion.

Within this epistemological framing, various folk representations, measurements, and understandings of time interact. Clock time and the Gregorian calendar – and their social logics – are the most applicable of such implements on the Isle of Dogs and provide anxieties about time-reckoning and speed due to perceptions of chronology and sequence within *la durée*. I aim to articulate such perceptions and anxieties on various registers with the idea of *la durée* as continuous differentiation. Indeed, human practice and a ubiquitous time consciousness in my fieldsite that perceives time to ‘pass’ is subject to a time-reckoning authority. As Munn (1992) writes:

Authority over the annual calendar...or of other chronological instruments like clock time, not only controls aspects of the everyday lives of persons but also connects this level of control to a more comprehensive universe that entails critical values and potencies in which governance is grounded (109).

Within this universe, ethnography has questioned the notion that there is a uniformed politics of time that emphasizes speed and is rooted in perceptions of time scarcity and widespread acceleration of time (see Wajcman 2015). This work demonstrates that speed alone is not as vital to capitalism as rhythms of labour and accumulation (see Tsing 2015). With the outlined epistemology we can discuss rhythms, lengths of time, and tempos/speeds, but now with more precision – as one perceived line (or aggregated lines) of differentiation measured with respect to another perceived line (or aggregated lines) of differentiation within a delineated timescape. I engage with these ideas, illustrating how a sense of time lack can be felt in different registers of lived experience due to *la durée* and its potential for imminent rupture both in immediate situations and broader imagined social configurations – hence, the title of this ethnography that indexes a lack of temporal abundance, or what should be termed more precisely as perceived lack of desired durations.

To sum up the aims of this ethnography, then, as rooted in a focus on time, I first of all suggest that time is the most vital, though often taken-for-granted and underexplored, aspect of social life that deserves explicit ethnographic engagement in various registers of lived experience. Second, that within *la durée*, local constructions of time, continuity, and money are mutually constitutive of each other and generative of widespread impatience exacerbated by a sense of time lack and imminent differentiation amid efforts to sustain endurance in various social registers and contexts. On the other hand, these desires for endurance can come into conflict with both internal and external desires for differentiation. This speaks to the crux of the ‘wanting to keep a way of life’ while wanting to ‘improve that way of life’ dilemma that I flag at the beginning of this introduction. These tensions manifest in various interrelated social issues seen in part in housing, crime, processes of belonging, entrepreneurial aspirations, inequality, and class friction. Third, given the above, that time (through local measurements grounded in perceptions of clock time and time-passing) and money share congruent notions of transaction and management. Such transactions form particular social practices and interpersonal relationships. Finally, that these points underscore a tension between competitive accumulation and social accommodation, and the conditions under which people vacillate between the two, amid desires to create or prolong desired *actualizations* of lifestyle and social reproduction within an ultimately ‘finite’ (differentiated) living present. A concentration on the pub within its broader timescape enables a focused analysis of these points.

I now pivot to the task of intelligibly delimiting an ethnographic zone of analysis within the wider set of processes and dimensions (social, individualized, historical, biological, physical) of *la durée* (as per Hodges 2007: 44). Doing so helps to create the

timescape of analysis and locate and name some of the forces/processes that can be said to fuel lines of differentiation and actualization in my fieldsite.

A tale of (neo)liberalism, financialization, and austerity

While Hodges's (2007) main ethnographic focus in terms of time is on how people 'live with history' and actualize the virtual past in a broad historical sense, my engagement with time is somewhat different. My contribution is to explore both this actualization of the virtual past (Chapters 1 & 2) and then move beyond it to investigate the subtleties and stress points of everyday interaction amid desires to control various durations outside of preoccupations with preserving a specific imagined historical social configuration. Of course, there is still overlap of these different registers – braided strands – of time/actualization/differentiation that are evident throughout. Even though this ethnography is concerned primarily with the immanence of everyday practice, the history of the area permeates these interactions and provides orientations with which people engage the world. It is accordingly necessary to fill in the above contextual outline with a robust summary overview of the intertwined historical forces and local population that produce such dispositions and material conditions. Cole (1984) provides one of the first comprehensive histories of the Isle of Dogs, and Foster (1999) offers the most thorough sociological account with an exceptionally detailed social history of the most recent development wave that includes voices from both the area residents and developers. I draw upon these valuable resources, supplementing (rather than critiquing) them with this first ethnography-length anthropological account of the Isle of Dogs. This anthropological endeavour articulates a sustained immersive engagement with a core group of interlocutors and a focus on how they interact with each other in everyday life to more theoretical commentary and concerns than these previous important works provide.

The historical summary I present here shows how amid the actualizations of roughly 220 years the Isle of Dogs has differentiated from a lonely marshland to centre of empire as part of the largest port in the world to an area with one of the highest concentrations of social housing in post-war Britain to, in the context of Brexit and the tensions it indexes, an area with a plurality of private housing that includes some of the highest average incomes in the UK alongside deprivation. The Isle of Dogs is often advertised as not merely up-and-coming, but the top of 'best places to live in London' (see *The Sunday Times* 2019) despite concerns from the Isle of Dogs Neighbourhood Planning Forum who demand that infrastructural problems be addressed before continued

development and population growth (see IOD Neighbourhood Planning Forum 2020). Whereas Ringel's fieldsite is the fastest-shrinking city in Germany (2013, 2014, 2016a), mine is the fastest-growing area in the UK. These two sites are the two sides of the same coin – intense differentiation, or time – but in opposite directions. Let us now explore this differentiation and some of the Isle's enduring characteristics to which this history lends itself.

Despite what I argue are marked differences to the rest of East London, the Isle of Dogs, or what long-standing residents refer to as the 'Island', shares much of its socio-cultural development with this larger region of which it is a part. Of prime importance for the ensuing chapters is a shared entrepreneurial, tactical culture that engages with change through (market) negotiation and subtle inversions of broader social normativity (see Hobbs 1988). This culture is long-standing, made visible in market activity for nearly one thousand years and which emerged alongside the trade of medieval guilds that had been established by the twelfth century in the City of London (ibid: 90). The City was a place for people to flee feudal serfdom and operate as 'freemen', and the area just outside the City's jurisdiction to the east (in proximity to the Isle of Dogs) became a place where small-scale merchants, artisans, and craftspeople could trade unhindered by the City's market regulations (ibid: 90) in what might be considered an early form of *laissez-faire* economics. The impact of the fourteenth century Black Death pandemic on the labour force and trade enabled survivors to negotiate for higher pay given the sudden imbalance between supply and demand, which further entrenched a tradition of tactical negotiation and individual gain that endures (ibid: 91). East Londoners 'were already developing a distinctive character' at this time 'with a reputation for shoddy workmanship, adept at negotiating and sharp trading', and housed downstream from the City 'in a congested area whose water supply, air, and highways were polluted with the flotsam and jetsam of the largest city in the world' (ibid: 91). It would take several centuries before this 'character' spread onto the nearby Isle of Dogs.

Throughout this *epoch* of economic development in East London, the fertile farmland of the Island was subjected to various durations of flooding from the Thames. The area was used for grazing and housed windmills to harness the air currents that continue to howl through the area with ostensibly greater force than the rest of London and which have rendered useless many a flimsy umbrella. King Henry VIII kept his hunting dogs in a dilapidated farmhouse on the Isle of Dogs while he was in residence at the royal estate on the other side of the river in Greenwich, giving rise to claims that this is what bestowed the area its name, yet this explanation is inconclusive (see Foster 1999: 11). The

fenland's population was less than 200 in 1800 (Booth 1892), just a few years before the first docks in the area (West India Docks) opened. After this construction, the population had surged to 21,000 by the end of the nineteenth century and had taken on characteristics of a 'working-class village' (Cole 1984: 18). This population was homogeneous and relatively stable rather than transient; vast embedded networks of kinship and friendship blossomed; a collective sense of class and community took hold; and the Island 'became widely known for its insularity, village-like social life, and strong sense of identity' (ibid: 18; Foster 1999: 18-22). The Island did not experience the flows of diverse groups of people as elsewhere in East London, which saw the movement of Jewish, Irish, and (Eastern) European populations (see Hobbs 1988: 93-101), due to the Island's isolation that the lack of a robust transportation network provided, coupled with the boundedness created by the Thames on three sides of the area and the quays and docks on the fourth (Cole 1984; Foster 1999).

Rather than the unfortunately thorny issues that socio-cultural diversity can create, the Island had to navigate the fluctuations of shipbuilding – the construction of vessels whose current gravesites include the bottom of the Hooghly River in India (Bear & Knight 2017) – and dock work that were tied to the peaks and troughs of manufacturing and industrial capital at the heart of the British Empire. Indeed, 'since the construction of the first docks in the early nineteenth century...the interests of capital have been in clear and open conflict with the interests of labour and local communities' (Hardy 1983: 4). Amid the booms and busts of ship-building and industrial manufacturing that saw competition from the ports in Northern England and their proximity to raw material, the local community relied upon and provided for each other in the absence of a welfare state. This support was needed in particular during the Victorian *epoch* when the ship-building industry crashed during the 1860s, as well as during the nineteenth century's two world wars (Cole 1984; Foster 1999).

Amid the *epoch* that witnessed the terror in East London caused by the elusive Jack the Ripper, whose murderous crimes further cemented the mixture of fascination and contempt with which the Victorian upper classes viewed the East London working class, casualization had been introduced by the 1880s due to the decline in local manufacturing and transition to ship repair (Hobbs 1988: 111). A precarious labour system that became embedded and accepted in local logics and assumptions about dock work, casualization required men to report to the docks in the morning for 'call on' and either receive work for the day or be sent home if nothing was available (Foster 1999: 15). My former dock-working interlocutors, however, recall ample employment during the 1950s and 60s,

commenting that one could simply walk down the road and find another job if the first port of call proved unfruitful. The point here is that with at least several *epochs* and degrees of precarity over the duration of dock labour on the Island, the entrepreneurial culture of the rest of East London began to co-exist alongside and within a community that relied upon each other as a way to contend with such precarity. This dynamic indexes a ‘stereotyped working-class solidarity’ that is ‘tempered with a powerful independence forged by centuries of individualistic endeavour, both in and out of work’ (Hobbs 1988: 118). As part of the broader East London, the Isle of Dogs could also be ‘defined by its population’s subjective experience as members of a single-class society’, in which ‘individuals developed and displayed a sharp entrepreneurial style as a crucial tool of economic survival’ amid ‘the casual labour market’ (ibid: 115). Here, decades before neoliberalism, elements of autonomy and independence took hold as ‘essential characteristics of the local populace’ (ibid: 115-16).

The underlying decline of industry was masked after the Second World War despite the notable strategic damage to the Docklands that the Blitz had caused. In what appeared to be a decades-long post-war ‘golden era’ cultivated by an agreement between labour, capital, and the state, there was ‘overwhelming popular acceptance that citizens had social as well as economic and political rights in which it was the duty of the state at a national level to balance the burden of poverty across society’ (Butler & Hamnett 2011: 11). The pivotal 1942 Beveridge Report inspired a bipartisan effort for reformation once the war ended, and East London became a social laboratory for policy changes that culminated in the welfare state (ibid: 11-12). Key parts of the transport network, including the docks, were nationalized, providing regular and secure employment (ibid: 42), and the system of casualization ended eventually in 1967 (Foster 1999: 15). Moreover, the new welfare state’s vast public housing expansion led to a staggering 97 percent of the Island’s housing being publicly owned by 1966, at the top of such levels in Britain, whereas it stood at 25 percent on the brink of WWII (Cole 1984: 267). In this new context, access to social housing was ‘a mark of inclusion, a certification precisely of a citizen’s worthiness, a corroboration of merit’ and of respectability (Koch 2018b: 46). The enduring geographical boundedness of the community maintained a sense of a cohesive working-class village amid the post-war economic boom that also saw a shortage of unskilled labour in the area as the immediate population decreased, which produced even more abundant work (Cole 1984; Foster 1999: 39).

This *epoch* was short-lived. A multitude of differentiating international and national factors initiated a precipitous decline of local industry from the mid-1960s, so

workers only briefly enjoyed the fruits of the abolition of casualization. Speculation from the outset of the docks' construction led to unprofitable overprovision which, when combined with a slump and changing patterns in world trade, advances in vessel size and containerization that made the eastern Tilbury port more efficient than London, competition from other UK ports, and a country-wide recession caused by a rise in oil prices, led to the closure of the Island's docks by 1980 (Foster 1999: 38-41). The post-war economic boom had given way to differentiation, both locally and nationally, and dockers on the Island developed a resistance to change that was born of 'a legacy of mistrust' (ibid: 39) as the area sat derelict for several years.

Despite a majority of the Isle of Dogs voting for Labour in the 1979 general election, change would be precisely what not only the Island, but entire country, would receive with the electoral victory of Margaret Thatcher and her Conservative government. With this new regime, 'the ideological demise of the post-war welfare state was sealed', as 'the attitude of assent to its destruction had been in the offing' (Koch 2018b: 45). Thatcher's implementation of US-style neoliberal reform, with its ideology of the 'self-made' individual and personal gain removed from a robust concept of society – elements of which we can trace to previous decades and even centuries in East London – divided the working class and 'ensured an 18-year reign for the Conservative Party, from 1979 to 1997' (Evans 2017a: 216). During this *epoch*, the 'Thatcherite subject was a citizen required to take responsibility for him or herself, linked with Victorian values of work, family, and private charity. With their focus on individual responsibility and their moral grounding in Victorian ethics', these neoliberal policies along with a transition from industrialization to the financialization of the economy 'continued to enshrine' various socio-economic inequalities (Koch 2018b: 46)

Though intertwined in the UK, neoliberalism and financialization have distinct epistemologies (Davis & Walsh 2017). Those of the former are grounded in ideas of self-made individualism amid a shrinking state, privatization, and market deregulation. The latter are focused on 'the creation of money, the transactional basis of finance, the reductive power of financial markets, the orthodoxy of shareholder value, and the intense micro-economic focus of finance' (ibid: 46). For the former, I explore the elements of autonomy and independence amid tensions between individualism/community, competition/cooperation that have historical roots outlined above. In terms of financialization, I discuss in Chapters 4 and 5 how the fact that money is created 'from fairy dust' as interest-bearing debt comes into conflict with the logic of many interlocutors

that ‘everyone must pay their debts’. It is still helpful to highlight here some of the other ways that financialization structures lived experience and differentiation.

Notably, Thatcher’s ‘right to buy’ public housing scheme in the Housing Act 1980 was the harbinger of the intense financialization, privatization, and housing commodification to ensue. The prime minister garnered votes with a promise that local council tenants could purchase their home at a maximum discount of 50 percent, yet the councils had to use money from the sales to pay off debts rather than replenish a rapidly depleting social housing stock, and the more desirable properties were swiftly taken off this freshly created market (Koch 2018b: 47). This housing scheme quickly differentiated the Island through a reconfiguration of its neighbourhoods when combined with a series of initiatives led by Urban Development Corporations (UDCs) as part of the state’s ‘hands off’ approach that would see the redevelopment of the Island’s docks into the Canary Wharf financial hub with private capital investments (Butler & Hamnett 2011: 47; Chapter 1). The many redundant wharves, docks, and factories on the Island were cleared to make way for attractive riverside private houses amid the simultaneous reduction of social housing.¹

The effects were complex. Outsiders who qualified for public housing were forced to move to the Island, many of whom saw it as serving a type of prison sentence before being relocated to a more desirable location. On the reverse side, many ‘native’ residents – often young married couples – who did not qualify for public housing had to move off the Island and begin families elsewhere. Both processes disrupted kinship and friendship networks (Cole 1984; see also Foster 1999: 295). If that were not enough, ideas of respectability shifted from that of an ideal tenant who could maintain their dependent family to that of a ‘worthy’ citizen who could afford private homeownership, as an individual need for social housing, which was now strictly needs-based, ‘became a mark of dismal inadequacy’ (Koch 2018b: 46). Many of those who could afford homeownership viewed it as taking part in the new *epoch* of financialization, and the commodification of the house became an investment strategy as part of broader financial speculation that exacerbates inequality (Chapter 2). One of my interlocutors illustrated this best when he exclaimed to me, ‘God *bless* Maggie Thatcher – because of ‘er I’m sittin’ on about 400 grand!’, in reference to his house’s accrued value.

¹Council houses are a form of public housing constructed, administered, and subsidized by local authorities. Applicants are placed on a waiting list from which they can ‘bid’, or apply, for properties. After an initial period with minimal entitlements, tenants can be given a ‘secure’ status. In a secure tenancy, tenants can rent out individual rooms with Council permission, have more autonomy to make substantial home improvements, and can apply to purchase the house through the Right to Buy scheme implemented in the Thatcher government’s Housing Act 1980. Housing policies vary between local councils and lend themselves to various tensions and anxieties.

Furthermore, the historically East End trait of being the point of ‘first arrival’ for immigrants, now with increasing numbers from former British colonies throughout the ‘Global South’ (Butler & Hamnett 2011; see also Hansen 2000), finally spilled over into the Isle of Dogs. The Island’s cherished relative homogeneity suddenly differentiated, unfortunately with a shift in available resources. One of the local wards made national news when it elected Derek Beackon of the British National Party, a far-right group with fascist orientations, to council in the 1993 local elections due to growing tensions over the allocation of highly coveted prime property to Bengalis amid decreasing social housing stock. A ‘one offer only’ policy seems to have concentrated Bengalis on the Isle of Dogs (Foster 1999: 274-78) and surrounding Tower Hamlets borough (see Gardner 1995, 2002), of which the Island is a part. Racism was thus exacerbated by (housing) market competition, exacerbated in turn by privatization and financialization. An illusionary narrative, but rooted in actual material conditions, took hold – one of ‘new arrivals’ who ‘jump queues’ to secure scarce and ever-shrinking housing and other resources such as employment opportunities amid a contracting state. Arguments were (and are still) made about time – that the duration of having been ‘born and bred’ (Chapter 3) in a particular place should even be considered ahead of the duration on a housing waitlist in order to meet immediate need. Of course, multiculturalism is not simply enjoying other people’s cultural forms and creations such as cuisine – it comes with claims and narratives constructed to suit particular material needs.

All the while, former dockers who sought to remain in the area had to adapt to this new *epoch*. For some, as throughout East London, a ‘responsiveness to the demands of the market encouraged an ability to see the opportunity to make a profit from anything: a “commodification” of reality’ (Hobbs 1988: 116). Such commodification involved the conversion of constraining factors into possibility (ibid: 116). One interlocutor, for example, made daily scores of sandwiches that she and a friend sold at lunchtime to Canary Wharf construction workers and then office workers before franchises and upscale restaurants emerged. Until others caught on and provided competition, she took home £1200 cash-in-hand per week during the early 1990s, which, adjusted for inflation, is now around £2600 (£135,200 per annum). Elements of this social reconfiguration and its tensions were portrayed on the UK television’s Channel 4 comedy-drama programme, *Prospects* (1986), that was set and filmed on the Isle of Dogs.

With the completion of many of the office towers in Canary Wharf by the end of the 1990s and the continued financialization of property development, the landscape and sense of place has changed entirely. As you snake along on the Docklands Light Railway

(DLR) public transport line onto the Island through the financial district, you can see a carefully landscaped and decoratively lit terrain woven between many of the UK's tallest buildings, luxury skyscraper flat towers, and several waterways that frequently host luxury yachts (and one that is home to an upscale floating Chinese restaurant). Just beyond Canary Wharf, the Asda supercentre (whose parent company is now the American Walmart Corporation) comes into view on the left, and the vestige of an industrial factory smokestack endures on the right. Just a little farther, what looks like a modest neighbourhood appears, but it is interspersed with gated residential complexes and pockets of intimate terraced townhouses purposefully constructed within insular closes alongside the Thames. Some of these riverside complexes contain leisure centres equipped with pools, gyms, and reception services, as the development revolving primarily around financial markets and international banks required proximal accommodation for the financial sector's many professional employees. The vast attractive surface area on the Island alongside the Thames proved optimal (Carmona 2009; Gordon 2001; Butler 2007; Jackson & Butler 2015).

The resulting reconfiguration of the neighbourhood is evident. According to the most recent census, the Island's population is around 40,000 (Tower Hamlets 2014a, 2014b), which some estimates suggest will double by the 2031 census. I lived and conducted research in the southernmost part of the Island, in the Island Gardens ward (with about 14,000 residents). This neighbourhood, represented by two councillors on the Tower Hamlets council (a Labour woman and a Conservative man), contains a notably higher percentage of people who identify as 'White British' (at 39 percent) than the other Island wards and Tower Hamlets more broadly (between 29-33.5 percent) (ibid). Another 19 percent identify as 'White other', 4 percent as 'Black' and 'Mixed', 20 percent as 'All other' and, while comparable to the other Island wards, the 14 percent of residents who identify as 'Bengali' is considerably lower than the 32 percent of the entire Tower Hamlets population (ibid). Whereas close to all of the total Island housing had been socially owned and rented publicly during the twentieth century welfare expansion, that number is now 22 percent in the Island Gardens ward, with about 42 percent of houses rented privately (compared to 25 and 17 percent throughout London and England, respectively) and a further 34 percent are occupied by their owners (Tower Hamlets 2014a). Indexing the number of finance sector employees who live in the area and work in Canary Wharf, 55 percent of the neighbourhood residents have attained 'Level 4 and above' education qualifications, which rises to 60 percent in the immediate Canary Wharf area (ibid, 2014b).

In short, the Docklands redevelopment has become an example of gentrification by private capital – even though ‘the public sector contributed something like £3 billion’ (Butler & Hamnett 2011: 49) – as opposed to social action, the latter of which has served as the impetus driving the majority of London’s gentrification (Butler 2007). Many job-seeking (im)migrants from throughout the UK, EU, and elsewhere with upwardly aspirations and business, finance, and economics backgrounds, have found their way to Canary Wharf and the Isle of Dogs. Seen here in particular but also throughout London, a process of ‘professionalization’ rather than ‘proletarianization’ has emerged as the city has been remade into, and dominated by, a financial services economy (Butler & Hamnett 2011: 12, 33-35). Not just the market, but, indeed, a reconfiguration of society itself, is made visible in financialization as a relational process between state, market, and society (Kalb 2020).

While the market is arguably made the most visible in financialization, the state is rendered the most visible in the more recent austerity policies. Koch (2018b) suggests austerity is financialization itself under a different label (197), but let us unpack this idea.

After ‘the Western financial system suffered its cardiac attack in 2008 and the economy went into a tailspin, the political class, fed on decades of neoliberalism, was unprepared to the extreme and visibly struck by disbelief’ (Kalb 2020: 14-15). As a consequence, austerity measures in the form of public sector cuts that have shrunk the state further ‘have become the mantra of the day, with the election of a Conservative-dominated coalition government in 2010’ (Koch & James 2020: 4). Such measures were the Conservative-Liberal Democrat government’s response to the 2008 global economic crisis that was *triggered* (not caused outrightly) by predatory sub-prime mortgage lending and neoliberal deregulation of financial markets in the United States (Weeks 2020: 27). The logic behind these cuts is to balance the state budget as a ‘scaled up’ household (à la Aristotle’s *oekonomia*). Funding reductions include those to housing and legal aid (Koch 2018b: 197), as well as to formal/statutory care provision and even informal care services through the severe withdrawal of government aid to voluntary community organizations (Bear, James, Simpson et al 2020; Watt, Vieira et al 2020). Austerity is then, precisely, the state’s response to the effects of financialization and which, through slashes to public services, seeks to lower government debt that results from ‘government debt acting as capital from which banks can lend on private debt to firms and households’ in order to drive financialized economic growth itself (Montgomerie 2019: np; Weeks 2020). This relationship creates a cycle of repetition and differentiation that perpetuates inequality,

even if financialization ‘provides funds to ensure that welfare arrangements are not erased altogether’ in part via debt advice services (James 2020: 197).

My interlocutors have arguably not been as hard-hit by the austerity cuts as they have been by the prior and enduring financialization and neoliberal governmentalities more broadly. Many are entrepreneurial and use that acumen to shield themselves from the vulnerability faced by those in the UK whom austerity has most impacted. A few interlocutors do work several jobs in order to make ends meet, namely several of the bar staff, but these work situations emerged before the 2008 economic collapse. Austerity still permeates everyday life and certainly does not help alleviate difficult personal circumstances by any means. Several people, for instance, are carers for their own parents or grandparents due to the decline in robust formal care provision. In order for them to receive the state’s Carer’s Allowance, they must provide 35 hours of care per week that can be scheduled as they wish, yet this target still creates all but impossible time-reckoning demands when juggling their other job(s) and family obligations. Along with the financialization of the housing market, Chapter 2 discusses the issue of the ‘bedroom tax’ policy that some interlocutors face as a result of austerity measures. On the whole, everyday discourse about austerity highlights tensions about benefits in general – a pride of self-sufficiency, reluctance to rely upon and seek state resources, and championing hard work, coupled with anger at the idea of foreigners and ‘lazy people sponging benefits’ that many individuals themselves do not wish to fall back on. These concerns exemplify a wider ‘demonization’ of the working class in Britain (see Jones 2016) that can even pit people who themselves identify as working class against others who are believed to be ‘getting one up’ (Chapter 4) through perceived inadequate attempts at economic contribution.

Within the context of such anxieties about socio-economic standing, the entrepreneurial and class aspirations found in the area are another important dimension to consider. I show, for example, how individuals appear to negotiate national political issues by inserting everyday moralities derived from business transactions into their political decision-making and opinions (cf. Koch 2017b). Despite the entire Island and Tower Hamlets consistently voting for Labour in national elections, the ward’s political divide that is evident in the party split between its two local councillors aptly represents the polarized political discourse among the Lord Nelson’s patrons (Chapter 4). These pub regulars, who are my core interlocutors, are an eclectic mix of older and newer Island residents. My working-class friends consist largely of construction, paint, and electrical trade workers and general ‘handymen’; pub staff; cab drivers; nannies; local primary school aides; private security personnel; and a few people who have found jobs in finance as

aspiring middle-class individuals. Several of these jobs overlap with small-scale entrepreneurial endeavours (Chapter 4), such as those of the family who struggled with their lease on the pub. This study also incorporates several more ‘down-to-earth’ middle-class companions who have either retired from or work in finance and often interact with their working-class friends and acquaintances in the Nelson. Most of my interlocutors are white and, while ‘ethnic backgrounds proved less important as determinants of reciprocal obligations between friends, neighbours, and family’ (Koch 2018b: 23), some markers of socio-cultural difference were cause for friction (Chapter 3). This juxtaposition of the working and middle classes, and the resulting cross-section of the local community, gives this ethnography something of its contemporary relevance.

The historical developments and tensions that I summarize here contributed largely to the Brexit vote, and I would be remiss not to include a few words about the referendum and Labour’s subsequent wipe-out in the 2019 general election.

On Brexit

23 June 2016. The United Kingdom voted in a public referendum to withdraw from the European Union, initiating a thorny process of disentanglement from a relationship that had endured for 43 years. The vote result was 51.9% for Leave and 48.1% for Remain, a difference of one million-odd votes. In the country’s general election held three years later on 12 December 2019, the Labour Party experienced its worst electoral defeat since 1935. This ethnography is not meant to be a study of politics, Brexit, or the political economy *per se*. However, my fieldwork took place ‘between’ those two dates, and the social embeddedness of various dynamics that these two actualizations signify are evident in this ethnography. I provide here a brief overview of these frictions and the logics that fuel them.

Voters turned out in a record number to ‘have their say’ in a democracy otherwise marked by voter apathy, disenchantment (see Koch 2016, 2017c), and a sense of ‘unfairness’ (Smith 2012). The reasons for individual people’s votes were variegated. This is due to how the question of Brexit, which saw an alliance between elite rebels of the Conservative Party and marginal right-ring Eurosceptics and cultural nationalists, created ‘a hodgepodge of previously unconnected complaints against austerity, the establishment, the EU bureaucracy, and capitalism more broadly’ (Evans 2017a: 219). As such, the result was not merely reflective of a culture war of identity politics between social conservatives and liberal cosmopolitans, but rather a rejection of the government *as* government (Koch 2017b). This rejection can thus be analyzed as a denunciation of the state’s paternalistic

micro-management and regulation of everyday life ironically *exacerbated* by the supposed *deregulation* inherent in neoliberalism (see Graeber 2015b) that also acted as a general tension relief valve for a range of social, political, and economic pressures. That is not to say that ideas of threatened ‘ways of life’ were not pervasive, evidenced by some Leave voters who sought to foster a sense of unified national character, relatedness, and belonging (see Balthazar 2017). However, initial accusations of ‘irrational’ or ‘xenophobic’ reasons for people to vote Leave came from positions of (often educated) privilege and reflect a lack of nuanced understanding of deeper class inequalities that also informed voting behaviour (Mckenzie 2017: 268).

It is impossible to separate class inequality in the UK from personal, local, and national politics (Savage 2015: 393–8). Several of my working-class tradesmen interlocutors, for example, expressed sentiments that were xenophobic at face-value. More fundamentally, these anxieties were about concerns that ‘cheap foreign labour’ made possible by free movement within the EU, which for them signified migrants with lower standards of living than them, negatively affected their ability to compete in order to earn a living in the (neoliberal) market made precarious by a shrinking welfare net. Those who lack educational capital within a stratified, post-industrial, and neoliberal knowledge economy ‘are acutely aware of being condescended to by those who have a university education’ (Gusterson 2017: 212) and who feel that they ‘know better’ than the working class. Such accusations and even contempt echo ‘feckless poor’ poverty discourses of the Victorian era (Savage et al. 2015: 352 in Mckenzie 2017: 268).

These tensions resulted in a range of interesting and perhaps counterintuitive ‘alliances’ on each side of the Leave/Remain question. On the political ‘Left’, the vote was split. On the one hand, some people voted to remain in order to foster multicultural tolerance through free movement within the EU. Others sought economic stability (but might have had trepidations about free movement for a variety of reasons, which caused some to vote ‘Leave’), thus aligning with Conservatives who voted to remain due to business interests. Others championed both aspects. On the other hand, some people on the ‘Left’ voted to leave for both pragmatic reasons and more ideological ones. The International Socialist Party, for instance, endorsed the Leave campaign in protest against the integrated capitalist structures that ‘emerged as the enforcer of austerity across a continent’ (Kimber 2016: 24). The party likewise voiced opposition towards how the EU ‘acts to repel migrants and refugees from outside Europe’ (ibid). Indeed, you will meet a research companion from Kazakhstan who, despite being a finance worker, a demographic of my interlocutors that generally voted to remain since such a vote would have reduced

the risk of economic upheaval, said she would have voted to leave if she had been eligible to vote. This somewhat spiteful-sounding sentiment was due in part to her personal frustrations about having to compete in order to ‘get in the UK’ on merit rather than have the right to free movement into the UK that EU nationals (such as my Irish housemate above) enjoyed.

The vote on the political ‘Right’ was also split amongst those in business who sought stability through a remain vote and those with interests that were not tied to the British economy. I quote historian David Edgerton (2019) in *The Guardian* at length for a succinct overview of this discrepancy:

What is interesting is not so much the connections between capital and the Tory party but their increasing disconnection. Today much of the capital in Britain is not British and not linked to the Conservative party... Since the 1970s things have changed radically. Today there is no such thing as British national capitalism. London is a place where world capitalism does business – no longer one where British capitalism does the world’s business... Whatever the interests of foreign capital, they are not expressed through a national political party. Most of these foreign-owned businesses, not surprisingly, are hostile to Brexit... Brexit is the political project of the hard right within the Conservative party, and not its capitalist backers. In fact, these forces were able to take over the party in part because it was no longer stabilised by a powerful organic connection to capital, either nationally or locally.

A major factor for Leave voters’ alignment with this hard-right segment of the Conservative party was the socio-economic setting brought about by austerity and financialized neoliberalism in which the vote took place. This state of Britain can be marked by waves of people – including a precarious middle class – requiring assistance due to uncertain living conditions caused by a ‘shift from state-planned to neoliberal economies, growing deindustrialisation, the rise of a service economy and the effects of financialisation’ (Koch & James 2020: 5). This middle class and its declining position represent an important segment of the Leave vote in the Brexit referendum (Antonucci et al 2017; see also Gusterson 2017: 212), and economic models indicate that the Brexit vote would have resulted in a victory for Remain had it not been for austerity (Fetzer 2019).

Brexit aside, and moving to the topic of Labour’s 2019 election wipe-out, many of my interlocutors continue to promote the ‘common sense’ of the Conservative-driven ‘self-made individual’ ideology even as they lament a perceived lack of community solidarity, express frustration that the rich seem to get ever-richer, and experience other dire effects of neoliberalism. Some people do ask why the government ‘can’t do more’. Those who ask the question are sympathetic to the idea of expanding the social welfare net, but their

trepidation about voting Labour comes from concerns about fiscal responsibility, having more of ‘their’ money ‘taken away by taxes’, and worries over whether ‘everyone who wants to come here (to the UK)’ can be accommodated within a more welfare-orientated society. Neoliberalism, financialization, and austerity have poisoned the efforts towards an inclusive, accommodating society à la Labour due to an embedded perception of ‘ways of life’ and resources under threat by ‘foreign others’ in a competitive ‘pull yourself up by the bootstraps’ society. Moreover, because of what leftist pundits have identified as a media smear campaign waged against Labour by outlets with financial interests vested in the status quo, many people view such endeavours as economically impossible and fantastical.

Evans (2017a) argues that ‘everything, including our theory of society, is now open to negotiation’ and that all of Britain is now post-industrial and disorientated (219). Within this setting of academic and ‘real world’ discombobulation, I suggest that anxieties about time, rooted in impatience and questions of duration – of livelihoods, of particular social configurations, and even of particular personal durations in everyday life that you do not want to be interrupted – are worthy of explicit ethnographic engagement and analysis.

Public houses and the practice of everyday life

The overarching analytical focus on issues of time is a strategy to contend with a fragmented ethnographic setting, and I further attempt to locate clear common ground through an ethnographic focus on one particular pub and the everyday activities of its patrons. Allerton (2013) suggests that ‘in order to avoid exoticizing our subjects, anthropologists should focus, not only on formal events, speech, or rituals, or on the verbal explanations given to us’, but also on everyday practice (8). Doing so can help remedy the feeling ‘that anthropological accounts are missing something, that they do not convey what a culture “was really like”’ (ibid: 8). I have tried throughout this ethnography to incorporate the subtleties of often non-verbal aspects of everyday life in the pub that might not only provide a sense of what the lived experience ‘was really like’ but which might also help to better illuminate the analytical arguments that I make, particularly those that make time explicit. I have largely bypassed the problem of lacking such an element in the ethnography by situating my fieldsite primarily in a space of everyday interaction. In contrast to Allerton’s concern, I have made attempts to connect these everyday practices to ‘formal’ events within the wider political/economic setting in order to show some of the ‘driving forces’ behind the differentiation of *la durée*. The nature of pub sociality was conducive to such a feat, as this was a space where politics, economics, and opinions about various other

phenomena were discussed, even when competing viewpoints caused irritation. Such sociality is not new.

Today's pub has played an integral role in British society for centuries, taking different forms and bearing roots in the inns, taverns, and alehouses prevalent in pre-industrial Britain, with a strong association to class (see Smith 1983; Kling 2001; Watson 2002; Miller 2019). In that *epoch*, alehouses were more numerous than any other type of public meeting place and formed the locus for a broad spectrum of social and economic activities, including trade, borrowing and lending money, lodging, labour, gaming/gambling, eating, drinking, dancing, and smoking (Watson 2002; Kling 2001). 'Alehouses' diminished during the nineteenth century to be replaced by the word 'pub', which had entered the Oxford English Dictionary by 1865 (Watson 2002). The pub's rise coincided with increased industrialization and urbanization in Victorian Britain, serving as a source of leisure for people (chiefly men) away from industrial work and as a site of refuge in the face of precarity (caused by casualization) (ibid; see also Kling 2001). In this context, the 'traditional English pub' became anthropologically interesting 'for its particular place in "English" culture and for its symbolic role as...an "icon of the everyday"' (Watson 2002: 190).

Pubs remain an established feature of the British social landscape, yet 'for such an important social institution, there has been surprisingly little sociological analysis' of and 'little written about public houses in academic literature' (Watson 2002: 191; see also Share 2003). Existing studies have focused either on situating the pub in a socio-historical perspective, analyzing the pub as a microcosm within and reflective of the changing 'macro' society in which it is positioned (as per Watson 2002; Share 2003) or examining the pub as a bounded community unto itself (as per Fox 1996). The former studies engage with gender and legal issues, exploring the various trends and changes in pub sociality that result from shifting gender relations, masculinities, and alcohol regulation during different *epochs*. Research from the latter group highlights individual pub cultures and the local community dynamics within specific pubs or particular 'types' of pubs and their particular forms of sociality (see Miller 2019: 796). Regarding the latter, Miller (2019) frames the pub as a site – a 'platform' – of 'scalable' sociality somewhat akin to social media, in which pubs can 'scale' from sites of drink to food to entertainment (803-805). This ethnography seeks to integrate both domains by documenting and investigating not only the pub's relationship to the political economy in which it was embedded, but also how such forces can influence forms of sociality within and outside the pub and give it a particular 'feel' and 'character'. As we will see, such pressure for 'scalability' was a point of contention.

Previous studies acknowledge that beneath the contemporary pub's ostensibly informal atmosphere that might evoke senses of openness, freedom, and democracy, is a regulated and ordered physical space with distinct social hierarchies and codes. A sense of hierarchy underscores the importance of analyzing 'regulars' and other patrons in public houses. Pubs act as a 'third place' that, along with salons, cafés, bookstores, and the like, mediate people's daily lived experience between home and work (Oldenburg 1999). In order to remain viable, a successful third place, regardless of its market, requires a committed core group of regulars to continue their patronage (ibid; see also Share 2003), or expenditure of their time and money. Attaining the pub 'regular' status is an ongoing process involving reciprocity (Fox 1996; Oldenburg 1999; Watson 2002; Share 2003), hierarchy, and contributions of time and money that shape ideas of belonging that I discuss in Chapter 3. However, I also show how the Lord Nelson was an *extension* of home for many regulars rather than an intermediary *between* work and home (Chapter 2). The reader will meet such regulars of the Lord Nelson, for whom the pub was considered their 'local', or place of familiarity/extension of home (and hence habitual patronage) by being in close proximity to their house/neighbourhood (see Kling 2001; Miller 2019: 796, 804).

By focusing on the pub, I take inspiration from Hall's (2012) ethnography of a particular street in South London. Rather than focus on an entire street, I engage, as Hall does in one chapter, with one particular 'third space' business. Like 'the Caff' in Hall's work, the Lord Nelson was also a site that integrated various everyday work rhythms with negotiations of allegiances, belonging, and performative repetition in a unique form of sociality (ibid: 52-73). Within this environment, regulars who were migrants could be both 'foreign' and 'local' (ibid; see also Rosbrook-Thompson 2015). A glimpse of this relationship is given in the Prologue where I discuss my situation in the field as a 'local foreigner', and I discuss this positionality in the ensuing pages and below in terms of methodological considerations.

Of methods and ethnographic narrative

To elaborate on the above, how does one go about researching the everyday and why should the everyday – the ordinary – be a focus of study? Here I attempt to answer these questions further and outline my interwoven methodology and writing strategy, proposing how the issue of 'time' can be approached. Much like the epistemological lens framed above, this writing and methodological orientation is an attempt to at least bridge philosophy and anthropology in one vein and epistemology, ontology, and phenomenology in another.

There is also some underlying friction here that involves asking what the ethnographic endeavour should be in the first place. Is ethnography a method of explaining and making better sense of people's lives with ethnographic detail and the assistance of theoretical tools, or is it an avenue to refute and/or argue a 'new' and significant theoretical claim? The latter is perhaps offensive to the people whose lives are essentially put on display (Graeber 2018, personal comm), and such goals can be achieved through means other than an ethnographic study. The work you have before you takes the former approach. This ethnography is not an attempt to 'prove' or otherwise reject any particular ontology of time as might be the case in a more philosophical or (non-social) scientific endeavour, but rather to use the framework I outline as an ontological tool in order to illuminate what knowledge about individual people's lives we might learn when taking time seriously. What might a focus on time as continuous differentiation, through the lens of individual people, yield epistemologically for an enhanced understanding of how they phenomenologically experience 'class' (Charlesworth 2000), difference, inequality, and belonging that we might connect with other social categories such as value, work, and everyday perceptions of competition?

The emphasis on *individuals* raises additional considerations that get at the very heart of what anthropology is, is not and, perhaps, should be. The *leitmotif* of exploring the precise relationship between individual and social group has been a central tension of the discipline since at least Malinowski (see 1939), albeit a more explicit tenet at some moments amid the emergent differentiation of the discipline than at others. That association is at stake in various representations and approaches that have explored this tension more recently through discussions about freedom and ethics (Laidlaw 2002; 2013) in relation to social structure, individual agency, and the everyday as a 'moral laboratory' (Mattingly 2014). Amid debates about this relationship between individual and group/society, the everyday and 'macro' structures/processes, arguments have been made that 'anthropology is a generalizing science', whereby generalized objective claims about particular groups should be the aim, 'or it is nothing' (Good 1996). In contrast, the discipline also experienced a surge of more democratic, reflexive, and interpretive approaches that importantly drew attention to how knowledge is mutually constructed and contingent (Marcus & Fischer 1999; Gellner 1992). This view opened the door to the value of seeing ethnography as 'written *by* individuals as well as *of* individuals, and in situations of concrete, individual specificity' (Rapport 2002: 14). It seems to me these tensions have yet to be reconciled to anyone's satisfaction, and the history of the Anthropology of Europe displays some of the concerns.

Early anthropological monographs about Europe were filled with studies of marginal rural communities (Boissevain 1975; Goddard, Llobera & Shore 1994; Kockel, Craith & Frykman 2012). Replicating early anthropological work of the colonial period, this volume of literature did little to challenge the ‘ethnographic present’ of fieldwork and articulate the studied communities to any significant socio-cultural and historical change. Amid rapid European integration and modernization, Boissevain (1975) influentially argued that research which centres almost entirely on the social life of a ‘community microcosm’ excludes the historical elements, which then undervalues or ignores the state’s influence, bureaucracy and ‘national integration’, urbanization, and ‘the power relationships and class conflicts between those within the little community and those outside’ (Giordano 2012: 15; see also Boissevain 1975:11). This postulation incited a wave of different topics of European study and variegated ways of studying them beyond participant-observation (Goddard, Llobera & Shore 1994; Kockel, Craith & Frykman 2012), including composite methodologies that incorporate archival, internet, and quantitative data. In other words, it was believed that social complexity required methodological complexity. Yet Boissevain (1994) himself later foreshadowed a return to community studies and research of the everyday as a way to contend with shifting theoretical interests that accompanied the tension and conflict among socially-diverse environments in which people contest the idea of (a) European identity (see also Shore & Black 1994). I earlier drew upon Evans’s (2017a) argument that our theory of society itself is now entirely post-industrial and open to negotiation amid (the aftermath of) Brexit, and I suggest here that so too are our methodological and writing strategies.

Many of my interlocutors would certainly chide me if I were to frame their lives within an Anthropology of Europe given their views about Brexit and the European Union, and I should point out that the UK is no longer a member of the EU at the time of writing. We must continue to ask *what is Europe?* (see Goddard, Llobera & Shore 1994: 23-7). Rather than wade into this debate, I posit alternative questions: *what is complexity?* and *does ‘complexity’ require ‘complex’ composite methodologies beyond the inherent complexity of participant-observation?* Is complexity not to be found beyond Europe, for example, in Los Angeles, US and Tokyo, Japan? In ethnographies based in each setting, Mattingly (2014) and Kondo (1990) argue, respectively, for a first-person approach that puts individuals and everyday life at the forefront with ‘little statistical, so-called objective data’ (Kondo 1990: 46) rather than composite methods that might generate generalizations.

Let us pause and think through complexity, or what we might call the perception of increased differentiation that, historically, has been quite literally capitalized on to give

the illusion of the West as somehow ‘ahead in time’ as the exemplar of ‘progress’ and ‘civilization’ (see Fabian 2002). Of course, it is a ‘well-known picture’ that ‘time and variation became inextricably linked’ given ‘the modern connection between the twin processes of differentiation and complexification’ (Strathern 1995: 21). Differentiation can, however, ‘be said to ontologically underpin so-called “traditional” societies just as much as the turbulent globalized environments of modernity’ (Hodges 2008: 416). Issues of time were consequentially always there, or at least had the potential to be, in the synchronic anthropological studies that delineated an ostensibly static ethnographic present, even in the subtle ways such as when ritual went wrong (see Douglas 1966). Such instances were an eruption of novelty, of time. Given these dual issues of complexity and time/differentiation, the task at hand is to explore *where* (at what social level) and *how* (with what methods) is it best to engage with our crafted epistemology for studying ‘complexity’ and differentiation/time. I suggest that while objective generalizations and composite methodologies might have their uses, there are more limitations to them than benefits when trying to understand the complexity of everyday life and differentiation. Following on, I propose that a focus on the everyday is the appropriate ‘level’ when contending with issues of time. It is here ‘beneath the surfaces of exchange’ in ‘the most intimate, intricate and significant aspects’ of a social environment (Rapport 2017: 200) that I suggest we can learn the most about time as immanent differentiation.

To begin, many of the composite tools such as census records are not terribly helpful to anthropologists ‘since they are largely based on aggregates or generalisations rather than on particularities’, which renders human dimensions ‘invisible’ (Hall 2012: 135). Instead, when we focus on the ‘smallest increment or unit of research – the individual, an experience, a conversation, the space the size of a table’ we learn ‘from the variability of singular interactions and expressions’ (ibid: 135). I should point out that I am advocating *for* a particular writing and methodological strategy rather than writing *against* others. I do not necessarily wish to question the value of what other insights other approaches might yield. They are merely different and simply produce different material. Generalizations and ‘objective or third person descriptions’ provide ‘one interpretive possibility, a possibility that may have its uses’ (Mattingly 2014: 14) but which comes with limitations and problematizations (Hodges 2007: 11-12), and which I have used rather sparingly. A strong case can be made in the phenomenological tradition ‘that objectivity itself is but one attitude within the range of necessarily engaged and first person ways in which we are enmeshed with the world’ (Mattingly 2014: 14).

It seems to me the most accurate generalization is that life itself is variegated and contingent, differentiated and *differentiable*. Socially and historically shaped structures and systems can certainly mediate, produce, and foreclose individual and collective imaginations about what is possible. This introduction has highlighted some of these structural aspects, and they are not omitted entirely from the following chapters. The tensions brought on by financialization and neoliberalism (and austerity, through particular housing concerns and caring responsibilities) are always there at least in the background if not the focus of discussion. It is easier to make sense of ‘a social unit, including the individual person’ once we have placed ‘that unit or person into their social or cultural context’ in order to account ‘for both the specificity and replicability of its or his/her position’ (Strathern 1995: 23). Yet anthropological assumptions about the need to ‘generalize at the cultural level often mean that we construct collective identity’ as ‘an undifferentiated collective subject’ (Kondo 1990: 38). In contrast, we might consider the value to be gained when we ‘treat societies, cultures, as barely generalisable aggregations of difference rather than as fictive matrices of uniformity’ (Cohen 1993: 213; see also Cohen 1994). A particular Anthropology of Britain (and elsewhere) is then, as I see it, perhaps a challenge to ‘reach beyond the surface of cultural categories, labels and classes to individual and human depths’ (Rapport 2017: 201). Cohen (2002) reminds us that ‘people live most of their lives in circumstances of particularity – family, friendship, work and collegial relationships – which themselves qualify those of generality, such as class, gender, ethnicity, nationality and so forth’ (327). You will meet an English woman who, for instance, replied that she had not given much thought about where she would place herself in terms of the British class structure. Other people who voted for Brexit could cite one or two primary reasons for their vote on one day and then another primary reason the next. These brief examples index people’s own internal ambivalences and vacillations.

While these positionalities might be contingent on differentiation at various levels of lived experience, the individual and everyday ‘ordinary’ level is the site where these differences are intimately experienced and best represented (Kondo 1990; Cohen 1994; Rapport 1997; Hall 2012; Mattingly 2014). Where Kondo (1990) writes that tidy categorizations and ‘the use of abstract individuals like “the Japanese woman” or “the Japanese man” do not capture the complexity’ of social milieux (9), I likewise use loaded expressions such as ‘the white British working class’ as sparingly as possible and only when I feel that a rough generalization can be made in order to better contextualize settings, as in the above history, and analytical arguments. Such an expression is otherwise fraught with overlapping and diverse, fragmented social orientations. One might contemplate

whether we can in the end capture more objectivity by focusing on the subjectivity of individual lived experience. Put another way, attempts to craft an objective analytical generalization might be more prone to a researcher's subjectivities than is the attention given to documenting the immanent subtleties of everyday interaction.

This discussion has thus far emphasized the general value of an ethnographic focus on the everyday and individuals, so let us now consider why this approach is particularly helpful for investigating time. Regardless of what type of society, 'simple' or 'complex', one is studying, an immanent anthropology that employs narrative helps to show differentiation, plasticity, and multiplicity in specific contexts as 'timespace in the making' (Hodges 2014: 47) and to see through the 'illusion of transcendence' (ibid: 44-5). Yet the fact remains that *la durée* is, 'in the last instance, inaccessible to objective human representation. This reveals the partially determined, but inherently relational, cultural and individualized nature of sociality and lived experience, as *la durée* underpins human existence and the physical conditions which shape it' (Hodges 2008: 414). I draw attention here to the *individualized* aspect of time. Whereas Bear (2014b) suggests that a 'focus on individual rather than collective social navigation in time means that [we] cannot build a framework that captures the complexity of labour in/of time' (16), I disagree. Again, an alternative focus on 'collective social navigation' of time can no doubt yield valuable material, yet the epistemological model I have constructed requires otherwise. I propose that we can combine the respective strengths of Marxist dialectics and Heidegger's phenomenology in a 'dialectical phenomenology' à la Herbert Marcuse (see Hodges 2007: 63, n26) that explores how the material differentiation of our ontology of time can create contingent individual subjective and phenomenological experiences in everyday life. To put it succinctly, 'where phenomenology penetrates to the underlying existential structures of human experience, historical materialism grasps the material conditions of its historical significance' (Kearney 1994: 207). Hodges (2007) contends that this orientation is 'evidently a prototype for critical anthropologists wishing to attend to individuality' (63, n26).

I therefore write in a predominantly descriptive narrative style that 'walks through' the emergence/immanence and differentiation of *la durée* at length as I, following Kondo (1990), 'attempt to recapture dialogue and events as they occurred... words uttered by "real people"' (46). This narrative fits within an overarching *epoch* structured by extended vignettes at the beginning of each chapter that establish the themes pursued in the respective chapter. The strategy is an attempt to provide a sense of the lived experience and local understandings of time in my fieldsite, and I hope that such presentation helps in an

imaginative and novel way to reveal a sense of endurance, or lack thereof, amid the continuous differentiation of *la durée*. Some of the ethnography might appear anecdotal and event-driven, yet this material has been carefully selected because of its representational value of social life in and around the pub. Much of the day-to-day activity was repetitive, but of course, also different. You will see that various different narratives emerge in people's lives which actualize the various lines of differentiation within *la durée*. The narrative of the pub is but one framing of the many other narratives intertwined with it and which could themselves have provided the focal point of study (see Mattingly 2014: 123).

In crafting this narrative I have endeavoured to heed certain critiques of ethnographic and anthropological writing and language styles. Anthropologists have noted the disadvantages of analytical language that relies upon presumed concepts, yet the response has often been 'to continue to write ethnography in a style of generalising realism pruned of individuality while acknowledging the limitations of anthropological representation' (Hodges 2007: 74). Moreover, any potential impact we might wish to have on public policy is diminished when 'many anthropologists still seem deliberately to succumb to the worst excesses of professional language' (Cohen 2002: 327). I thoroughly endorse the notion that 'interpretive social science is pointless if it is impenetrably complex. It would be a contradiction in terms to suggest that in great creative art, the difficulty of technique should dominate the aesthetic. Yet so much academic writing seems to be devoted to persuading the reader how terribly clever it all is' (ibid: 327). To the extent possible my writing style is 'accordant with arguments that being human above all entails consciousness of an *emotional*, experiencing self...whose nature is partially at odds with the dry diction and wordy jargon of academic writing' (Hodges 2007: 11). I accordingly adopt a critical humanism that shows emotion and descriptive sensory aspects, offers more precision in the representation of lived experience (ibid: 76-7), and better illustrates and animates the analytical points made. Even though writing divisions are 'enshrined in the anthropological literature in the form of a split between studies of selfhood and emotion, on the one hand, and studies of world historical political economy, on the other' (Kondo 1990: 34), this need not be the case.

There are additional elements of auto-ethnography throughout where I go beyond the reflexive constructivist accounts that discuss the intersubjective nature of ethnographic knowledge production to position myself as an embedded actor amid the lived experiences I document. While perhaps subject to scrutiny as 'narcissistic' (Kondo 1990: 25), some autobiographical elements are necessary for a social scientist since 'biographical

commentary is only made subtle, made sensitive, through an autobiographical consciousness' (Rapport 1997: 7). I should point out that I do include biographical elements in order 'to attend to the specificities of given individuals' (Mattingly 2014: 57), yet biography itself is not a primary aim of this study. At some points the layered and braided overarching narrative and sub-narratives are broken up for analyses and some minimal generalized realist reflections where necessary. As time itself is braided, in this way I have further braided the realist, confessional, and impressionist modes of ethnographic writing that correspond respectively to generalizations, illustrations of the embeddedness of the researcher and associated contingency of knowledge production, and narrative details that make vivid my interlocutors' lived experience and the 'doing of fieldwork' (Van Maanen 2011).

Life is messy, and there are of course omissions that could have made this ethnography more complete. Yet as Carsten (1995) reminds us, 'completeness' should perhaps not be a 'proper aim for an anthropologist' (223), a thought that has provided comfort amid varying degrees of fixation and compulsion felt at various times to 'get it right' (Hastrup 2004). Such are the factors that contribute to an unsettling and bittersweet relationship with ethnographic writing; an angst about putting thoughts into words fuelled by both problematization of analytical generalizations and a concurrent commitment to illustrate accurately the textures of social interactions and lived experience as mediated through the senses during fieldwork – what Kondo (1990) terms 'corporeal epistemology'. This is of course counter-balanced by the satisfaction felt after having written, and one can only hope that the reader will share a similar satisfaction after having read. Yet even 'finished' and 'complete' pieces are reinterpreted, repurposed, updated, and contested. As hermeneutic circles tell us, a book read twice is not the same book. There is no end and final result, really – only further differentiation that this ethnography explores as time itself.

I was able to collect material for the approach and writing strategy that I discuss above with a three-pronged methodology: the traditionally ethnographic participant observation, group discussions/interviews, and discussions with particular interlocutors aimed towards documenting their life histories and opinions about various topics. A pub is conducive to conversing with people and collecting data over a drink (see Koch 2018b). As such, I did not require too many formal interviews due to the amount of material that I could reap from 'organic' conversations in the pub. The more formal interviews were used as a supplement for 'filling in gaps' left by social interaction in the pub, and several of these were conducted in people's homes. Many people preferred not to have formal interviews but instead authorized me to use all the data from our conversations and other

interactions. Having a part-time job three days per week (off the Island) helped with establishing rapport through sharing a rhythm with others who also stopped in the pub after work, and we could share with each other the ups and down of being on the job. The few shifts that could have been made available in the pub would not have been enough to sustain me financially during fieldwork and the reciprocity expected in drink rounds.

A handful of research companions expressed that if the project was not about history, then it should be (cf. Edwards 1998, 2000). Many interlocutors initially apologized for not knowing all the details of the local area history and suggested that I visit a library rather than speak with them. It took some time for a few people to accept and be comfortable with the fact that the project is about *them* and *their* lives, which includes what they make of whatever historical knowledge they do have. What soon became apparent once I began 'official' fieldwork was the level of social fragmentation. There was plenty of 'common knowledge' of various regular patrons' personal lives, yet I often felt surprised by the frequency with which I seemed to know more about what was going on in people's lives than community members did. In the aftermath of the pub's closure, only a handful of patrons seemed to have sustained contact with each other and the landlords and their family, pointing to the importance of time and a mutual space in which to interact, such as a pub.

My interlocutors' consent to be a part of the project does not in itself substitute for the experience of having one's life and more intimate details being put under a spotlight. To this end, I made explicit that I was in no way affiliated with any institution other than the LSE, nor would I voluntarily share any gathered information to any other institutions. On a few occasions a couple of people became anxious that I might have been an undercover police officer (cf. Hall 2012: 65), but I (and others) did our best to quell those concerns. The pub landlords were particularly helpful in this regard, in addition to encouraging people to speak with me for the project. I emphasized consistently that what I was doing as an ethnographer did not in any way seek to expose, punish, cheat, or otherwise harm those included in the study. People understood that the pub offered a mutuality of sorts for various purposes, be they the primary business efforts of the landlords, entrepreneurial dealings of various regulars, or my own ethnographic endeavour. As Hobbs (1988) puts it, 'we were all *feeding* off each other: all "Doing the Business"' (16), and this was a shared understanding.

My transition from being a community resident to studying other community residents did not change the social dynamics to the extent that I had anticipated. Aside from no longer engaging in spirited debate with the landlady and others as I had done before, the

most noticeable changes were a few comments like ‘this is weird’ on the occasions when I sat down with people for one-on-one recorded interviews. However, despite such statements, no one who agreed to participate in a recorded interview seemed reticent when providing their answers. Only one person asked me in one instance to say something ‘off the record’ during one such interview. A general risk that was germane to the project was also part of the general sociality of the pub: conflicting desires or ‘secrets’ between interlocutors. Such was the case with financial matters, as various community members had already asked me not to tell anyone else in the pub about situations of personal indebtedness that included interpersonal loans between pub patrons. Many of these matters became widely known as a result of the pub’s closure. I do not present them in detail, but only to illustrate other points about social interaction. I made clear to all involved in my research that all information discussed, and everything observed, would be anonymized and untraceable to pub outsiders to the extent possible through pseudonyms. I have included only one person’s actual nickname rather than real name. Because of the location of the pub, I have opted to keep its real name as well since it would have been easy enough to piece together based on even the vaguest description in relation to the local area. Several interlocutors, such as a young woman from Kazakhstan, enjoyed selecting their own pseudonym (Adelaide), revealing in her case a desire to seem ‘more British’. A gardener revealed some class aspirations through his selection (Tarquin). I have tried to the extent possible to provide sufficient ethnographic material that was widely known to my interlocutors, rather than delve into the more intimate material that I do not believe is necessary in order to accomplish what this ethnography aims to do.

My phonetic transcriptions and dialogue do not follow a set of formal or systematic rules. I have rather opted to borrow Evans’s (2006) method of ‘giving a sense of the sound of the language, including, for example, where syllables are merged and consonants dropped’ (176). In a few instances, I have made further attempts to anonymize identities by saying ‘a woman’ or ‘a man’, even though these people are central characters of the thesis. However, I do not differentiate between these instances and those when my use of ‘a woman’ or ‘a man’ denotes a one-off, fleeting interaction with someone who was less known to me and others. As an ethnography that engages with time as a running theme, I have attempted to pay close attention to my use of tenses (see Hodges 2007: 77). I employ the present tense to mark enduring features and characteristics of people, places, and practices that continue beyond the *epoch* of fieldwork; and the past tense for prior actions and features and characteristics of people, places, and practices that were contained in that *epoch* or which I have since been made aware have ended/changed/differentiated.

Chapter outline

Chapter 1 provides a ‘feel’ of the tempos and rhythms of the pub and conversations that took place there through conversations among several interlocutors who appear throughout the ethnography. The central focus of the chapter is on the resignation about social change so often expressed with the phrase ‘it is what it is’, which I argue also marks an impatience to actualize through conversation people’s intricate thought processes and social understandings that are more astute and subtle than the adage suggests. This resignation and impatience accompany a wariness about expert opinion, a theme introduced here and interspersed throughout the ethnography. I introduce the pub landlords and their family and provide a relevant social history of the Isle of Dogs, which documents the struggle of the pub trade vis-à-vis gentrification and issues with time in terms of both duration and mundane rhythmic time-reckoning. I interlace this discussion within a conversation between the pub landlady and a regular and her property developer friend. In closing, the chapter reflects upon people’s attitudes towards change and time in terms of duration/endurance.

Chapter 2 continues the discussion of change and gentrification through an analysis of discordant conceptualizations of home amid a substantially privatized housing market. I show how explicit temporal issues of rupture/disruption and transience create feelings of unhomeliness in the two registers of the household and the broader community. For many newcomers to the Isle of Dogs, the area is merely a place in which they happen to live rather than home. Drawing upon the outlined framework for examining time, I show how people try to actualize elements of a virtual past in order to prevent or at least postpone social differentiation, in addition to attempts to prevent the differentiation of individual actualizations in intimate settings. This chapter also shows how the pub acted as an extension of home and as a refuge to escape the experience of unwanted change on the rest of the Island.

Chapter 3 further engages with issues of time in relation to social belonging and inclusion. I investigate the element of time in the common expression ‘born and bred’, suggesting that it marks a wider concern about balance, reciprocity, and contribution to social reproduction and endurance. Such balance implicates time in addition to money in what I show are similar if not congruent notions of transaction. Beyond endurance/duration, this chapter documents various issues with the more immediate angst of daily time-reckoning and impatience, which contribute not only to pub sociality but indeed shape relationships and social expectations. In concluding, the chapter develops the idea that

alterity in a broad sense can be analyzed as ‘matter out of time’ in addition to ‘matter out of place’.

Chapter 4 expands upon concerns about balance through what I frame as tactical petty crime and illicit behaviour in the pub. I discuss various tensions that people have of others ‘getting one up’ on them, which index larger concerns about time and duration in the various registers that I already present. Aside from such ‘dodgy’ behaviour, similar concerns about duration and balance manifest in less illicit entrepreneurial endeavours, a few of which attempt to actualize a virtual past and prevent social differentiation within *la durée*. Other entrepreneurial aspirations are sought in order to create duration on other individual levels, such as the ability to remain in the country as an immigrant-entrepreneur. The chapter then discusses work in general within a neoliberal context, showing how the same anxieties continue to manifest in competition, concerns about others ‘getting one up’, and everyday moralities that influence political decision-making and orientations.

Chapter 5 begins by documenting the salience of football and excitement for the World Cup, which took place during my fieldwork. I take seriously my interlocutors’ view that ‘football is life’ through a proposal that the sport is not merely a metaphor for life. I suggest that football is embedded within and reflective of wider class issues seen on the Isle of Dogs that involve opportunity hoarding, anxieties about inequality in terms of personal attributes, money, and neoliberal desires to ‘win’. Such issues are rooted firmly in an ontology of time. Drawing upon the framework that I use to analyze time and its implication of differentiation, I propose an alternative type of accumulation to material possession that I call ‘phenomenological accumulation’. I illustrate how such accumulation involves seeking experiences of difference (as opposed to things), although things/objects can certainly create and mediate such experiences. However, the desire to experience difference can sit uneasily with unwanted widespread change – hence, my formulation of ‘winning’ as being in a position that allows the management of difference and thus, as a function of differentiation, time. The chapter shows how various instances of hoarding, whether of opportunity or of material things, are rooted within explicitly temporal angst and such notions of ‘winning’.

Chapter 6 presents an extended thick description of one particular night in the pub in which concerns about time were especially prominent. It extends the discussion about time to illustrate further how the lived experience of time is monetized, with parallel if not congruent notions of transaction and management. I analyze how the constructions of time and money are mutually constitutive of each other and generative of various aspects of sociality. As a consolidation of ethnographic material and notions of time interwoven

throughout, I continue to explore the fundamental importance of time and, as a corollary, impatience, to constructing social relationships and practices. The chapter also demonstrates how Island residents tactically operate against temporal constraints in their everyday lives in attempts to trick time. In doing so, I present different ethnographic examples that illustrate issues similar to those already presented. However, I approach them from a different angle. Rather than show how belonging is implicated in this chapter's ethnography, for example, I hope that this will have become self-evident. I push the argument further by considering specific manipulations of time/differentiation as expressions of agency that create and actualize time, as opposed to 'filling time', 'passing time', or 'killing time'. After discussion, ethnography from the landlords' final days as stewards of the Nelson and the pub's closure – and a brief epilogue of the aftermath – concludes the chapter to close also the work's overarching narrative (or *epoch* within *la durée*), drawing together many of the themes discussed throughout.

The concluding chapter summarizes the overarching themes of the thesis, emphasizing the value to be found in ethnographic focuses on the everyday, and elaborates on some of the conceptual categories that this study animates. It closes with a call to rethink the 'common sense' of the present financialized economic structure amid the Covid-19 pandemic in order to mitigate the various stress points of everyday life, and associated angst about time and the management of various durations, that this ethnography documents.

1 ‘It is what it is’ resignation and long conversations of change

Thursday, 22 February – Monday, 5 March 2018. Snow blanketed the streets of London on a grey afternoon during a torrential storm dubbed the ‘Beast from the East’ that bombarded the United Kingdom in the winter of 2018, fuelling British preoccupations with meteorological commentary. The gently persistent snowfall seemed peaceful compared to reports of devastation the Beast had caused elsewhere in the country. Patrons of the Lord Nelson public house on the Isle of Dogs still complained that the city was not equipped to contend with such precipitation. Surrounded by tattered furniture and paintings of Admiral Lord Nelson, the Battle of Trafalgar, and other depictions of Britain’s long-past maritime domination, customers and the landlords commiserated over shared experiences of transport danger and delays, the ‘diabolical’ inevitability of inflating utility tariffs, and near-falls on dicey iced pavements. A solemn Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II overlooked her subjects from the comfort and grandeur of one of the sovereign’s several royal residences in a small inconspicuous official photograph hung at the crux of a dark wooden panel above the L-shaped bar. Witticisms and the singing aloud of a line or two with the eclectic – though predominantly British rock/pop – background music interspersed the otherwise bleak conversations. Here, as at other such times, humour, music, and conversation were all tenets of pub sociality. The discussions often invoked both concerns over perceived social change and smaller disruptions to the more mundane actualizations of everyday life – rhythms formalized by the bellowing chimes of Big Ben farther upriver and global time zones standardized according to the Greenwich Meridian, which nearly bisects the Isle.

Tabloids provided some comedic material on one frosty March afternoon. Placed neatly atop a counter that forms a partial divide between the sitting area in the front and the pool table, lavatories, and beer garden (outside drinking and smoking area) in the back, several regular patrons often made the daily newspaper selection their first port of call upon

entering the pub. One of these papers, *The Sun*, had for over four decades featured a different nude or provocatively-dressed young woman amongst its sensationalist headlines and content until just three years prior. Established first as a broadsheet in 1964 and then tabloid in 1969, *The Sun* grew to enjoy the largest circulation of any daily newspaper in the United Kingdom. A wholly owned subsidiary of Rupert Murdoch's News Corp., the tabloid has a notorious reputation for brazenly 'taking sides' in political discourse and exacerbating social anxieties (see Chippindale and Horrie 2013). A few men occasionally lamented the decision to discontinue the 'Page Three Model' even amid expanding discussions of sexism and sexual assault one year into the #MeToo movement, but most are quick to denounce the high-profile perpetrators as 'filth'.² Still, the tabloid's decision to withdraw this feature is for them one more indication of broader social change and 'political correctness running amok'. Life is becoming exponentially unrecognisable from what they feel they once knew.

In a distinctive ritualistic pub rhythm, a man walked to the bar with *The Sun* in hand to take a seat at his regular spot in front of a pint of his regular lager that the usual barman had already poured in the time that elapsed between his passage through one of the pub's two entrances, shaking of the other regulars' hands, and retrieval of his choice newspaper. It was a slow day. It was a typical day.

"'Ave a look 'ere lads', he said to the handful of other white English (Cockney) men lining the bar, pointing to a headline in the paper. 'The police 'ave done (arrested) someone for growin' indoors – they was the only 'ouse on the street *not* covered in snow!'. The men laughed, knowing instantly that the article referred to an indoor marijuana cultivation site whose heating lamps for the plants had generated enough warmth to prevent snow accumulation on the rooftop. They are familiar with these narratives of clandestine activities and police busts. Such premises are equipped with booby traps intended to protect the covert operations by punishing intruders with physical harm that forecloses the possibility that the injured intruder will inform authorities, less ensure mutual legal reprimand.

After laughing about the criminal's stupidity and their visualizations of a single untouched rooftop amongst a white sea, the men began to discuss the estimated £80k value of the seized crop. Some mused over what they 'could do with a few extra pounds'. A young man offered his Paul McCartney 'let it be' – or *laissez-faire* – outlook directly to me

² The #MeToo movement spread 'virally' through social media platforms, namely Twitter, during October 2017 amid increasing accusations of sexual harassment and sexual assault in Hollywood. Millions of people, chiefly Euro-American, have used the hashtag on social media to draw public attention to the magnitude of sexual improprieties in the workplace and beyond, prompting widespread resignations, investigations, incarcerations, and criticisms.

as the song played through the pub's speakers. He suggested that if people can 'get away' with making extra money without harming anyone in order to change their financial circumstances and hence social standing and stability, then 'fair play to them'. People often vacillated between such sentiments and those that displayed less of a willingness for tolerance, such as when someone else's success or 'getting away' with something might come at their expense. Others complained about London's crime surge and contentious police cuts. 'I remember when you'd see coppers walking the pavement daily', one man interjected. They implicated me in the wider discussion by asking for confirmation of which American states had legalized recreational marijuana and for my assessment of the situation 'back home' in California based on any insights my friends and family might have shared. The fact that California voters legalized recreational marijuana at the ballot box during the 2016 American presidential election emerged.

This concept of direct democracy intrigued some of the men, who then probed what other issues had been decided through a people's vote in order to effect change, rather than legislative processes. A fascination with Donald Trump and his largely unexpected victory over Hillary Clinton in the 2016 election then eclipsed earlier topics in the conversation. Even those who decry the man as a 'nutter' still expressed at least some admiration for the American president. Like many other pub patrons, the men lauded Trump for 'telling it like it is' in a perceived collective resistance to *unwanted* social change 'across the pond' and deplored their own government's believed inability or worse – calculated unwillingness – to effectively advocate for their concerns one year into Brexit negotiations. They, like many other interlocutors, have a keen comparative interest in the ways other countries do things; in how political processes result in policies that regulate, produce, and deny modes of existence. Although some are convinced about the superiority of the UK (even while simultaneously suggesting that I was 'mad' for leaving the 'California sunshine'), they still have a curiosity about the world's many modalities and possibilities of living.

After considerable time spent criticising the perceived 'abandonment' of trade with the Commonwealth for that with Europe and the wave of 'foreigners flooding the country', the discussion transitioned to what life 'used to be like' in the Docklands. The regulars waxed lyrical about how things were before their way of life was ruptured by the most recent wave of developments. An elderly London black cab driver told me that I should watch a 1980 film called *The Long Good Friday*, which he remembered as having been filmed on the Isle of Dogs. He said the film accurately depicts the Isle 'ow it was'. Starring Bob Hoskins and Helen Mirren, the film explores tensions prevalent in late-1970s Britain. A London gangster and aspiring businessman (Hoskins) attempts to partner with the

American Mafia in a bid to develop London's Docklands through hosting the Olympic Games, entangling himself inadvertently with the Irish Republican Army (IRA) along the way.³ The cab driver commented on how uncannily he felt the film predicted the future development that ultimately enveloped the area; the film proved prophetic. The Isle of Dogs 'used to be derelict', he explained, 'until modernization and all the development up in the Docks. Now everything has changed'. I asked him whether he felt on balance that the development initiated by Thatcher's government ultimately enhanced the standard of living on the Isle. He replied:

Well, I suppose it depends on 'ow you look at it. Them dockers that were laid off when the Docks closed got their severance pay an' bought 'ouses – many of them former council 'ouses – they would never 'ave been able to afford otherwise. So, in that sense, if there 'adn't been a change it would 'ave remained derelict for forever and a day. But, it took away a [way of] living, it took away a life[style]. If you look at this pub nah, it's empty. Before, going back to the 60s, early part of the 70s, it would 'ave been packed with dock workers...

He then shrugged and said, 'At the end of the day, it is what it is'.

Everyday epistemologies, everyday actualizations

'It is what it is'. This versatile adage at the outset might seem like a mere tautological expression of supposed immutable circumstance. At other times it can be an example of succinct ambiguity, a rhetorical device analogous to then-Prime Minister Theresa May's 'Brexit means Brexit' declaration made amid widespread uncertainty over what the country's actual attempt to depart from the European Union would ultimately entail. Like the South East Asian Manggarai expression, 'This is the shape of our land here', the phrase can also combine modesty and pride when describing places, implying both 'this is the way things are' and 'what you see is what you get' (cf. Allerton 2013: 1).

Isle residents also employ the phrase to simplify life's many complex grey areas or to express resignation, to be sure. *Will Brexit ultimately enhance the standard of living in the UK? It is what it is. Was increased development in the Isle of Dogs ultimately a good or bad thing? It is what it is. Why might it be socially awkward when an inebriated pub*

³ The IRA refers to different configurations of paramilitary groups driven by an ideology of united Irish republicanism. During the 'Troubles', a period of guerrilla conflict between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland from the 1960s-1990s, the IRA detonated a truck bomb on the Isle of Dogs on 9 February 1996. The Good Friday Agreement two years later acknowledged that Northern Ireland was part of the UK, the first time the Republic of Ireland made such an acknowledgement through an international binding agreement. The border between the Republic of Ireland (an EU member-state) and Northern Ireland proved a thorny issue during Brexit negotiations.

patron accidentally spits in a mate's face during conversation and neither person wants to acknowledge that it happened? It is what it is. Beyond mere simplification of your own thoughts, the expression can imply a tacit acknowledgement of the extensive, multifaceted logics/epistemologies, dispositions/subjectivities, interests, and all other intricate factors inherent in everyday situations. It can hint at potential answers to prickly questions during conversation and various attempts at social explication. The phrase further marks an unapologetic unwillingness to waste precious time (or desired actualizations) and cognitive energy in order to deconstruct such complexities; while people have nuanced understandings of complex social situations (which we might say exist virtually as concepts in their minds), it is easier simply to say 'it is what it is' rather than discuss such complexities in detail (and actualize those thoughts) – discussions that people feel would 'not do anything anyway'.

My companions often use the idiom to terminate discussions on politics, economics, or other social issues when they appear to plateau at an epistemic impasse, when it becomes apparent that an ultimate truth or consensus reached through a concession or satisfactory resolution will not materialize, rendering any further debate futile in that instance. In this manner, the adage is the ultimate summation of everyday epistemological exercises and a handy brake to what can otherwise be an infinite ride on an intersubjective hermeneutic merry-go-round, constructed by practices within structures whose natures or relationships never quite concretize through universal lay or academic consensus. In other words, people seem always to disagree on various issues for a variety of reasons and in various contexts, and 'it is what it is'. Perhaps most importantly, the phrase signifies a resignation about social change – a sentiment that various social processes take place in a realm beyond what an individual person can control. A few conversations on separate days exemplify these points.

The first of these was a rare occasion when no one who had been born or raised on the Island was in the pub. Those who *were* present, Henry, 'Scottish James', and Kevin, will reappear throughout.

Henry and Scottish James, two men in their 70s, were seated in their usual seats: James beneath The Queen's portrait at the bar's bend and Henry two stools over on his right. I stood next to James on his left, and Kevin – at work behind the bar – was the only other person present. Henry is a retired City of London banker with a long, sage beard, who moved to the Isle in the early 1990s. While goading James with his pub banter, he also enjoys demonstrating his breadth of knowledge and social connections. Our conversations ranged from discussing the Baganda *kabakas* (kings) of Uganda, to claret wine and his stint

of living in New York City, to his friendship with a former Lord Mayor of the City of London and exclusive dinners at the Yeoman Warders' pub inside the walls of the nearly one-thousand-year-old Tower of London.⁴

Scottish James, too, has a wide range of interests. He is Glaswegian, although his mother was from Donegal, Republic of Ireland. A regular Irish patron who is originally from Tipperary had successfully identified James's regional Irish ancestry, apparent even in his Scottish accent. James had been an area sales manager for a piping supplier and says the only people he has ever loved are his late mother, a former pet cat called Merlin, a girlfriend from his youth, and his one sibling – a sister who lives in America and whom I helped James phone on special occasions at his request. Most of the time James carries a cotton book bag and soft blue cooler with a few sandwiches or sausage rolls to sustain him through drinking sessions, which begin early and last well into the night. Both bags hung on either side of a high-backed bar stool when James was in the pub. When he was not lamenting the fact that he did not attend university or was not reading works of history, historical fiction, and biography at the bar, James was obsessed with claiming to be clever. He proclaimed things like, 'I'm a very intelligent man', or stated his surprise that someone else does not know an obscure, trivial fact that he has committed to memory and often repeated after a few too many pints. James gained satisfaction from the fact that he was the only person in the room during a pub quiz who knew that the old Kolkata airport was called Dum Dum. He also liked to taunt bar tender Kevin, in his 50s and originally from the North of England, about being 'not heavily endowed with intellect', adding 'or a sense of humour' in reference to Kevin's scowl from having been inevitably insulted.

Kevin moved to London in January 1989 and the Isle of Dogs in 1990, citing the lack of work in Middlesbrough as his primary motivation. His friends were already in London, so he 'decided to try it'. While they teased that he would last no longer than six months in the city, Kevin takes pride in his achievement of 'making it' for thirty years and counting in the city.

On this afternoon, Kevin recorded the results from the newspaper sports pages into one of his many notebooks while Henry and Scottish James began to discuss the rush hour 'atrocities' of public transport. The conversation started with James's reflections on his 'mistake' of navigating the packed Tube that morning and subsequent concerns over

⁴ Yeoman Warders, also referred to as 'Beefeaters', are the guards of the Tower of London, a fortress whose construction began in the 11th century amid the Norman Conquest of England. The complex has housed royalty, prisoners, and, currently, the Crown Jewels, which are removed for ceremonial occasions such as the State Opening of Parliament and the Coronation. The Yeoman Warders are selected from the military and live within the Tower's walls, providing tours to visitors. They have their own pub and lager, which people can gain access to and sample through various social clubs and individual connections.

London's 'atrocious' population growth.⁵ I participated in the discussion, and it grew into a speculative narrative on what we found to be most loathsome about the overcrowded London Underground during rush hour.⁶

The men noted that people most often move grudgingly during an influx of other passengers, rolling their eyes and shaking their heads with an unwillingness to accommodate strangers. They acknowledged that some people rather just seem lost in contemplation or on their mobile phones or headphones, desperate to create what I called a 'personal flow' while being what they described as 'packed in like sardines' with others. I pointed out that the extra room needed by travellers with large suitcases en route to an airport, and sudden stops on the line that cause those who are standing to stumble into each other, disrupt these flows, creating what we might conceptualize analytically as unwanted differentiation within *la durée* rather than a continuous actualization of personal desires to arrive at work within the restrictions imposed by clock time. Henry suggested that at the best of times someone might help a mother who is struggling with a baby buggy. At the worst, people race past or push and elbow their way ahead of their place in the station queue with just less than (or even equal) force to what might in other circumstances be considered assault. He added that someone else might observe the latter behaviour and think what a self-important, entitled person the queue-jumper is, yet can find himself as the aggressor two days later after their employer has reprimanded them for tardiness – or for some other unknown reason.

James continued with hypothetical irony saying that, despite departing home early, that person might then be delayed by a 'poor bastard' who halts the train and brings their own time to a definitive conclusion with the decision that their life is unbearable.⁷ There is little sympathy and more often disdain amongst certain Isle residents for the 'selfishness' of those who commit suicide on the tracks of the London Underground and deprive others of the time they feel is so scarce and budgeted in the bustle of London. James continued that during congested periods on the Tube he wants to tell people to 'stop reproducing', adding with a chuckle, 'thank God I was firing blanks all my life', referring to the fact that

⁵ The first UK Census, taken in 1801, recorded London's population at just over 1m. Over the first three decades of the 20th century, the population grew to a peak in of 8.61m in 1939. The population then began a period of decline, initially caused by the impact of WWII and then changes to social structures and increasing suburbanization. The last decade of the 20th century saw London's population begin to rise again. The 2011 Census placed London's population at 8.63m, the largest it had ever been. Projected growth over the next thirty years suggests the population will reach 10.2m in 2039 (Greater London Authority 2015).

⁶ The London Underground, colloquially called the Tube, was built in 1863 and is the world's first underground railway system. At present, it comprises 11 train lines serving a total of 270 stations across 402 km. See Ashford (2013). Sadiq Khan, the Labour party and first Muslim and ethnic minority Mayor of London, faced criticism for not delivering a new tube line to ease congestion by the promised date.

⁷ Between 2000-2010, 644 suicide attempts were recorded on the London Underground network (Martin and Rawala 2017).

he has no children. Such sentiments reflect a widely-shared belief that the UK ‘is full’ (see Tuckett (2017)). For many interlocutors, regardless of what ‘official’ data might say, they feel that there are already too many people who contribute to population congestion in London. They do not need data in order to express their own daily frustrations about living in what they perceive as an already-overpopulated city. A handful of interlocutors suggested that having children is a selfish endeavour that people ‘do’ simply ‘because they can’ without thinking about urban congestion or the fact that those children will have to compete in a social world marked by ‘status’, ‘prestige’, and people trying to ‘outdo’ others in order not to have to do ‘the work that *really* matters’, such as farming, construction, and other jobs outside of the knowledge economy.

‘To grasp a rhythm it is necessary to have been grasped by’ (Lefebvre 2004 [1992]: 27). Having lived in London and relied on the underground network, I had certainly had the rhythms of the Tube imprinted onto my bodily habitus. James and Henry’s conversation and the many fatigued or even sleeping faces of the passengers speak volumes. Capitalism is loud on the trading floors of Wall Street, but it is deafening in the rumble of the London Underground. Their conversation further shows how the space-time relationship in a mundane morning train commute produces reflections on the limitations of space and time in the world and consequently where people find belonging in it – no matter how temporary.

I briefly reflected on the abundance of previous conversations I had had about the frustrations over disruptions to what my companions described as flows caused by transportation and a perceived constant competition against others to navigate obstructions, or immanent everyday differentiation, in the city. Cyclists, pedestrians, and drivers alike enjoyed venting their irritation with each other to me and to others in the pub or at home, as well as their annoyance with fellow cyclists, pedestrians, and drivers. Residents emphasized alterity when performing these narratives of perturbation, noting differences in biology (whether someone was tall or short) and social conditions (whether they were in a hurry or ‘taking their time’). Racist, ageist, sexist, classist, and/or xenophobic speech accompanied many stories of such disruptions, showing how capitalist urban time pressures and impatience amid attempts to live life according to how people want (or need) to can provoke biases and arouse anxieties over perceived disruptions to both broad social orders and more immediate actualizations of personal desires. Many British residents often say whether they ‘have time’ to express fondness and whether they ‘do not have time’ to convey indifference or aversion. People might or might not ‘have time’ for other individuals or social groups and situations on various scales, ranging from neighbours to

various nationalities to political discussions. I wondered whether dirt might not be so much ‘matter out of place’ (as per Douglas 1966) as alterity more broadly can be ‘matter out of time’ – out of rhythm or tempo with the life cadence and differentiation either expected or desired in a specific moment or more prolonged *epoch*. This idea will reoccur and develop in the chapters that ensue.

Neither James nor Henry explicitly blamed capitalism or time constraints for the transportation woes. Instead they agreed that these frustrations are a result of the ‘daily grind’ required for everyone to earn a living amid an increased population due to migration, their belief that some people have more children in order to claim state benefits, and an inability or unwillingness by the ‘powers that be’ to do anything about it. In other words, for them the situation is an immutable circumstance. As they agreed, ‘it is what it is’. They moved on to discuss the ethics of relinquishing a seat on the Tube to someone else in need, and the different scenarios they offered resembled a less morbid version of the hypothetical exercise in ethics posed by the famous philosophical trolley cart problem (see Foot 1967). James ordered his fourth pint of the day from Kevin, who removed his glasses and dropped his pen loudly on the bar counter, clearly irritated that his own actualization of recording sports stats was disrupted for the sake of earning a wage by having to contend with an obnoxious customer who finds amusement through insult.

‘At the end of the day, it’s common knowledge that humans are always self-selecting – they will always choose themselves’, James stated before taking a long drink from his new pint.

Looking up at me with a small grin to indicate he was about to provoke or ‘wind up’ James by rupturing James’s belief in himself to be right, Henry said, ‘James, you are unequivocally, absolutely, empirically *wrong*’.

‘Hey listen, humans – we are selfish, horrible creatures,’ James began.

‘But not in every instance self-selecting’, Henry retorted.

‘How can you say that?’, James asked, incredulous. I was tempted to vocalize my agreement with Henry and playfully note how many times family members of the landlords or pub regulars, including myself, had volunteered to escort James home on nights when he could barely walk, or sit for that matter, after heavy drinking due to an intertwined alcohol dependency and anxiety over death. I thought James would just counter with the argument that the landlords only look after him to ensure his continued patronage (and hence safeguard their income rather than his well-being), as he had remarked several times in the past during similar conversations.

Like so many pub conversations I had either heard or participated in – ranging from Brexit and Trump to sport and music – after considerable debate, both men refused to concede their points – their epistemologies and understandings of the world – or subordinate their egos. Instead, James ended the conversation by asserting, ‘Hey listen, it is what it is...it is what it is’. While they could earlier agree on ‘it is what it is’, the adage now signified an epistemic impasse.

* * *

In another conversation with one of the pub landlords, Bill, I was asked for my opinion of Brexit. ‘You know, Bill’, I began, ‘After speaking with everyone in here and people on the Isle, doing this project, and listening to and seeing where everyone is coming from –’

‘You agree with everyone!’, he said laughing while I nodded. ‘I do too. It is what it is, innit?’

In the pub, Bill was in many ways an English type of the classic anthropological ‘big man’. A self-employed electrician with steady business, he loathed being a publican yet enjoys drinking and the social environment in a pub. He was central to setting the tone of the pub and social group formation through reciprocity of both conversation and drink. Despite some patrons’ repeated suspicions that I might be an undercover police officer, many others assured me that I would ‘be fine’ because of having built a relationship with him. A mild-natured man in his early 60s with an ability for sudden intimidation if the situation calls for it (such as quelling pub fights), Bill inconspicuously observed everything from his drinking spot at the end of the bar near one of the entrances. He was the ultimate participant-observer. Along with not missing anything that happened in the pub, Bill also sees the fundamental complexities and at times competing interests of lived experience. On many subjects, social change and Brexit included, he believes that Isle residents articulate both material and ideological logics that make sense on their own terms despite being at odds with each other (as per Foster 1999: 5-8), or his own epistemologies. Hence, his agreement with everyone and another usage of ‘it is what it is’.

In one more example of the phrase, I asked a man called Rodney if I could record our conversation in the pub. He agreed, but quickly added:

But no one records pub conversations...I suppose this is a theoretical or philosophical, whatever, question, but doesn’t a recording...uh, what if you just wrote from memory, wouldn’t that be better, uh, more correct? Ah, never mind, I suppose it is what it is.

Through our ensuing conversation, I realized he had tried to articulate that a significant aspect of pub sociality centres on the recollection of previous conversations, yet lacked the patience to do so. An audio recording would disrupt this process and render any social abstraction derived from it untrue and unable to capture the importance of memory in the everyday practices the abstraction might seek to explicate. Even though the recording would capture the conversation verbatim, perhaps the reality and truth of the situation is ‘what people remember’ as a virtual past that becomes actualized through pub sociality.

The hypothetical musings between James and Henry – and myself – were based on empirical lived experience of decades spent negotiating the London transportation network in their case and several years in mine. Bill and Rodney’s reflections were likewise based on extensive daily conversations in the pub. They show how people always already have their own lived experience as a type of embodied ethnographic data. Many Isle residents are ‘natural anthropologists... [t]hey unabashedly stare, confront, ask questions, observe...and judge’ (cf. Moore 1998:15). These qualities are foundational to pub social life. Of course, all human beings can be said to engage in the epistemological feats of asking the ‘big questions’ about life and what makes us human (cf. Bloch 2005: 1-20). The case can be made that philosophers are anthropologists without field notes, and lay people are philosophers without the tools, channels, or patience to articulate fully their abstractions.⁸ After all, ‘anthropology, as Bourdieu (1990) put it, is “fieldwork in philosophy”’ (Hodges 2014: 44).

Many pub patrons have ‘street-smart’, entrepreneurial sensibilities and, upon my explanation of what anthropology is, felt that anthropologists do not possess as innate a grasp of the world as they do. They see social science knowledge as both arrogant and pretentious ultra-politically-correct opinion that complicates ideas about life with minimal ‘real world’, or material, value, produced by people who get paid disproportionately for the perceived leisure time to think and reflect unnecessarily on ‘random’ topics and who had the financial fortune in the first place to afford an education that taught them how to use convoluted language – language that they feel is unnecessary in order to convey the actual points being made. ‘What’s the point of that – to show you’re clever?’ many people asked about the use of complex language in academia in general. The photograph included below of one of my research companions who you will later meet shows the humorous subversion of perceived classed hierarchies of knowledge (and art) through a meme that he created and circulated on WhatsApp, which he has kindly granted permission for me to use. Many

⁸ In my undergraduate introductory course to social anthropology, the graduate teaching assistant remarked during the first seminar that as humans, all of us in the class were anthropologists, and he was only going through the process of accreditation as a graduate student.

working-class companions prefer ideas on social truths offered and deliberated through everyday conversation, music, and humour – as seen in the opening vignette – and other works of popular culture.⁹ However, whether in the Ivory Towers of academia or a ‘rough-and-ready’ pub like the Lord Nelson, simplification is often central to epistemological feats and the conversations they produce. In the pub, phrases like the one presented seek to simplify complexity. In the social sciences, ethnography, theories, frameworks, and models attempt to simplify complex data in search of social explication and enhanced understanding, even if they produce complexity in the process through the continuous analytical differentiation of lived experience. These notions and tensions pertain to ideas about work, class, and neoliberalism that I discuss later, but one example is helpful here.



Figure 1.1 Meme of Dapper Del as ‘The Thinker’

I had a rare chat about Brexit and politics with Jason, the landlords’ youngest child in his late 20s, who works as a painter (and part-time film extra when such opportunities arise). Unlike his mother, Jason tends to abstain from political debate and instead enjoys

⁹ See Jacobs-Huey (2006) on the construction of social truths through stand-up comedy and humour.

discussing sports and anything related to Disney or Michael Jackson, topics on which he is a fountain of knowledge. Midway through the conversation, he said, ‘Politics doesn’t affect me’. In a misinterpretation of his statement since we had been talking about the material effects of political processes, I played the devil’s advocate and probed whether he thought there might be political decisions that do have an obvious effect on his wages, housing, or other daily concerns.

‘Of course they do, but politics doesn’t affect *me*. You just adapt and *go with the flow*,’ he replied, adding his life motto, ‘No stress, live simply – be ‘appy’.¹⁰

‘Ah right, you don’t let politics affect you psychologically’, I clarified for myself.

‘There you go, making yourself sound all clever,’ Jason jabbed with frustration. ‘What else does *me* mean? *Me*, my mind,’ he said, bringing both hands inward towards his sternum to emphasize ‘me’. He carried on. He said that, while he does not let politics affect him, he cannot tolerate rude, educated people who think he or anyone who voted for Brexit are unintelligent or racist. Jason believes that people are too arrogant to take the time or care to understand his and others’ points of view – their epistemologies – and particular life circumstances. He also expressed that since ‘experts can’t seem to all agree on anything’, his opinions are just as valid. For Jason and others, ‘expert’ opinion is just that – opinion, not fact.

For these Isle residents, complex social understanding is more tacit and sometimes even visceral without the patience and linguistic or educational capital to articulate those sentiments otherwise. It might be said that such impatience lends itself to an inability to actualize through conversation a virtual understanding of complex matters. Until then, it is what it is. Illustrated in the conversation with the black cab driver, it is common to reduce contemplations about ‘change’ – and the truth about change – to matters of ‘it is what it is’. Yet with respect to a concept as onerous and gargantuan as ‘change’ on the Isle of Dogs or the UK more broadly, just what exactly is *it* that it *is*? What are the forces at play that yield such an expression of resignation amid perceived rupture? Where some write of a ‘long conversation’ that involved gradual social change/differentiation through the integration of ‘divergent cultural perspectives, dissimilar intentions, dissonant notions of value’ (Comaroff & Comaroff 1997: 6; see also Comaroff & Comaroff 1991: 198-251), one literal long conversation in the pub highlights many of the above issues inherent in tensions surrounding various epistemologies, differentiation, and actualization on the Isle of Dogs.

¹⁰ Second emphasis mine.

A long conversation

Pam is a proud woman with long black and grey hair. On most days she wears black dresses and flip-flops except in the coldest of temperatures. She is in her early 60s like her husband, Bill. Unlike her husband, however, Pam was the primary manager of everything in the pub on top of caring for her mother. As one patron put it when asking to speak with Pam, he was looking ‘for the *real* governor’ (landlord). Pam was often awake until the early hours of the morning and up again before dawn to make school runs for her grandchildren or to buy fresh bagels when the shops open on Brick Lane. I accompanied her once to Billingsgate fish market at dawn to select the best catch of the day that the pub then sold to passers-by on the pavement from a stall attached to their beer garden. A quick McDonald’s breakfast at the drive-thru on the way back was all she had time for.

Pam and her family have always ‘made-do’ despite significant setbacks. She and Bill have four grown children, the oldest a girl and three boys, including Jason above. They were homeowners until 1991 when a local council owed Bill £77k for work he had done for the council, yet they could not pay him before he was required to pay VAT (value-added tax), indexing the problem of bureaucratic sequence and representations of time within the differentiation of *la durée*. He and Pam were made bankrupt and lost their house. Pam says the council blamed her and Bill for getting themselves into ‘that predicament’. Despite being made bankrupt with four children under the age of six, the council said they ‘would be lucky to get a house within four years’. Pam admitted that while she is not racist, she could not help but feel aggravated by her perception that people who seemed to ‘just be arriving’ in the country were receiving ‘brand new council ‘ouses’ before her family. They rented privately for a spell, and Pam worked odd jobs until they became leaseholders for a pub, whose monthly rent also provided accommodation. As Bill’s and Pam’s parents drank in the Lord Nelson and it is Bill’s favourite pub, they assumed the proprietorship in September 2012 when the lease became available. Bill and Pam lived in the domestic quarters above the pub with their daughter (Shauna) and her son, and with one of their three sons (‘Young’ William), his partner (Mary), and William and Mary’s daughter and son. Jason, another son, lives with his partner, Babs, and her mother. I hardly saw their third son, who does not live on the Isle of Dogs.

Wednesday, 14 March 2018 – One night I found myself in the middle of a conversation between Pam, a property developer called Mandy, and Mandy’s friend, Amber. Mandy and Amber had come to the pub for a drink when Amber thought that Mandy might be able to provide some insight for Pam to promote her struggling business.

Trying to make her own point to Pam and Mandy that local workmen would come to the pub if it offered breakfast, Amber said, 'In the development up near Asda, 'ow many workmen you're gonna 'ave there? 'Ow many workmen? 'Ow many fry-ups (English breakfasts)?' The Asda supercentre is the largest shop on the Isle and is situated close to land marked for high-rise flat towers. Construction workers sometimes come into the pub after work. Many are walking billboards for development, wearing shirts or hoodies that advertise their respective companies.

'In ten years' time, there'll probably be no pubs over 'ere. 'Cause there's thirty-three pubs closing a week', Pam replied.

'No, there're actually...', Mandy began to correct.

'No point - [Mandy] knows better', Pam laughed sarcastically.

'There're actually forty pubs', Mandy continued, 'There're actually forty pubs closing every twelve days'. Cardboard coasters laid out on the tabletops remind patrons that public houses throughout the country are in decline and call on public support to cut beer tax by signing a petition. The Nelson expected to face the same fate at this time (which the landlords ultimately did experience), and the landlords were vocalising this imaginable reality to close friends and regulars.

Various other indicators illustrated the pub's precarious predicament. The boiler remained out of commission, and the radiators were out of order. Instead, two small (1.5 ft) propane-fuelled heaters at the opposite ends of the pub's front section provided warmth during the winter. Even with these in place, some potential patrons entered and immediately departed, commenting that the pub was 'too cold'. If patrons were not already wearing their jackets while drinking, they certainly put them on before using the lavatories. People returned from the toilets shivering, and Big Bill once joked upon returning from the gents' (men's toilet) that he could not see the mirror because of how much steam he had created while using the urinal. His statement is only slightly hyperbolic. A leak in the men's toilet exacerbated the situation; a man who has had a lucrative career as a facilities manager complained through jest that he required 'wellies' (Wellington rain boots) in order to use the urinal.

An unreliable alcohol supply compounded the problems posed by the cold and lack of food. Sudden changes in rates of consumption throughout the week or weekend contributed to this inconsistency, as did an increase in patron-convenient debit or credit card payment. Electronic payments took 2-3 working days to clear into the pub's account. If there was a party or karaoke on a Friday or Saturday night with high consumption and card usage rates, the pub would not receive the funds until Tuesday or Wednesday to pay

for new stock and consequentially risked running out of barrels of various lagers before then. Even without weekly parties, this occurred at least one day each week. On the worst days, the three top-selling of the pub's six lagers on draught (Fosters, Kronenbourg, and Carlsberg), all depleted, leaving only Carling, Stella Artois, and Moretti. Patrons entered and asked for a Fosters, then a Carlsberg, then a Kronenbourg (or any sequence of the three) and upon hearing sequentially that each had run out, either walked out for other nearby pubs or expressed their frustration while settling for one of the other three lagers. Some switched reluctantly from lager to a stout. The pub ceased to sell ales because of their short lifespan. In short, there was an inability to develop a consistent business rhythm that reckoned various explicit issues with time. One patron likened the situation to a British comedy sketch by the group called Monty Python, in which a man enters a cheese shop only to be told that each cheese he subsequently requests is not in stock. 'And 'e says, "This isn't really much of a cheese shop then, is it?" Well, this isn't really much of a pub then, is it?' the man said with a chuckle.

Further exacerbating the situation, the Nelson could no longer afford the monthly Sky Sports subscription and was now streaming football matches from free foreign websites. The low resolution, buffering interruptions, and foreign advertisements irritated many patrons who had come specifically to watch the football match. On a few occasions, patrons were asked to disconnect from the pub's complimentary Wi-Fi so the streaming would not be interrupted.

The landlords and their family blamed their cash-flow problems and overall situation on the comparatively low cost of alcohol available in supermarkets and convenience shops owned by 'foreigners'; a perceived general lack of sociability deriving from class distinctions, social media, and technology; and an increase in the local alcohol-abstaining Muslim population. In an area where there is also a large influence from middle-class, white-collar workers, this general atmosphere in the Nelson did not appeal to certain middle-class tastes. Patrons who were not committed regulars simply did not return if they had an experience they considered sub-standard.

'Doesn't that tell you something?' Pam asked, referring to the statistics of pubs closing throughout the UK.

'It does. It tells a lot. And do you know why?' Mandy responded.

'A-a-and it ain't just food', Pam asserted in a defensive bid to pre-empt Mandy bringing up the pub's kitchen closure. On top of the issues with central heating, the kitchen had been non-operational since a fire caused considerable damage in April 2017. Despite the pub having passed every inspection for years, the fire marshal declared that the entire

upstairs residence must meet commercial standards in order for the kitchen to resume operation. This had not been the previous policy, but the appeals were unsuccessful. The landlords believed that implementing the measures to bring the living quarters into commercial compliance would be impractical due to the number of family members occupying the residence, and because of the hassle it would cause. Rather than the standard pub fare, or ‘pub grub’, of burgers, fish and chips, and meat pies, cheese/onion and ham rolls were consequentially sold for £2. There might have been a few corned beef rolls on a good day. Patrons still bought these rolls despite complaints that the price was ‘dear’ (expensive) for what one received. Even before the kitchen fire, the pub still offered a few items on the menu – jacket potatoes with a choice of cheese, beans, chilli con carne, ham, or coleslaw; hot dogs with onions; and chips – after steadily eliminating dishes over the five years during which the family had leased the pub. These items were written on a single torn scrap piece of lined paper kept behind the bar that put many potential customers off and created a slight look of embarrassment on Kevin’s face as he would sheepishly retrieve the piece of paper from on top of the till and hand it across the bar to customers. Countless would-be patrons entered and immediately exited after having a look around the establishment and realising that rolls and packets of crisps were the only food items available.

‘And actually, you’re looking at the pubs that are closin’. If you look at the pubs that are not closin’, do you know why they’re not closin’? Because they’ve gone to – from pub grub – to Thai, Asian –’, Mandy pressed on.

‘But they dun it ‘ere! When Rebecca and Paul was in they dun all that’, Pam shot back, implying that alternative cuisine had not been fruitful for the previous landlords.

‘I can’t argue my point –’ Mandy vented in frustration. ‘I-I-I – let’s not argue this point. I do it for a living. This is what I do for a living’. Mandy stressed that all the pubs and businesses for which she had been hired as a consultant or developer were all ‘profit up’. Amber could not get a word in edgewise between Pam and Mandy. One of Pam’s family members knocked on the residence entrance door behind the bar, and Pam left the conversation to admit them.

‘She’s too old, she’s stuck in her ways’, Mandy claimed in Pam’s absence. Such ‘ways’ have deep roots on the Isle of Dogs. Many patrons who grew up on the Island when it was still working docklands all described the community in the same way. This understanding is crucial to making sense of people’s attitudes not just towards the pub but the new local political economy that is intertwined with global capital through the Canary Wharf financial hub. Long-term residents describe a community that while connected to

London was very much its own village in which ‘everyone knew everyone else’, ‘money circulated internally within the community’, ‘jobs were abundant’, and ‘anything that anyone felt they needed’ materially or socially, including partners, ‘could be found on the Island’. Residents bought locally from an array of bakers, greengrocers, butchers, cheesemongers, craftsman, and the like, and went for a drink after work (mostly the men) in one of the Island’s 40-plus pubs that was nearest their home.

In this environment, the expectations of a public house were relatively low. They served primarily as a place for workmen to get a drink and converse before going home. All that was needed was alcohol, a roof, and maybe a cheese roll to satisfy appetites until leaving for dinner. The current demand for trendy gastropubs with full restaurant-quality menus offering ‘exotic’ Asian cuisine, sports television, and consistent live entertainment is a product of capital development, amongst other processes that I will discuss in Chapter 5 as ‘phenomenological accumulation’.

The Nelson seemed to have reverted to what many residents articulate a public house was on the Isle pre-1980s. For white working-class regulars of all ages, this was welcomed and comfortable, even though there might have occasionally been annoyances due to heightened expectations like uninterrupted sports broadcasts, Friday night karaoke, and Saturday night DJs. There is a certain pride and loyalty that stems from nostalgia and individuals’ own personal tastes and comforts.

‘It’s not! It’s not! It’s not that’, Amber tried again to make her point. Pam returned from the passageway and took a drink of her Bacardi and Diet Coke. Amber continued:

We’re looking at that development right, just up the road. They’re gonna have probably about three, four years’ work on their hands. Now, what do – what do workmen want? They want a fry-up [breakfast]. They want a good ol’ fucking fry-up – right? Now tell me now, where they’re gonna get that? So, so just short-term, even, if you can offer a good ol’ fry-up, when you know, when you know there’s a development down the road, where you’ve got workmen, and workmen DO – Jimmy, [my partner], would walk a fucking mile for a bit of sausage and bacon. He really would. Development – [Mandy], your talking is right, but if you look more short-term other than long-term. [Instead of] what you’re gonna offer long-term, look more short-term. You ‘ave a development on your doorstep. And with the development comes workmen. With workmen and self-employed people, if you do a proper decent fry-up...you will thrive.

Outlined in the Introduction, development on the Island is rampant. A brief elaboration on that history of development helps to contextualize the long conversation. By the late 1970s, there was not enough private or public capital to finance massive development of the Isle (Cole 1984). This in turn would perpetuate the area’s disadvantaged

environment and allow the Isle to ultimately remain ‘proletarian’, in one author’s language (ibid). .However, tensions erupted during the market-driven development championed by Thatcher’s government in the 1980s (Butler 2007). Under the Tory government’s neoliberal strategies, the construction of Canary Wharf began in 1986 during the British economy’s ‘big bang’ with the objective of enhancing the city as a global financial centre ‘free from the shackles of the Square Mile’ (Carmona 2009: 144), or the City of London. The area had been a designated Enterprise Zone administered by the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC), which was convinced by American developer G. Ware Travelstead to consider the site as a location for corporate offices, and Thatcher was this idea’s strongest political proponent (Gordon 2001). Travelstead failed to consolidate financial capital, and the project was overtaken by the Canadian company, Olympia and York (ibid). Having been the ‘poster child’ of the Conservative government’s urban policy, Canary Wharf’s development halted amid the property crash of 1992 when the firm went bankrupt. It commenced again in 1997 when Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair proclaimed that the ‘resurrection’ of Canary Wharf was the sign of a new Britain (ibid). Development anxieties had existed before the capital-driven approach, however, as the various 1960s to early 1970s state and local council proposals highlight during post-industrialization (Cole 1984). Unlike the current worries involving intertwined class and multicultural anxieties, these rejections of the state were based on attempts to sustain the working-class village that had existed and defined the Isle of Dogs for generations.



Left: Figure 1.2 Protest graffiti on a billboard. *Right: Figure 1.3* Development protest shirt. Both on display at the Museum of London Docklands.

‘We dun that’, Pam replied to Amber’s proposal of serving breakfast to construction workers. ‘When they ‘ad the [recent] development, yeah that’s what we did. We used to open up at eight in the morning for breakfast’.

‘If they gave you a new lease today, I would take it over. If it was a new lease, if you said to me I don’t wanna take over the lease as of today –’ Mandy began.

‘What people don’t realize – you’re so full of it. What I’m trying to explain to you, it’s so easy for people to sit this bar –’, Pam also started.

‘No, it’s not –’, Mandy tried to cut her off.

‘No, listen. It’s so easy for you to sit this side, and me to sit that side’, Pam declared with emphatic hand motions.

‘I’ve done – I’ve done it, yeah’.

‘Look, I don’t mean, I really don’t care. What I’m saying is I sit this side. *I* know what we ‘ave to pay out every day. *I* know my over’ead. You don’t. So you can sit there and say to me, “Well you should do this and you should do that”. I’ve done that’.

‘Yeah’.

‘You might be a property developer or whatever you do, but I’m not stupid either. I know what goes and what doesn’t go’. Like Jason, Pam can also be quick to anger when she feels her intelligence is being insulted or life experience is not given due merit – in this case not by an anthropologist, but by a ‘consultant’.

‘And I’ve done all this’, she added. ‘You ask anybody in ‘ere – we’ve tried everything’, she said gesturing to me. ‘We’ve done breakfasts, we’ve done coffee mornings, we’ve done everything’. After some more debate, Pam declared there was little financial value to be gained from pubs.

‘It’s not about the money’, Mandy replied. ‘[If] you’re gonna put money into it, yeah? You’ve got to learn today’s aspect – today’s money, and today’s living, and today what people want’. Unfortunately for the pub’s ethos, the Isle of Dogs today has become synonymous with the nearby Canary Wharf financial hub (Carmona 2009). This juxtaposition reflects the current social configuration on the Isle. Seen in the first pub conversation, many long-time residents embodying the historical white British working class often express lament over a perceived lack of neighbourhood sociality and change from what ‘used to be’ before Canary Wharf and the influx of foreigners. On the other hand, many upwardly mobile or middle-class residents view the Isle as an ideal place to be a ‘city adventurer’ (see Butler 2007). That is, they have arrived here from elsewhere within the UK or beyond, often having just completed university, and want to live within a secure community with access to the city but remain not ‘of’ the community or city. Unlike other

gentrified areas of London, these upwardly mobile people are not attracted to the area for the sake of interacting with its historically working-class population or social diversity, but rather because it is a relatively safe and quiet place in which to retreat after nights out in more ‘exciting’ areas of London and in which to plan the actualization of their career progressions, families (Jackson and Butler 2015), and eventual home ownership away from London’s congestion. Residents with these mind-sets will appear in the next chapter. ‘I’ve done – I’ve always worked for myself. I’ve been in pubs [since I was sixteen years old]’, Pam justified.



Top left: Figure 1.4 View of development around Millwall Outer Dock, facing Canary Wharf.
Top right: Figure 1.5 DLR train passing in front of an industrial smokestack vestige. *Bottom: Figure 1.6* Canary Wharf skyline from East Ferry Road/Canary Wharf College

‘And if my nan (grandmother), if my nan came into this pub today, she would run it exactly ‘ow you’re running it - and it’s not wrong’, Mandy admitted, underscoring the fundamental tension between conflicting epistemologies and lifestyles. While the pub’s atmosphere and offerings might not have been wrong for some, most of the Isle’s new lifestyles and trends are at odds with this now-minority that attempts to actualize a virtual past and foster an endurance of a particular social configuration.

‘Every time for fifteen years – I-I I have worked – I have drunk in this pub for fifteen years, and nothing has fucking changed – what does that say?’ Mandy mused. Pam, who kept glancing over her shoulder at the clock to check the time, eventually asked Mandy to leave, and Amber departed with her.

The following day I brought up the conversation with Pam. She laughed that ‘that woman was getting right on’ her nerves before sighing and shrugging it off with, ‘It is what it is’.

Conclusion: scales of *la durée* and difference

From unwanted differentiation caused by halts on the tube to more substantial ruptures like losing a home or a perceived communal way of life, ideas of change are contingent on perceptions of scale and differentiation. For a simple baseline definition, we might say change is perceived differentiation in various registers. Change is apparent on individual levels in personal circumstance, witnessed for example through Pam and her family’s experience of losing their house in the 90s. On the same level, the new home ownership of former dock workers described by the cab driver afforded different life possibilities for the individual workers and their families, many of whom moved to neighbouring towns and villages east of London. The aggregation of this phenomenon altered entire kinship networks and contributed not just to difference in individual circumstance, but also a broader communal reconfiguration of the Isle (Cole 1984). That same pub conversation even invoked perceived change on national and international scales through discussions of shifting politics in the UK/Europe, Commonwealth, and US – and of where narratives of self and community histories, or ‘subjective experience’, fit in a dialectical relationship with these wider currents, or ‘normative social orders’ (cf. Comaroff 1980). Further still, the rarity of snowstorms like the Beast from the East implicates international discourse on the supranational consequences of a changing climate that many argue is an aggregate of human activity, segmenting and hence differentiating time into a current *epoch* labelled the Anthropocene (see Irvine 2017; Latour 2018).

Such conversations are prolific precisely because they are conduits through which individuals actively and passively, consciously and sub/unconsciously, fashion themselves as particular social beings for the duration of specific *epochs* within certain social orders and strata within *la durée*. In a world of increasing fragmentation and uncertainty (Giddens 1991; Comaroff & Comaroff 2018), many Isle residents articulate a deep craving for the simplification and legibility of life and other benefits seen to accompany stability, a consistency within *la durée* that is free from interruption/differentiation. Some long-standing Isle residents look to the virtual past for refuge in this context, generating senses of nostalgia (see Angé and Berliner 2015; Massey 1994) for how life ‘used to be’ in the Docklands that they seek to actualize (through patronising the pub, for example). Any change wanted is ostensibly that which would provide the material or social resources to allow an individual to live lifestyles they want to live and see the world and their place in it as they want to see, unscathed by the multi-layered, tumultuous situational fluctuations and epistemological uncertainty that are part of being human.

Many residents’ struggles to make sense of the Isle today and life in general are indeed a ‘search after the “real” meanings of places’, a search that is ‘a response to a desire for fixity and for security of identity in the middle of all the movement and change’ (Massey 1994: 151). Even those Isle residents who embrace diversity or spontaneity do so on their own terms because they have the means and propensities to do so, whether through education, general socialization, personal finance, or sheer boredom and discontent with the capitalistic monotony of their current life routine, or social rhythm. A tabloid’s juicy sensationalism, such as that found in *The Sun*, or local pub gossip bear the possibilities of both unearthing truth (or establishing order from chaos) and providing excitement that might rupture/differentiate the otherwise banal (cf. Hodges 2007: 3), providing a sense of time moving forward rather than stagnation. Explored throughout this work, these dispositions, tastes, and desires result from an everyday epistemological pluralism that is shaped by class, nationality, sex/gender, perceptions of time, and other determining factors.

In making analytical determinations of change, we must be mindful that what appears different in individual situation or social order might in fact be a take on ‘dynamic continuity’ (as per Radcliffe-Brown 1977 [1940]). After all, difference is predicated on underlying commonalities and sameness in order to make comparisons. Difference in skin colour requires skin in the first instance. Matter ‘out of time’ or place is still matter. The changing of the guard and British monarchy itself, like much of British pomp and ceremony, are perhaps the most iconic examples of dynamic continuity in the UK. The people and meanings might substitute, but the institution and ritual remain (cf. Bloch 1986).

As another cab driver explained to me while pointing up to the pub's picture of The Queen, 'It's all 'bout a lit'l thing called stability – and there she is, my son – *The Queen*. She's not a looker, but she's the only one we got!'. Through London public house names like the 'Lord Nelson' or other national figures, the attempts made to maintain banal nationalism (as per Billig 1995) and amongst temporary landlords and patrons point to a certain dynamic continuity. This transcendent stability helps people locate their belonging, and find meaning and social legibility through that belonging, in the world.¹¹

Attention must also be paid to the problems posed by hybridity, mimicry, resistance, and appropriation when examining change. Such analytical terms can too easily force a binary between tradition/modernity, past/present that 'invokes a nostalgic, pessimistic and unproductive oscillation between the celebration of identity and authenticity on the one hand, and fears about the loss of culture...on the other' (Moore 2011: 6). Amongst the white working class on the Isle of Dogs, a loss of culture would for some entail the loss of a 'culture of Britishness' that has become 'conflated with whiteness' and has filtered out complex historical relations through post-colonial amnesia and a worldview of superiority rooted in images of Empire (Tyler 2012: 429-433). The Lord Nelson proudly displayed such images. Unlike more touristy spaces in London, there is no intended irony or novelty, in the eyes of many patrons, about their representations of a glorious national past.

Seen in these conversations, a theory of change is then necessarily one of individual perception of difference and correlation (cf. Hodges 2007: 500). On the Isle of Dogs, the ideas that globalization brings into question the meaning of 'place' and encourages simplistic comparisons between 'then' and 'now' (Massey 1994: 146-148) are apparent. We learn perceptions and such comparisons of the Isle and other places through conversation, whether in universities or public houses like the Lord Nelson. As one beverage coaster distributed amongst the tables asked, 'Where else would you put the world to rights?' Where some write of movement, it can be said that conversation which invokes change 'implies the experience of differentiation, sequence, and duration' (Comaroff & Comaroff 1992: 78), wherein people exchange ideas about ruptures and continuity in life. As we see through the above conversations, these ideas often accompany a resignation about being able to manage perceived differentiation/change and a scepticism of 'expert' opinion – whether that of an academic or a professional property developer. Unlike all other

¹¹ In the United States, a common practice of bar/restaurant owners is to name their businesses eponymously rather than after national figures. This still demonstrates a dynamic continuity when the business is managed by successive generations, and it also maintains a degree of banal nationalism through the reification of the 'American Dream' of self-made individualism.

known beings, humans have the distinct capacity to tell stories, to recall and share perceived sequences of events through conversation, although some other animals come close (Thompson 2010). In short, we are the ‘ape that captured time’ (ibid: 395), made possible by a capacity for memory that fosters a sense of ‘time passing’ and time consciousness.

The next chapter further develops this examination of change/differentiation and time through a deeper analysis of the issues posed by the classed property development and the housing market to ideas of ‘home’. It furthers the discussion of time on two different scales, or registers – the wider community of the Isle of Dogs and the more intimate spaces of households.

2 ‘Master of your domain’ home and the (dis)continuity of financialized space

Thursday, 28 March 2018 – Another typical day in the pub as I sat at the bar with Pam, Big Bill, and a regular called Cat, in her 50s. Pam and Bill shared the recent developments in a major acquisition deal that had occurred in the previous summer and had involved the pub operator company from which they had leased the Nelson. A private equity firm and an internationally recognized brewery had purchased a combined total of over 3,000 pubs held by the public house operator. The operator had sold the Nelson to the brewery as part of this deal, and the local area management transition had taken place earlier this month.

Pam and Bill explained that they had met with the new management team in a bid to have their debt forgiven from accrued fines that the operator had imposed on them for making alcohol stock purchases out of contract. Pam and Bill made such unsanctioned purchases due to the ostensibly impossible reconciliation of a sporadic cash-flow and inventory depletion with the amount of time it took to process/deliver sanctioned stock orders. In short, there was a lack of continuity; the volume of patronage sufficient to enable the landlords to develop a consistent business rhythm was inadequate. Pam and Bill had also requested that their weekly rent be reduced. Their rate included the repayment of a loan that the Nelson’s previous landlords had taken out from the old pub operator in order to install new flooring. This was a narrative that Cat and I had heard before. ‘This floor has been paid for several times over’, Pam reiterated, ‘but they still won’t reduce our rent, [saying] we should’ve negotiated that when we signed the contract even though we didn’t know at the time that the [rent] rate included [covering] a loan repayment’.

Pam and Bill agreed that while they were frustrated to have received no financial relief from the new area manager, they at least felt vindicated when the manager concurred with them that the pub was a ‘money pit’, as Pam put it. In other words, the manager had recognized the difficulties posed by the class dynamics and local demographics amid a

changing, gentrified landscape (Introduction and Chapter 1). Whereas the previous manager believed that the pub's location between Canary Wharf and Greenwich made it a prime spot to attract business, the new manager understood Pam and Bill's reasoning that this very aspect is, in and of itself, a liability. In their view, potential middle-class patrons prefer simply to go to the pubs and restaurants in Canary Wharf and Greenwich, not least because of the collective atmosphere of cosmopolitan vitality those sites provide. Countering such competition is beyond the remit of any landlord or area manager of the Nelson. The new manager's understanding of this factor did little to change the material/financial circumstances of the pub, but Pam and Bill believed their feelings of resignation were – at least – now 'officially' justified.

The conversation turned to a discussion that paralleled those in the previous chapter – conversations that were part of the social repetition to be found in the pub, yet which took different turns. Pam and Bill lamented the change they perceive to have enveloped the Island as a result of the constant development and gentrification that I outline in the preceding chapters. 'It's so different from what it used to be; the Island is 'ome but it doesn't feel like 'ome anymore', Pam reflected. They also shared their anxieties about what looked to them like the 'writing on the wall'; that they would have to rent privately amid an increasing likelihood that their proprietorship of the pub was unsustainable. They worried that a housing application with the local council would either displace them from the Island – their 'ome' – or involve a significant wait before they might be allocated a house on the Island. Another concern was about their two children (Shauna and William) and three grandchildren who lived with them in addition to William's partner, Mary. They spoke about an 'East End' sense of family that precluded a lack of concern for the welfare of their children and grandchildren, taking it upon themselves to ensure that everyone was housed and cared for (cf. Young & Willmott 2007). Pam emphasized that she would feel uncomfortable with renting from a private landlord or the local council after having lived in their previous pub and then the Nelson for nearly twenty continuous years in total. Despite having still to pay rent (to a pub company) as part of receiving accommodation through the pub, Pam felt that the pub as a form of both business and residence provided a greater sense of autonomy, or ability to 'call the shots' as she phrased it, than did being accountable to a private landlord or the council. Pam and Bill both recalled how 'nice it was' when they had owned their own house before they were made bankrupt as the result of an issue with payment timing/sequence for work that Bill had done for a local council (Chapter 1). Cat, who owns several houses, agreed with them that people should be able to feel like the 'master of their domain' and 'to do what they want in their own space'. 'But

‘ow can we?’ Big Bill chimed in before summarising what he and many other interlocutors believe to be the crux of the housing and development problem:

Every spare bit of land ‘ere and they just build on it don’t they? Every spare bit of land. They just build. And we always – when we lived over there [pointing] on East Ferry Road...they was building Lockesfield Place [gated housing complex] at the time behind us. [The construction] was just constant. But we – no one got conversation before that – we ‘ad to just live with it. Grin and bear it. The price of the ‘ouses and flats ‘ere now are just, well people have just – local people can’t afford ‘em. But you’re getting all these [foreigners] coming in buyin’ up. I think that should all be stopped...them coming ‘ere buying it all up. I mean there’s one fella [who] lives over in Ferry Street, that block, them ‘ouses there [pointing behind]. One bloke owns all of them except for one. I don’t think it should be allowed. Because it don’t give a chance to anybody else to buy one. And ‘e, all ‘e does is rent ‘em all out. And rents ‘ave just overtaken everything! The ‘igh rents are a joke. The whole rental market is going mad. I think they should put a block on it – the rental markets and the councils. You ‘ave to pay so much a week to the councils to live in a place – I think they should charge [a higher tax] on private landlords. I don’t think the [foreign landlords] should be allowed to come ‘ere, buy everything up – and get a profit! And that’s why the ‘ousing market is so bad – it’s all private! Councils aren’t actually building [the houses]. And we get no ‘elp from no one.

This conversation indexes the effects of financialized space on two levels – the perceived ‘classed’ reconfiguration of the Isle of Dogs as a whole through major ongoing property development that implicates the housing market, and the effects of such reconfiguration at the level of individual households. This chapter examines both levels – and how they are entangled in an interplay between market, state, time, space, and class – through people’s attempts to actualize and maintain a sense of ‘home’. Indeed, ‘since its inception, the anthropology of the home has detailed the home’s involvement in broader fields of power, as opposed to straightforwardly reproducing vernacular concepts of the home as a sanctuary, isolated from the wider world’ (Davey 2020: 13). While this ‘sanctuary’ is what people strive to achieve through such aspirations to be the ‘master of their domain’ that Cat notes above, Bill’s words describe the embeddedness of the home as a medium for broader economic and political entanglement (see Alexander, Bruun & Koch 2018).

The Isle of Dogs is caught up in London’s housing crisis that is ‘rooted in a neo-liberal urban project to recommodify and financialize land in a global city’ (Beswick et al 2016: 321). Individual property investors, global corporate landlords (GCLs), and institutional investors through private equity firms, continue to capitalize on emergent and lucrative opportunities made possible by the sustained privatization and financialization of urban space (ibid: 321; see also Aalbers 2017). Such privatization has diminished the social

housing stock and has inflated rent rates for private housing through the elimination of rent controls in a city where wage growth has not mirrored the spike in rent rates (Mulheirn 2019; Davey 2020: 20; Wilde 2020).

In examining such interplays of state and market, work on the anthropology of the home in Britain has focused on the forces that create *unhomeliness* (as per Davey 2020: 13), or obstacles to people's abilities to actualize a sanctuary of continuity and self-expression. This work has examined the state's presence in social housing tenancy, such as Miller's (1988) classic account of how the state imposes restrictions on tenants' abilities to express themselves through property decoration. More recent work has challenged the perceived absence of the state in the current liberalized and marketized setting through an exploration of the legal coercion for eviction made available to private landlords of 'ordinary homes' (Davey 2020). This chapter incorporates different types of housing, showing how some middle-class professionals in private accommodation can paradoxically inhabit more volatile situations than working-class tenants in social housing. I argue that, for many of these interlocutors, the potential for – and actually experienced – volatility is a result of the presence and activities of other tenants rather than anxieties about eviction or restrictions imposed by the state. Ideas of time, rupture, fragmentation, and transience are central. However, going beyond a presupposition of the single house as home, I argue that the house is just one element of 'home' and 'homemaking' for many long-standing working-class Islanders. This single physical structure is but one *site* of home that is embedded within a network of other sites, institutions, and structures that collectively constitute what many interlocutors consider 'home' in a more holistic sense that encompasses the entire Island. In this broader conceptualization, the British working class can be said to experience sentiments of *unhomeliness* – of no longer feeling like the 'masters' of the wider 'domain' that is the Isle of Dogs. Through a focus on desires for continuity that extends beyond the single household, I do not confine the discussion of 'home' to a discussion only of the housing market or the state's presence in homemaking. I explore how some people struggle to make or continue a sense of home in the wider fluctuating setting of the Isle of Dogs, whereas other residents view the Island merely as a place in which they happen to live.

Expanding upon the discussion of gentrification and property development in the last chapter, I illustrate below how long-standing symbols of home have lost their salience and have given way to boundaries between living spaces: physical walls that distinguish people of different classes/income levels. By developing the idea that pubs can be an extension of home rather than merely a space that mediates between work and home

(Introduction), I show how Pam resisted what for her is the *unhomeliness* of such ‘classed’ development found throughout the Island. Turning to housing, the chapter further engages with the themes of rupture and transience, revealing tensions and fragmentation amid discordant desires in relation to, and rhythms in, private housing. I then examine how people seek to foster a sense of continuity and to extend the experience of home by seeking a plot of land at the local garden allotments, a long-standing feature of the Island.

(Re)developed spaces and symbols of home

Those who have lived for at least a few decades on the Island will tell you that they feel ‘at home’ when they see a short blue drawbridge. Many Islanders recall when the bridge was an even more integral part of their daily life than it is now – when it was once the most practical way to get on and off the Island over its watery moat. Several people reminisced about what they index as a sense of community that this symbol of home generated through its sheer physicality. Mothers used to wait after school with children who were not their own if those children’s mothers were not present to collect them. Or, the mothers would take the children home and phone their parents later. They took for granted that the Blue Bridge was raised, obstructing the flow of traffic onto the Island. Likewise, people assumed that other parents would look after their children if they were delayed in crossing the bridge. Also at this time, only one bus travelled across the bridge to the Island. ‘If you missed it’, a friend told me, ‘You knew that you ‘ad time for a drink and chat in the pub ’til the next one came through’.

The construction of the DLR in the late 1980s changed this reliance on the Blue Bridge, connecting the Island to Bank station (Bank of England) and elsewhere. The extension of the DLR beneath the Thames to Greenwich and beyond was completed just before the turn of the millennium. Moreover, the train network that feeds in from Southeast England allows relatively easy access to Canary Wharf for finance and other professionals who own homes in the countryside, away from London’s congestion. The Jubilee line on the Underground network in Canary Wharf also opened by 2000, further integrating the area with the rest of London (Gordon 2001). A riverboat service is now popular amongst commuters who can afford the higher price to commute into central London on the Thames with fewer people and stops – fewer perturbances.

As someone who relied on the DLR and first found their way to the Island via the DLR service, I had neither registered nor heard of the Blue Bridge until the early days of

fieldwork. A woman called Alana, an aide at a local primary school, described where she lived to me.

‘I’m just before the Blue Bridge in those ‘ouses on the right’, she explained.

‘Blue Bridge? I don’t know where that is’, I replied.

‘Sure you do! You’ve got to’, interjected a black cab driver. I shook my head. Alana looked at me in disbelief and even seemed somewhat offended that I could live on the Island and not be aware of something that she so closely associated with it. The matter was so important to them that the cab driver googled a picture of the bridge on his phone and showed it to me. It turned out that I had seen the structure, but my mind had only remembered it as a vague undefined object. I had not recognized it *as* a bridge.

‘Ah yeah, right, I know it’, I assured them.

People for whom the Blue Bridge is an important physical structure enabling identification as an ‘Islander’ nonetheless use and find the other new transportation links convenient. While some people without cars might now even rely more on the DLR than the Blue Bridge to get on and off the Island, long-standing Islanders do not take these transport links for granted in the same way that newer arrivals to the area do. Like me, many newcomers to the Isle of Dogs that I spoke to did not initially appreciate that the geographical space is in fact an island, and they accordingly did not conceive of themselves as ‘Islanders’. The development in Canary Wharf has integrated the various quays with roads and bridges. There are now so many ways of getting under or over the waterways that these borders are not as noticeable when one first encounters the Isle. Like my initial indexing of the Blue Bridge as some generic structure rather than a bridge, I and others saw the many waterways merely as characteristics of the local area rather than obstacles that various engineering feats have overcome. It was not until exceptional (though frequent) circumstances such as disruptions to the taken-for-granted public transport links caused by accidents, workers’ strikes, or planned maintenance in order to prolong the infrastructure’s duration, that the geographical boundedness created by waterways became vivid.

The Blue Bridge still stands and functions as a bridge, but its importance and salience have thus diminished. In contrast, property development has altogether modified and repurposed other spaces and what long-standing Islanders will tell you are (or were) symbols of ‘home’. One such reclassification is of the old fire station directly across one of the streets from the Nelson, which stands at the intersection of two main thoroughfares. Firefighting, like other emergency jobs, is an occupation that many interlocutors feel is a necessary contribution to the normal functioning of society. Firefighting aims to preserve and extend building and human time/life. A fire station makes social sense. While the

external façade of the building still resembles a fire station, the interior has been changed to an upmarket Turkish restaurant, with a few dozen large empty painting frames hanging suspended from wire overhead, with the frames facing parallel to the floor. To many research companions, while perhaps ‘interesting’, the décor’s abstract nature ‘doesn’t make sense’ and marks an unwanted departure – a differentiation – from a prior taken-for-granted social legibility in which they felt ‘at home’ in the community beyond their single house.

Moreover, the park that had once hosted the long-standing *British* tradition of Guy Fawkes Night, which along with an annual carnival had attracted thousands of Islanders every year (Cole 1984: 315), is now silent every 5 November. Instead, a *German* Oktoberfest has for many years produced perhaps the largest annual gathering of people aside from the London Marathon. Many older working-class British residents will tell you that a reason for their voting to exit the European Union is because ‘Germany ultimately got its way [after WWII]’ through what they perceive is a position of excessive authority within the governance of the European Union. These people accordingly ‘can’t stand the Germans’ and expressed annoyance over the fact that others welcome and celebrate the German festival.

The two consecutive Oktoberfest weekends attract a diverse crowd of people from across London, united by having enough disposable income to afford the £8+ pints of beer on offer and both ‘authentic’ and fancy-dress *dirndl* and *lederhosen*. Whereas the Guy Fawkes Night festivities had been open to all, a massive tent with the capacity for 1,000+ people now separates those who can spend up to £60 for admission past the polyethylene wall from those unable to do so, with further restricted areas within that are accessed through various levels of ‘VIP’ statuses. The event does offer free admission, but only on the less desirable days (Thursday and Sunday) when numbers are lower due to most people having to work the following days.

Such spaces that demarcate people according to income have proliferated on the Island, and some pubs have adopted similar modes of social segregation.

The ‘unhomeliness’ of class walls

Mandy, the property developer from the ‘long conversation’ in the previous chapter, had also advised Pam, the Nelson’s landlady, to build a wall in the pub. Mandy’s logic was that a pub with the ability to cater for different classes and tastes needed clear borders to mark it as adequate to the task. Mandy compared the Lord Nelson to another pub farther up the

road, closer to Canary Wharf. I had visited that pub and most of the few others remaining on the Island only a handful of times for reasons surrounding my field positionality.

My first visit was on a warm, sunny evening during a weekend in mid-spring. I sat in the pub with two employees of one of the big banks in Canary Wharf, chatting with them about work, family, and how they had celebrated Easter a few weeks prior. Both are professionals from working-class backgrounds now occupying white-collar positions at the bank. They both threw in several jibes at the investment bankers with whom they 'had to' work at the firm, not being investment bankers themselves.

The pub was a simple room with basic tables and chairs. A few boards listed the daily food specials which, along with the carpet rather than wooden floors, quickly differentiated this pub from the Nelson to me when I first entered. One area of the room, where a few women were eating, had a dartboard. A small wall differentiated this zone from the rest of the room where everyone else was drinking, and I made a mental note that this must be the wall that Mandy had encouraged Pam to replicate. The wall did not seem very significant, and I could not understand Pam's vehement resistance to the idea of erecting such an inconspicuous wall in the Nelson. I recalled several pubs that I had visited previously throughout London and elsewhere that utilized space in similar ways, dividing 'drinkers' from 'diners'. Even if the establishments did not intentionally choose to demarcate space in this way, patrons did so themselves through their choices of where to drink or eat. Such was the case on this day. Some people came in and out, smoking outside while watching passers-by and passengers getting on and off the DLR trains at the station on the opposite side of the road. Many of these pedestrians pulled shopping bags on wheels behind them, either en route to or returning from the nearby Asda market. I recognized both interlocutors and other people who were familiar to me simply by having seen them 'around'. Other patrons and all the bar staff were new faces. Still, as with the Nelson, the understated decoration and majority of the patrons – with their conversation and work clothes – signified a working-class space.

I noticed a door off to the left side of the bar and asked the bank employees I was with about what might be behind. They agreed that it was worthwhile for me to have a look. I walked over to the door, opened it to the other side, and the sight took me aback. Diners seated at several stylishly rustic tables filled a large room with glass walls and ceiling. This conservatory had double folding doors that extended the entire far side of the room into a beer garden with additional elegant, weather-proof seating on an elevated wooden deck. A few final rays of sun shone through the glass which, along with candles on the tables, decorative lanterns in the garden, and warm fairy lights throughout, created a serene and

upscale ambience. This atmosphere was markedly different to the ones generated by this pub's bar and the Nelson's wobbly wooden benches and single fluorescent floodlight in its beer garden. An entrance to this garden dining space, separate from the entrance to the bar, admitted people who were dressed in 'posh' casual spring/summer clothes. On this evening, the lack of denim and paint-splashed sweatpants and the abundance of polo shirts, white or light shorts and trousers, boat shoes, sunglasses, cardigans, and pastel jumpers (draped over shoulders), was evident. I was standing at the *actual* wall between classes that Mandy had advised Pam to replicate in the Nelson.

Pam had spoken with me several times about the Nelson's lack of attractiveness to Canary Wharf professionals. In her words, she acknowledged that most 'white-collar workers do not want to mix with the more rough-and-ready crowd'. However, she would have none of Mandy's advice about the wall and ideas to convert the Nelson's dilapidated beer garden into an Asian cuisine-serving gastropub. Recall that Pam did not agree with Mandy on anything else for that matter. Mandy's proposed physical wall signified an element of personal inferiority to Pam – a lack of social legitimacy that she (probably rightly) felt regular patrons would also feel if their local pub were to be split in two in order to keep them out of one side. Pam did want Canary Wharf professionals to frequent her pub in order to help continue its viability through the income they would provide. She just refused their custom to come at the expense of the pub's historic working-class character and regular patrons. Besides, even if she had wanted to model the Nelson on the other pub up the road, she did not have the financial capital to do so. While this other pub had built its differentiating wall internally, the entirety of the Nelson acted as a barrier that protected regulars from the differentiating outside social world. It served as a wall behind which patrons could enjoy one of the vestiges of industrial working-class life. It was a site that offered them refuge, stability, and a sense of home amid what for them is unhomeliness and a reclassification of the rest of the Island. As Mandy said, the pub had not changed in the fifteen years she had known it – but this was something to be celebrated.

Walls are not new to the Island. Their signification, however, has changed. Walls that both distinguished imports from exports – and kept people away from those market goods – divided the Island when it was a centre of global maritime trade. A few friends on separate occasions showed me a YouTube video of the Island's old walls, taken from the perspective of a car driving the length of the road that runs along the Island's perimeter. In an interesting twist, these riparian walls along the Island's edge have been replaced by 'classed' walls that surround gated housing complexes, which were initially constructed for today's global financial traders in Canary Wharf to inhabit (Chapter 1).

Like the pub wall that differentiated a ‘posh’ middle-class area from the working-class side, these other housing walls, gates, and private security guards on the Island today can create, legitimate, and rationalize class-based exclusion strategies and segregation (as per Low 2001). These latter walls can also produce a sense of spatial regulation through CCTV surveillance and resident identity databases (as per Scott 2006). Such exclusionary overtones contribute to a politics of recognition, or belonging, that people find to be at the source of their anxieties, throughout Britain (see Smith 2012) as on the Island. As Pam and many other companions stated on multiple occasions, ‘We’ve become strangers in our own ‘ome’. However, both working-class tactics and middle-class strategy have subverted the romanticized notion of affluent single-family homes within riverside residential complexes. The walls have been penetrated; the categories they signify have been scrambled. Affluent single-family homes in the gated complexes now coexist with flat/house shares comprising diverse tenants in a range of socio-economic positions.

This new housing situation has largely been a result of the involvement of foreign property investors who capitalize on people’s multifaceted desires to live in London, even in the sub-prime conditions discussed below. On the day that effectively marked the start of fieldwork for this project, I walked into the property agency diagonally opposite the intersection from the Nelson. Armed with a notepad and my phone to record interviews, I chatted with two agents about the local housing market. For their agency, roughly ninety percent of buyers who had purchased homes on the Island in order to let them (which comprised the majority of their sales), rather than occupy them, were based abroad, corroborating Big Bill’s concern that ‘foreigners’ are ‘buying it all up’. Of that percentage, both agents agreed that the vast majority of buyers are based in China and Hong Kong.

Property agencies such as the one I spoke to act as the brokers between these foreign property investors and the tenants of their properties. The majority of interlocutors who were renting privately complained that these agencies have either become complacent in the upkeep of the properties or maintain them for as cheaply as possible. The agents have also started to let living rooms as large ‘luxury’ bedrooms within flat/house shares in the ‘upmarket’ riverside complexes in an effort to increase income for landlords and maximize their own revenue as a percentage of the rent. This phenomenon lowers the rent rate in the other smaller bedrooms, which has resulted in many low-income individuals and couples tactically seeking something of a middle-class lifestyle through shared accommodation within the ‘secure’ gated flats with access to leisure centres. On the other hand, many middle-class individuals and couples have strategically opted to save money for their future long-term home ownership through temporary/short-term residence in such shared

accommodation. This housing situation can create tense, fractured social relationships and undesirable standards of living. These relationships point to people's desires for simplification through regulating their own lives as they want to, without interruptions caused by other people and *their* desires and life rhythms.



Figure 2.1 Construction zone barrier and advert for a 'stylish' housing

Discordant rhythms and the ruptures of domestic space

I found a listing for a room in a flat share within the gated complex called St David's Square, which had been listed on two accommodation websites as an 'upper middle-class' property. One listing advertised the monthly rent as £650 and the other one as £625. Shortly after I expressed my interest with the agency and asked to book a viewing, the advert with the lower rent price disappeared from its respective website. I met with Bashir, the agent, the following day and raised my concern over the exact monthly rent. He explained it away as an admin error and confirmed that the price was £650, not £625.

I was moving from a property in Lockesfield Place, another gated complex directly opposite St David's Square, since my room in the former was too small to legally let. Measuring roughly 6.5ft x 6.5 ft (or my height by my height), the local council housing policy precludes letting bedrooms of such size in the absence of sufficient compensatory communal space. I had moved into the Lockesfield property in order to save money as a

student, after a Hungarian shop detective called Tibor, a frequent pub visitor, had vacated the room. Tibor had frequently complained in the pub about how miserable he was in this property, with flatmates who had no desire to interact with each other. ‘It’s like a prison cell’, Tibor described (cf. Hall 2012: 48). Tibor explained that if his housemates had been friendly and wanted to form a sense of ‘family’, he would have had less of an issue with sharing the space. However, because of the fragmentation and lack of sociality, Tibor instead felt annoyed when he sensed the presence of his housemates. He preferred that they would all ‘just go away’ and in doing so provide him with a sense of having his own space. Tibor sought such a sense of home in the pub, staying late in order to avoid ‘the prison cell’ that was his small room in the house share. I felt this sense of fragmentation and isolation myself during the single month that I lived in this room.

At the flat viewing in St David’s Square, Bashir sheepishly gestured towards a small table and two chairs in the corridor just outside the kitchen.

‘This is the communal space’, he stated. Like the Lockesfield Place unit from which I sought to move, this flat’s living room had been similarly converted into a bedroom. There were two chairs for a flat of five people, but, unlike the house in Lockesfield Place, there *were* chairs and some semblance of a communal space. The single bedroom that I viewed was larger than the previous one, and the washing machine in the kitchen also had a drying function. Between the dryer, a radiator in the bedroom, a bed headboard, and a curtain rod over the bedroom window from which I could hang my clothes to dry, I noted that I would not have to use the limited bedroom floor space for everything, as I had to do in the Lockesfield property.

Before the viewing ended, I asked if any occupants might be in their rooms and whether I could meet them. Bashir seemed somewhat taken aback by the question but described the occupants – two heterosexual couples – by their jobs and nationalities as he knocked on one of the two other bedroom doors. A man in his twenties answered.

‘This is Diego’, Bashir introduced me to the Spaniard. ‘How’s everything in the flat, any problems?’ he asked. Diego just shook his head. ‘He’s just started a job at Nando’s [chain restaurant], isn’t that right?’ Bashir asked him. Diego looked irritated now with the exchange. He simply nodded.

‘So you’re going to get me some good deals on some food?’ Bashir attempted to joke. Diego did not say or do anything except look at Bashir with a look of utter bemusement about the fact that he was trying to engage in conversation. Such casual and friendly exchanges were clearly not a common occurrence. ‘Thanks Diego, sorry to disturb you’, Bashir ended the interaction, and Diego quickly shut the door.



Top: **Figure 2.2** Entrance to Lockesfield Place, gated residential complex. *Bottom:* **Figure 2.3** Centre block and water feature of St David's Square, gated residential complex.

‘As you can see, I like to have a laugh with my tenants and make sure everything is okay in the flat’, Bashir explained in an attempt to perform a caring persona. I ultimately negotiated the rent price to £625 and moved into the flat on a one-year lease agreement with a six-month break clause if either Bashir or I wished to terminate the tenancy after six months. The act that Bashir had performed during the viewing quickly wore off, and the social fragmentation that Tibor and I had experienced in Lockesfield Place, and which I had glimpsed when I met Diego, was amplified.

Bashir had not mentioned that use of the gym and pool services required prior attendance at a semi-weekly safety induction that cost a mandatory £20. This surprise cost and wait period until the next scheduled induction irritated many residents I spoke with – people who had likewise been kept uninformed about such hidden costs and rigmaroles. Several residents commented on the irony that they were often even too tired to walk a few hundred feet to the leisure centre to relax in the sauna or jacuzzi. They would rather stay in their homes; I was surprised by how few people were ever at the leisure centre given the hundreds of residents who have access to it. Even Diego, who had moved to the square in part to be able to train at the leisure centre’s snooker table for competitions, did not do so more than a few times per month. His partner, Perla, a bartender in a West End nightclub, shared her stress over the situation with me. She explained that he was tired all the time, just wanting to lie in bed after working graveyard shifts. The situation irked her. Both of them hardly left the flat on their days off work, and they generally did not go anywhere else other than work. Throughout the day, I heard the sound of video games or films and television shows from behind their closed bedroom door. They told me that they had little disposable income to be able to do anything else outside the flat (cf. Davey 2020: 22).

The odd hours that the Spanish couple worked did not fit well with the desired life rhythms of Adelaide, another tenant. A financial analyst from Kazakhstan, she and her Indian partner at the time, Vinny, met at university in Birmingham and had moved into the flat to save money in order to buy a home at some point in the future, away from the city congestion of London. Both were from well-off and connected families in their respective countries. Vinny is a managing director for a large marketing firm, whose major clients include a renowned car manufacturer. Both Vinny and Adelaide enjoyed going out to other parts of London, Adelaide more so than Vinny. Vinny, like the Spanish couple, had been to the Nelson on only a few occasions. Adelaide began drinking there after she had accidentally locked herself out of the flat. The reception staff provided her with a ladder to access her bedroom window, and an ‘Islander’ who happened to pass by offered to help her and invited her for a drink in the Nelson afterwards.

None of the flat occupants knew anything of the history of the Isle of Dogs or really cared to know. It was merely a *temporary place* – as opposed to *home* – in which to live while ‘just getting by’ for one couple and saving money for a long-term home elsewhere for the other, in their own respective life courses. For Adelaide and Vinny, in contrast to Diego and Perla, this life course included seeking UK citizenship in addition to home ownership. Vinny’s father had specifically instructed Vinny not to return to India until he had secured indefinite leave to remain in the United Kingdom. Adelaide, who has quite a flirtatious and vivacious personality, also has ambition and a drive that Vinny does not. Money motivates her, and she has experienced the extravagant life possibilities that money can buy and which she desires to continue to experience. Her father has been a key stakeholder in the energy resource sector in Kazakhstan since the privatization of the economy after the dissolution of the former Soviet Union. Adelaide has experienced flying on a private jet to Moscow for a Russian oligarch’s wedding and other trips around the world. She proudly describes herself as a ‘capitalist’. For Adelaide, the current global financialization and privatization of energy and other markets signify profitable opportunities, even if they create unwanted situations such as the one in which she found herself in the flat.

Returning from the Nelson to the flat slightly inebriated one night, Adelaide woke up the Spanish couple on their day off. Perla and Diego, who had made every attempt to avoid interacting with Adelaide and Vinny, asked her to reduce the noise. An argument erupted, in which both parties accused the other of inconsiderate behaviour. Perla and Diego accused Adelaide of thinking she was ‘better than them’, and Adelaide vented her irritation that the Spanish couple did their laundry in the early hours of the morning when they arrived home from work. Both the Spaniards and Adelaide directed towards each other their stress about living in such close proximity to other people with different routines. Adelaide accused the others of being ‘travelling gypsies’ – of not committing themselves to remain in a particular space/place. I interpreted this as Adelaide’s own tacit confession of her stress and frustration about having to compete in a global market while doing so amongst people who, like her, are impelled to leave home for the similar reasons – career advancement and the vitality to be found in experiencing ‘all that life has to offer’ in her words. Life would be ‘easier’, as Adelaide said, for her if everyone else ‘remained in their own countries’, both in the instance in which she was rowing with the Spaniards and in the broader competition of progressing her career in finance in London’s competitive job market. This double standard indexes a desire to be exceptional that I take up in Chapter 5.

While these two parties quarrelled behind the walls that the flat provided, the two couples quarrelled amongst each other behind their bedroom walls. I could hear them. Both couples eventually split up at different times, and Vinny remained in the flat while the other three moved out. Adelaide later told me that she was annoyed that Vinny was ‘always there’ in the flat, whose mere presence we can analyze as causing unwanted differentiation to Adelaide’s desired actualizations. The flat did not offer her any space in which to be alone, unperturbed, able to engage in her own thoughts and actions without someone else there to interrupt her. Vinny had likewise felt this tension. With Adelaide now out of the flat and having the room to himself, Vinny was able to create a space of continuity by watching back-to-back episodes of the television series, ‘Friends’, on Netflix, which I heard through the bedroom walls every day, and ordering take-away meals. I could often monitor the time when I cooked in the kitchen next to Vinny’s room by how frequently I heard the show’s theme tune, knowing that an additional twenty minutes or so had elapsed. Vinny did not once cook a meal in the flat kitchen, saying that he could not be bothered with the time and disruption that cooking causes.

In some cases, increasing quests for individual autonomy that the flat occupants sought can lead to families of choice (cf. Weeks et al 1999). This was the case for those of us from the LSE who had initially moved to the Isle of Dogs together (Introduction). However, market conditions on the Isle of Dogs demonstrate how attempts for autonomy can also lead to restrictions of choice. The lack of co-habitant selection in many housing cases I encountered – including the above example – pose many challenges. These situations result largely from economic necessity or convenience. Similar to how many of my research companions described their employers’ expectations that employees willingly work out of a genuine commitment to the interests of the business as part of a team – in addition to or even ahead of the basic need to sustain a living in a neoliberal setting – landlords expect residents to cooperate ‘like families’ when randomly housed together. The property agent for my flat, Bashir, expressed this expectation when engaging in dispute resolution between Adelaide and Perla before both eventually moved out. Speaking to them like a father disciplining his children, he said their back-and-forth disruptive behaviour needed to stop and that he wanted the flat to be ‘like a family’ where, for example, ‘everyone can feel comfortable using the kitchen and living area at the same time’. Several aspects of the flat make the statement ‘delusional’, as Adelaide put it, not least due to the mere physical constraints let alone the social complexities. Even two people struggle to manoeuvre in the kitchen at the same time, and recall that the living area to which Bashir

referred is a small table and two chairs in the corridor, since the living room has been rented out as a bedroom.

By the time my fieldwork had ended, the occupant configuration of the flat was entirely different to that when I moved in, showing the pace of differentiation and movement that occurred in the neighbourhood and affected all of my British working-class interlocutors. However, many British working-class regulars in the pub had not initially been aware of the housing situations in the gated complexes until Tibor, Adelaide, and I informed them of our living conditions. For many of these pub regulars, the gated complexes had signified ‘posh’ residences. Unlike the people in the flat that I describe, these regulars had not experienced equivalent levels of transience and the propensity for rupture. They had received relatively more secure housing from either the council, living above the pub, or having purchased their homes in the 1980/90s, just at the onset of the property boom and implementation of the government’s ‘Right to Buy’ scheme (which contributed substantially to the depletion of the social housing stock).

Cat was one person who had experienced this relative security and stasis. She is the manager of a contract management team at a firm in Canary Wharf, but considers herself to have come from a working-class background. Originally from Northern England, Cat moved to the Island in the late 90s after purchasing a house around the corner from the pub. Successful in her navigation of the housing market, she had also purchased a house down the road from the pub, in addition to two others elsewhere. She rented out all three until selling the one near the pub to a Chinese buyer, ‘coming out ahead’ in the deal as she phrased it. Cat owns another house in Spain for her own use. She enjoys inviting friends and even mere acquaintances from the pub to her house for BBQs. This was where I spent my time during successive London Marathons. An avid viewer of the home improvement television series, ‘Homes Under the Hammer’, Cat has taken an interior design course and enjoys ‘doing up’ her house and rental properties. Rather than experience any internal rupture from others or any perceived threat of losing her home, Cat, who is single, finds most of the disruption to her ‘homemaking’ to come from her neighbour, Albert, who Cat complains edges his van onto her portion of their shared driveway.

Although perhaps to a lesser extent than Cat, many of the other British working-class with whom I spoke had relatively more household sovereignty than the foreign occupants of the house and flat shares, who often had no little to no choice over with whom they would have to share such an intimate space. While my British working-class companions expressed concerns about the perceived unhomeliness of the Island as a whole, most could not fully empathize with newcomers like my flatmates and me. They had not

experienced personally the unhomeliness of individual households that was created by a lack of personal space and daily ruptures caused by living with strangers. Even though their spouses or children could often introduce unwanted household disruptions, there was altogether less fragmentation in these households. For them, anxieties came more from potential future ruptures, such as that of losing the pub described by Pam and Bill, than from feeling a daily lack of household autonomy/sovereignty.

One such example of angst about a future rupture is that of Frank, who worries about having to share space in his council house. In his early 80s, people in the Nelson describe Frank as a 'gentleman's gentleman'. He was born and has lived his entire life on the Island, saying the only way he will leave is when they 'take [him] out in a box'. You can see him walking in Mudchute and Millwall parks in his wellies at 6am every morning, voluntarily collecting rubbish in large refuse sacks and trimming back overgrown bush that might have otherwise obstructed people's walks on the pavement and pathways through the parks. Pictures of the old Docklands and maps of the area from the 60s and 70s adorn his corridors. He receives milk delivered to his doorstep in a glass bottle in an effort to continue a practice that for him marks how things 'should be'. Twenty-odd baby pictures cover a wall in his living room (an actual living room rather than a bedroom as in the private properties mentioned earlier). These infants, of various ethnicities and nationalities, were all cared for by Frank and his late wife as foster children at some point in their lives. A small decorative sign reads: *anyone can be a father, but it takes someone special to be a dad*; and another: *grandfathers are for loving and fixing things*. A piece of paper with the words 'Sunday Club' lies flat on the mantle. This sign is propped up on Sundays when his children and grandchildren come over to eat, drink, and listen to big band jazz on a television radio channel.

When I first spoke with Frank one week after Easter, he said that I should have come over the previous Sunday so I could have met his entire family. With a calm smile, he added that there had been barely enough space in his living room to fit them all, with everyone squished on the two sofas, sitting cross-legged on the floor, and utilising all the chairs in the house. The possibility of this intimate family gathering being ruptured by someone else is what Frank feared would happen should the council require him to let his spare bedroom to a stranger. The UK's bedroom tax came into effect on 1 April 2013 and charges social housing tenants a 14% reduction of their housing benefit for having a spare room (see Koch 2014, 2015). The three options are to accept this reduction, downsize to a smaller property, or let the spare room to a lodger. Frank is barely able to manage with his pension and housing benefit, saying 'what comes in every week goes out that week', yet

he is holding out on taking in a lodger for as long as possible. While wanting to be selfless and helpful in theory to someone who might not have housing – as he has indeed tried to be over his lifetime – the thought of a stranger disrupting his home and personal space is where Frank ends his willingness to help. A lifetime Labour supporter – one of only a handful I met during fieldwork – Frank is conflicted by a clash between his own ideology of accommodation on the one hand and what he feels is the reality of various situations on the other.

‘There are just too many people in this city. It’s a shame the way the world is, with refugees and all, but we can’t fit everyone who wants to come ‘ere. We ‘ave to draw a line’, Frank lamented, echoing concerns that the ‘Island is full’.

A tale of two ghosts: the unhomeliness of transience and transition

Aside from the anxieties of daily or future ruptures that prohibit people from feeling a sense of sovereignty as a ‘master of their domain’, the past can also provide a source of rupture through its propensity to haunt.

Monday, 23 April 2018 – the day after the London Marathon – a celebration of perseverance, endurance, and speed. Crowds had lined the main thoroughfares on the Island to encourage friends, family, and other runners and to catch a glimpse of the celebrated Olympian, Mo Farah, sprint past. Around 7:00am, two court bailiffs knocked on the door of the gated community flat that I shared at that time with Gabija, Sofija, and Vinny. Gabija and Sofija had moved into Perla and Diego’s old room not even two weeks prior. They experienced an immediate series of unfortunate events upon moving: a trail of vomit led from the lift to our neighbouring flat; and what they suspected were faeces had been smeared on the flat block’s glass entrance door. This morning with the bailiffs added another reason for their growing trepidation and frustration. Having been unaware of the officials’ presence, I heard the following narrative an hour later that morning from Gabija.

She had just awoken to use the lavatory and, still ‘half awake’, was walking back to her and Sofija’s bedroom when the door knocked. Gabija opened it to find two men in uniform, who she initially believed were police officers. They asked for someone called João da Costa, whose name Gabija did not recognize. The officers’ presence, coupled with Gabija’s short tenancy and inability to recognize the name, precipitated a panic in which she mentally questioned whether João might, in fact, have been Vinny or me. She explained to the officials that she and her partner had lived in the flat for less than one month, and the

officials then asked to speak to the occupant with the longest tenure. Gabija woke Vinny, who had lived in the flat for over two years at that point and had experienced various configurations of the flat occupancy. Vinny ascertained that the officials were in fact court bailiffs, or enforcement officers, seeking Mr da Costa, who had missed scheduled court appearances.

The officers allegedly were highly sceptical that Vinny was equally unable to identify Mr da Costa after having occupied the flat for so long, as they had apparently received communication from da Costa just a few months prior in response to a summons sent to the flat address. The officers also explained that a car was registered to da Costa at the address. Vinny acknowledged having seen post addressed to the suspect but insisted that he had never known a resident by that name and that the long-established procedure was to pile all mail addressed to unknown names or previous tenants for the property agent periodically to collect and sort out. The bailiffs then asked for the agent's details as well as those of anyone else who lived in the flat. Gabija informed me that Vinny then disclosed only our agent's name and phone number and my name to the bailiffs, as Sofija had joined them at the front door by this time. Satisfied with Vinny's statement and information supplied, they departed after taking a photograph of Vinny for their case file upon receiving his consent and after allowing him to clothe himself with a t-shirt.

The property agent, Bashir, arrived unannounced just a few hours later around noon. I was writing in my bedroom with the door open, and the Lithuanian couple were preparing their lunch in the kitchen. Whereas Bashir typically provided adequate notice before visiting the property, on this occasion he used his own set of keys to admit himself directly, without informing any occupants or even knocking.

'Did the bailiffs contact you then – about the previous tenant?' I asked.

'What? No, I've just come for the post', he replied. I summarized very briefly what had transpired just a few hours earlier and directed Bashir to the kitchen where he could hear the full narrative from Gabija. She explained the morning's events in the same detail she had provided me yet omitted the segment about the court having received communication in response to a summons posted to the flat. I decided to add this part after Gabija had finished and after Bashir claimed to have never heard of João da Costa.

'Oh! Yeah – they said they heard from João from the flat', Gabija recalled. I then also mentioned that I had seen the name on occasional post.

'Well, it must be a ghost', Bashir said with a half-smile while jingling his keys. He immediately stopped, as our attention was drawn towards his hand by the sound his keys were making. We conversed some more before Bashir departed after collecting the stacked

‘return-to-sender’ post and instructing us to notify him straightaway should anything arrive for João da Costa.

Later that evening, Gabija and Sofija had two guests over for dinner. As we all pitched in with peeling a large 10-kilo sack of potatoes to be used for minced pork-filled potato dumplings, imaginations sparked, scepticism flared, and speculation grew over the exact ‘truth’ underlying the morning’s events and the extent to which Bashir might have been implicated – and whether he was consequently a trustworthy character. Vinny, now home from work, hypothesized that João was Bashir’s friend who had been allowed to register his car at the address and was now being chased for either a traffic violation or unpaid parking fees. The others seemed satisfied with Vinny’s conclusion, nodding in approval.

‘Man, I have seen it all’, Vinny reflected. He then shared stories about previous tenants. A prior occupant of my room had allegedly been evicted after it became known that he had regularly used illegal performance enhancers. A young woman who had resided in Gabija and Sofija’s room had been taken into police custody after ‘going crazy’, according to Vinny. He explained that the woman’s boyfriend had died, and she subsequently converted her bedroom into what Vinny called a ‘shrine’, painting all the walls and plastering them with pictures of her deceased partner. Vinny’s own former partner, Adelaide, later told me that the only thing *she* believed had expired was the troubled woman’s relationship with her boyfriend, rather than the man himself. Without any way of knowing this at the time, the others in the flat took Vinny’s word about the dead boyfriend as truth amid their dinner deliberations.

‘Maybe her boyfriend was João – the ghost!’ Gabija joked.

I shared these events with Pam and one of her sons, Jason, the following night during a pub ‘lock-in’, when regular patrons were permitted to stay after the pub’s closing. They had asked me about Gabija and Sofija, having just met them when Gabija and Sofija visited the pub to play a few rounds of pool after moving into the flat, an activity that would become a regular occurrence and incorporate them into the ‘pub family’. I mentioned the agent’s reference to a spectral tenant and the ensuing dinner conversation. Pam and Jason reached a different conclusion. They both instantly accused Bashir of using a previous tenant’s details to commit credit card fraud. They warned me to be mindful of this when the time came to vacate the property and shared a narrative from when they worked as house cleaners. The two had been asked to clean the former home of a Chinese landlord who owned multiple properties, who they believed had quickly fled the country lest be arrested for dodgy activities. In one chest of drawers, Pam and Jason had discovered scores

of credit cards, all with different names. Their own lived experience, their own empirical ethnographic data as it were, legitimated a scepticism of ethnic outsiders or ‘Others’ based on their alleged criminal activities.

‘So, they’re all like that – all them Asians’, Pam said. ‘Can’t trust ‘em. And they own everything!’

‘You can’t say they’re all that way’, Jason interjected.

‘Well I know they’re not *all* like that –’, Pam started.

‘But you literally just said they are, mum’, said Jason half-laughing, half in disbelief. Deflecting any further discussion on the matter, Pam returned to the topic of spectres after a pause.

‘You know, *this* place is haunted’, she said in reference to the pub and its phantom percussionist. Having already been told by several interlocutors about the Nelson’s drummer ghost, I was aware of the story. The man had been a performer in the pub during the Island’s – and country’s – period of deregulation and privatization amid capital-driven development. However, no one I spoke to knew exactly who he was or how he had died. As with many ghost stories, malicious acts and violence are assumed (see Fiddler 2018). In this case, manslaughter was alleged to have been perpetrated during a pub brawl. Kevin the barman recalled that when he lived above the pub, on several mornings after he had emptied the bin, locked up, and gone upstairs to bed, a few empty glass bottles mysteriously reappeared. This evidence suggested to Kevin that the phantom drummer might be calling attention to having been ‘glassed’. ‘Glassed’ means attacked by someone else using a pint glass or beer bottle, typically after it has been broken on a hard surface to create penetrating edges that can often lead to serious injury and, in severe cases, death. Besides reappearing glass bottles, a few other people have experienced eerie phenomena, ranging from spooky sounds in the pub’s cellar to being grabbed on the leg by an invisible force while climbing the cellar’s stairs.

What should be made of these hauntings? The ghost stories highlight various scales of social anxiety. On the one hand, the story of João exemplifies that for many of the ‘middle classing’ (cf. Chipkin 2013; Gutierrez-Garza 2014) individuals who seek homes in gated complexes yet cannot afford their own, they are subjected to constant disruptions to their desired life routines. Gabija and Sofija had lived previously in their own home without any anxiety derived from having to live with strangers. They, like Vinny, had joined the flat-share merely out of financial convenience – ‘to save money’ – while enjoying the middle-class benefits of the leisure centre and security. In doing so, they had placed their trust in Bashir, the landlord. The potential criminal activities inherent in the flat’s history

of which they later learned – activities that had transpired despite the CCTV cameras, walls, resident database, keyring fobs, and security personnel – ruptured their romanticized ideas of the gated community. This rupture called into question the usefulness of the external security features if shady characters could so easily be admitted to reside within. It also led them to doubt whether some of the gatekeepers themselves – the property agents – were entirely benevolent. The ‘haunted’ flat here reflects a problem of material and social relations. The issue is a discrepancy between the duration of the physical structure of the flat compared to the ‘transience’ – the turnover – of the flat’s occupants, in which ‘alienation can develop’ between the occupants and their house as a material possession (cf. Miller 2001: 107-121). The story of João reflects the alienation people might feel from a single house as a result of the transience that is a characteristic of the financialized housing market on the Isle of Dogs.

Pam and Jason’s reaction to the same story demonstrates this impact on a wider scale. For them, being English rather than a foreigner like everyone else in the flat, the issue was not one of a single home or gated community’s lack of security, but rather a piece of a larger metanarrative. They instantly interpreted the issue as a prime example of what they perceive as a widespread problem and lingering concern since the privatization and opening up of the housing market to more global markets. They saw it as indexing issues of profiteering, fraudulent, and foreign landlords that they blame for contributing to their sense of unhomeliness throughout the Island.

It should come as no surprise then that Pam, perhaps subconsciously, evoked the memory of the loitering drummer ghost, whose uncertain past coincided with the transitional period of development that made the present social configuration possible. It also makes sense that she did so precisely when confronted over the veracity of her generalized allegations against the Asian population. Jason had challenged her on an assertion of truth. Rather than engage in critical reflexivity, Pam told the spectral narrative, evoking a sense of blurriness between fact and fiction.

Aside from these ghost stories, recall another way that people express bemusement or a resignation from further analyzing – or differentiating – social substance in order to arrive at a deeper explication or ‘truth’. Discussed in Chapter 1, people invoke the common expression ‘it is what it is’ in everyday conversation in a similar way as to how the spectres come up in the above conversations. The ghost stories contain the same everyday epistemology inherent in ‘it is what it is’. When pressed with the illogic of their respective statements, both Bashir and Pam might just as easily have conjured that expression – shrugging it off as ‘it is what it is’ rather than a phantom – as a way of deflecting bigger

concerns. The evocation of ghosts in conversation and the adage hint that there are some forces behind social interaction that are just on the edge of visibility. This elusive knowledge can be unearthed with some detection, some effort and allocation of (scarce) time to unravel the ‘clew’ (ball of yarn, see Comaroff and Comaroff 2018: 102), or otherwise analytically differentiate the social fabric in order to deconstruct not just alleged criminal activity, but the social relations and political and economic structures in which that activity is embedded.

Note that the above ghost stories occurred in the context of both Brexit and of significant pub closures throughout the UK (Chapter 1). The flat at that time had just been listed for sale on the market out of concern that Brexit would cause a property value crash rather than sustained growth. Final warnings from the electric company arrived weekly in the post over a few months, and the flat’s electricity supply was eventually shut off. As all utility bills were included in the monthly rent, Bashir charged Gabija and Sofija considerably more than he had charged Perla and Diego in order to make up the balance of what was owed to the utility supplier. Even still, blackouts became a frequent occurrence, and the flat occupants often had to make a run down to a local Post Office to ‘top up’ a meter key with money from their own pocket. Bashir did eventually reimburse them. In a similar vein, recall that Pam and Bill had learned earlier that month that their substantial accrued fines and debts would not be written off by the new brewery, a decision signalling that the business was no longer sustainable under their proprietorship. Bashir and the pub family were in similarly uncertain situations that threatened to rupture their own actualizations of particular desired lives. Larger interplays between state and market jeopardized the property agent’s and pub landlords’ sought-after actualizations, trajectories, life courses.

Whether Bashir had actually engaged in illicit activities in order to extend the possibility of continuing with his business or existing lifestyle or for some other reason, or whether Pam and Jason made this accusation in order to rationalize their pub’s unproductivity vis-à-vis alleged criminal foreigners, who for them index broader social change, might never be fully ascertained. What we *can* say is that occupants of the flat and the pub from a virtual past provided sources of anxiety as they actualized themselves within *la durée*, fostering sentiments of unhomeliness. Ghost narratives index the contemporaneity of the past and present, as well as ‘anticipations of the future’ through the propensity to ‘return’ (cf. Buse and Scott 1999: 11-14), or actualize a virtual past. For a while after the incident in the flat, Gabija and Sabija worried that they would again have to deal with enforcement officers or others looking for Mr da Costa in the future. For Pam

and her family, it was perhaps not the drummer ghost that haunted them so much as the increased rent rate from the loan repayment that was a result of the actions of the previous pub landlords. This immutable past action was a source of stress and anxiety about losing their business/home in the future amid change in the broader community. In both situations, an ‘anticipatory uncanniness’ that can be both material and ‘phantomic’ threatened to rupture a desire for continuity/endurance into the future (cf. Davey 2020: 24-25).

Cultivating home: a site of continuity

Whereas much of this discussion has been about real or potential disruption to ‘homeliness’ on the Isle of Dogs, another space has, like the Nelson, served as a recognisable and taken-for-granted refuge of stability for decades: the Mudchute garden allotments. Originally a way for families throughout Britain to grow their own food amid war rations, several pub patrons recall their parents or other relatives having maintained a family plot when they were younger. The fenced allotments in Mudchute Park now have an average four or five-year waiting time before the autonomous allotment society can grant people a piece of circumscribed personal space. Several people I spoke with who had interests in the allotments said this wait is a source of impatience and, consequently, a politics of time arises in which people try and persuade others who are higher up on the waitlist to form a partnership. Such manoeuvring bends the rules of the society, and the new governing board has sought to tighten its regulations of access and use of the allotments.

The allotments are not allocated exclusively to Island residents or even just to residents of Tower Hamlets (the Island’s borough), but to residents within a wider district set by the allotment society. Aside from various degrees of enthusiasm for growing their own food, many people expressed their desire to have a plot of land because of the continuity it represents and provides – continuity of local community through decades as one of the last few spaces on the Island that has not been developed, as well as a personal space that can provide minimal interruption from others as an extension of home and site of food production that helps to minimize the financialization of lived experience; people have the autonomy to grow their own produce rather than buy it from the shop. Many allotment recipients have constructed quite elaborate structures on their plots that resemble house porches – or even very small cottages, in some cases – one equipped with a garden bench swing and canopy.



Top: Figure 2.4 View of the Mudchute garden allotments. *Bottom left: Figure 2.5* Supply cupboard inside an allotment plot structure. *Bottom right: Figure 2.6* Shelf of plants inside an allotment plot structure.

‘It’s all about comfort’, an older woman of dual nationality (Poland and the UK) called Kasia told me as she handed me a water bottle from her supply cupboard on her allotment plot. The structure on her patch of land is one of those that resemble more of a small cottage than garden shed. I quickly learned that by ‘comfort’, Kasia meant that her plot afforded her a personal space in which she made every attempt to keep perturbances to a minimum. In addition to copious garden supplies, Kasia’s cupboard was also well-

stocked with water, non-perishable food items, and a portable toilet. She maintained the space so that she could retreat there in peaceful solitude for the length of time that she wished without interruption from other people or, evidenced by her camper toilet, even her own biological rhythms. She explained that she was happily married to an Irishman and cared for her mother, who lived with them and formed part of the reason for Kasia no longer going out to many places, including the Lord Nelson. The plot provided necessary time and space to herself. Kasia might occasionally invite friends there for a glass of wine and/or chat, as she had invited me. Although this was frowned upon and discouraged by the allotment society, several other people had kept their plots solely as places for such escapism rather than as sites of food production. Kasia told me that several people had also been known to sleep in the structures on their allotments, an act that for her clearly marked the site as an extension of the house. For many, beyond their house, their allotment is also home.

Conclusion

Through a focus on how people experience ‘home’ and, in contrast, ‘unhomeliness’, this chapter has engaged largely with issues of rupture/interruption through people’s abilities to create or maintain continuity and stability. Such ability for continuity/stability has been referred to as homemaking ‘sovereignty’ (Davey 2020) or autonomy, language that I have included in my discussion above. Going somewhat further, I draw attention to the fact that we cannot exclude a more direct engagement with time in analyses of home and unhomeliness. The ethnography I have presented reveals degrees of impatience for others and a desire to have more time on various registers that constitute ‘home’, which subsequent chapters take up and build to a discussion of ‘temporal’ agency in Chapter 6.

In one register there is a desire for the sites that signify ‘home’ and a past social configuration – such as the Nelson – to have more time. Put in the language of the framework for examining time that I present in the Introduction, it is a desire to continue to actualize certain symbols of home from a virtual past through such mechanisms as refusals to construct a wall in the pub and ordering glass bottles of milk to be delivered on your doorstep. It is an attempt to prevent differentiation – not just physically demarcated class differentiation vis-à-vis various walls, but the differentiation between the past and a new social order, or what is considered a new ‘normal’ in a break from past social configurations.

In another register there are desires for more time/endurance on a personal and everyday level – of being able to experience continuity, free from interruption in intimate, private spaces such as the house or garden allotment. It is a desire for particular moments – as opposed to widespread social configurations – not to be differentiated by the interruption of others. As with the cases of the ghosts, such interruptions can come from the virtual past through prior actions that threaten to rupture attempts for home sovereignty. The interruptions I note above also highlight the transience of people that the housing market creates and the apparent permanence of the new local structures and institutions – the banks and financial markets in Canary Wharf – that are a part of the privatized, neoliberal setting that exacerbates such transience. This transience precludes many people from creating a sense of home on the Island – both with respect to the wider community and within their individual households. For many of these people, the Island is a place rather than home – a site of residence rather than part of how they conceptualize and present themselves as particular types of people.

The next chapter further explores the themes of time and rupture, moving beyond a discussion of how time influences ideas of home to a discussion of how time shapes social belonging and inclusion. In doing so, I provide a ‘temporal’ explanation for why Big Bill and others are particularly troubled that *foreigners* dominate the buy-to-let housing market on the Island.

3 Beyond ‘born and bred’ belonging and economies of time

Saturday, 19 May 2018 – the day of the wedding of Prince Harry and American actress, Meghan Markle, at Windsor Castle. My partner and I waited outside the Nelson past its noon opening time. The pub had plans to stream the wedding live on one of its projector screens, yet the doors were still locked at ten minutes past the hour.

This day was one of only a handful of occasions when Emily, who is English, accompanied me to the pub. Emily enjoyed speaking with patrons and the landlords, yet she does not drink alcohol or appreciate the loud atmosphere that sports matches, DJ parties, and karaoke nights can create. Regulars, staff, and the landlords asked after her each time I entered the pub. A few people remarked on different occasions that Emily might be ‘too posh’ for the Nelson and might not like them since they saw her so infrequently. I clarified that her absence was nothing personal against the pub or its patrons. Emily lived and worked outside of London, which required us to compromise on time and money to see each other during fieldwork, and she does not feel a sense of belonging in public houses in general because of her abstinence. While the thought of rejecting alcohol was difficult for some to imagine, this earnest explanation seemed to satisfy their concerns. It raises some issues about belonging – i.e. shared interests and the contingency of time and money on social interaction – that this chapter discusses. The ways the landlords attempted simultaneously to accommodate various different interests, which included the screening of the royal wedding, indexes tensions about such accommodation within the wider socio-political realm.

After about five minutes of waiting outside in the sun, Kevin opened the double set of doors and admitted Emily and me. Union Jack flags with Harry and Megan’s faces imprinted in the centre and a single heart beneath the couple hung above the windows. Bunting with smaller versions of this appropriated flag design draped overhead across the

top of the bar, and a single standard Union Jack flag hung over the mirror on the far wall. Kevin had previously declared his lack of interest in not only the wedding but also the Royal Family in general. ‘I don’t care about them – I just don’t, I just don’t’, he had affirmed.



Figure 3.1 Banner decoration in the pub for Prince Harry and Meghan Markle’s wedding.

A black American bishop taking part in the wedding spoke at great length midway through the ceremony, prompting news commentators afterwards to describe his words as a ‘near sermon’. Henry, the regular patron with whom Scottish James was debating in Chapter 1, entered the Nelson during the bishop’s address. Kevin immediately turned to pour a pint of Kronenbourg for Henry, an indication of the tempo that regularity/repetition, familiarity, and belonging can create, and that which could be expected by pub regulars.

‘Dressed up for the wedding I see, Kev’, Henry causally remarked in reference to the collared white button-down shirt that Kevin wore.

‘No I didn’t!’, Kevin adamantly refuted. ‘It’s a nice sunny day so I thought I’d wear white. That’s all. I don’t care about them’, he added. Kevin set the overflowing pint on the bar in front of Henry, took his money, and turned around to take change from the till. With Kevin’s back now towards Henry, Henry looked over at Emily and me with a playful grin and gestured as if we were reeling Kevin in on a fishing rod. He had successfully ‘baited’, or provoked, Kevin, as he had done many times before. Such was the relationship between Kevin and many regulars – a mixture of humour at Kevin’s expense that carried undertones of one-upmanship and status negotiation on the one hand, with

appreciation and care for the barman expressed through declarations that he is ‘good as gold’ and various acts of assistance, such as navigating bureaucracy, on the other. The bishop carried on.

Five additional regulars, some of whom had viewed segments of the wedding at home, entered the pub while the bishop spoke. Each man expressed their irritation as they noticed the wedding on the projector screen. ‘I came here to get *away* from this!’, one man exclaimed. ‘Oh, for the love of God’, remarked another. The last man to enter the Nelson asked, ‘Are they married yet?’ He had posed the question in earnest, yet everyone in the pub had laughed in the initial belief that he had enquired jokingly out of exasperation. The bishop carried on.

‘If there are five pages in tomorrow’s papers on the wedding, *ten* will be about *him!*’ Kevin claimed with his finger pointed at the screen. Kevin’s remarks reflected the sense of impatience in the pub and feeling that the bishop usurped a disproportionate amount of time to deliver his thoughts – an amount of time that marked the bishop as different, atypical, and disruptive. In the eyes of these men, the bishop did not belong in the service.

Judy arrived shortly after the broadcast had ended. Kevin had agreed to work a part of her shift so she could watch the wedding at home. This arrangement had disrupted the staff rota and had required Kevin to work a partial shift during the Football Association Cup Final the night before when he would have preferred to view the match as a patron in the pub, free from the interruptions of working behind the bar. Such were the general attitudes of the other bar staff (all women) towards Kevin – a sense that Kevin’s time was not as important as theirs. Unlike them, Kevin had no additional duties that required his time – job, children, or interest other than being in the pub. Yet, like the patrons and landlords, the female staff showed concern for Kevin’s well-being. It was Judy who, through her friend who is a property agent, ultimately found Kevin a place to live after he had given notice to his landlord without a thought-out plan to move elsewhere.

Judy, known for being opinionated, quickly voiced her thoughts on the wedding. With a wry smile, she called the newly wedded couple ‘twits’ because, unlike Prince William and Kate Middleton seven years prior, they had been ‘selfish’ to marry on a weekend and accordingly deprive workers of a Bank Holiday (non-working day), or ‘free’ time. Her humour quickly subsided, and she launched into a critique of the ceremony:

The bishop was too political. He didn’t need to mention slavery. What about the Irish slaves before the Africans that no one talks about? Because they’re white, no one talks about them. We, the British people, have accepted [Meghan]. The Royal Family has allowed [the marriage] to

happen. We don't care that she's American or mixed race or whatever else. Surely that should be enough – the fact that [the marriage is] happening. We don't need all this extra commentary on race and the black bishop and the black cellist and the black gospel choir. I mean, don't get me wrong, I'm not racist. I hate having to say that I'm not racist. I have black friends and I like gospel music, which I know isn't the point, but I don't think anything bad of anyone just because of the colour of their skin or where they come from if they weren't born and bred 'ere – as long as they contribute. It's just that all this together was too much. I think that's what irritates people – all this extra commentary that we don't need force-fed to us. Who has time for that?

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This afternoon spent in the Nelson contains layers of what I discuss in this chapter as issues of belonging and inclusion. One layer, though perhaps not immediately obvious, concerns why the landlords had chosen to broadcast the event given regular patrons' lack of enthusiasm and even the annoyance that they had correctly suspected it might cause them. Pam's tactic to prolong her proprietorship of the pub and prevent its closure was to accommodate as many interests in the pub as possible – to maximize the number of people who might feel a sense of belonging in her family's business while retaining the pub's East End working-class character and refusing to submit to recommendations, such as the property developer's advice that she should erect a wall to differentiate between patrons of different classes (Chapter 2). This ethos of attempting maximal accommodation sometimes exemplified the Aesopian moral that attempts to please all ultimately please none. I felt this tension when acting as the pub quiz master one evening when the Nelson tried to accommodate simultaneously a funeral wake and football match broadcast. The match was muted, which upset the football viewers, and the quiz-goers had difficulty hearing the questions I tried to read over the yells of the football spectators and the voices of the funeral party, congregated in a front corner of the pub with alcohol in hand singing a collection of the deceased's favourite songs.

Thorny situations such as these, which assumed that the pub regulars would remain loyal despite the landlords' attempts to accommodate possible other community interests such as the Royal Wedding, index larger political issues. In preceding chapters, we see glimpses of how the Island's physical space acts as a microcosm for how some Island residents think about the capacity of the island of Great Britain as a whole. In this chapter, I explore how the pub acted as a microcosm of national political tensions and competing interests that implicate Brexit, immigration, and ideas of belonging/inclusion at the state level. This is the case not only because of the discussions of national belonging held in the pub, but also because of the processes of pub inclusion and accommodation that reflect

processes of belonging and competing interests within the broader society. The integration of time and money to foster continuity lies at the heart of these phenomena.

Judy's words hint at the importance placed on continuity – not just of personal circumstance, but also of the pub and the nation-state – when she implies that she is more willing to accept those who contribute to such continuity with their time and money than those who do not. Many pub patrons share this sentiment. Despite the lack of enthusiasm and, as Kevin put it, 'care', for the monarchy, there is still an appreciation for its role as a symbol of state that provides steady income for the country. Recall the London black cab driver in Chapter 1 who emphasized the importance of continuity when referring to the picture of The Queen above the bar. For many interlocutors, the money they see the Royal Family as generating for the reproduction and the growth of the British economy legitimates its existence – its belonging, in a sense. There was much discussion in the pub about the claim that the Royal Family acts in ways to keep/benefit itself no matter the cost. These discussions included conspiracy theories that Diana, Princess of Wales, had been murdered by the family in order to conceal an alleged pregnancy with an illegitimate child. Such theories reveal my interlocutors' scepticism and propensity to assume calculative logics of a conspiratorial nature that make sense within their own parameters (cf. Pelkmans & Machold 2011). In the weeks before the wedding, patrons debated whether The Queen would have allowed Prince William, in direct line to the throne, to wed someone of mixed race. Their consensus was that the answer did not matter. What did matter was the fact that The Queen had allowed this present marriage. Whereas people felt the continuation of the monarchy could be justified due to its economic contribution vis-à-vis tourism, people felt this marriage approval was another calculative attempt by the Royal Family to legitimate itself by appearing 'socially modern' and 'with the times'.

In what follows, I show how the pub landlords and patrons tried to achieve continuity/endurance of a particular social configuration in their own lives through various interrelated social and economic costs that implicate processes of belonging. A tension could be seen between a type of moral economy and more utilitarian aspects of social reproduction – an 'it's nice to be nice' ethos of altruism on the one hand and an 'I'll scratch your back if you scratch mine' expectation of reciprocity and mutual, or even unilateral, benefit on the other. This tension manifests in negotiations of tolerance, kinship expectations, and debt relations that I explore further in the next chapter. Throughout the present chapter, I show how processes of belonging operate on both the pub and nation-state levels, as well as how these two fields intersected in the pub. As is shown by the irritation with the bishop and Judy's resulting question of 'who has time for that?', there is

an explicitly temporal dimension to belonging. This aspect further advances the notion that difference, which can signify a lack of belonging, can be ‘matter out of time’. Time matters in negotiating relationships with others through the reciprocal expenditure of time, (im)patience, and the synchronization of tempos and rhythms of practice, thought, and speech that foster affinity – what interlocutors refer to as being ‘in sync’ or ‘on the same wavelength’ as someone else. Time also matters to the lived experience of continuity, the reproduction of which is a source of conflict.

I now discuss the idiomatic framework of ‘born and bred’ belonging that Judy mentions, showing how it incorporates themes highlighted above. I also offer an analysis that goes beyond this folk model to explore belonging in the pub and Britain more broadly.

‘Born and bred’ belonging

‘You’re family!’, Babs assured me. I was in the middle of a conversation with Babs, a nanny who worked occasionally behind the bar, and her boyfriend, Jason (one of the landlords’ sons), during which they explained Babs’s botched attempt to cosmetically remove hair from Jason’s genitals with wax and shared their interest in consuming and feeding each other various foods such as steak and cheese during sexual intimacy. On another day during a live music performance, a woman called Alana exclaimed, ‘We’re family, no need to be embarrassed!’, to Nora’s daughter in an effort to encourage her to dance. Nora, who is one of the barmaids and who is originally from the Lake District in Northern England, echoed Alana’s encouragement.

Such expressions have a two-fold significance. On the one hand, they are a warming affirmation of the degree to which people accepted others as part of the extended pub family. On the other, they ironically imply a social distinction, a degree of separation. In a closer relationship, vocalising that someone is ‘family’ might not be necessary to establish comfortable acceptance as in these two instances; it would be taken for granted. The same is true when a few people revealed that they or their partner have Irish ancestry, to which others assured them there was ‘nothing wrong with that’. If absolutely nothing were ‘wrong’ with being Irish, people would assume so and not feel compelled to provide reassurance. By making the statement, they simultaneously index both acceptance and the historical tension between England and Ireland, thereby still implying a degree of social difference and stratification. Judy’s words similarly hint at this paradox when she suggested that social commentary on overcoming racial inequality, which she and others might not ‘have time’ for, might inadvertently reinforce hierarchical social

categorizations through the perpetuation of historical narratives that draw attention to perceived alterity. Rather than an actual erasure of social boundaries, these frequent expressions represent active efforts to at least navigate, if not fully reconcile, difference, inclusion, and belonging.

My own position in the pub reflects some of the fine lines of categorization that could be crossed and others that were less malleable. Aside from being reassured that I was 'family', Pam the landlady had told me several times that I could call her 'mum'. Her and Big Bill's children echoed this sentiment when they said on several occasions that I was 'like a brother'. One night after a particularly heavy round of drinking in which I was able to 'hold my alcohol' as well as the others in the group, young William turned to his dad while pointing at me and said, 'There's your fourth son!' Again, such statements point to the existence of a subtle boundary. While it is relatively simple to be made to feel as if you belong in one sense, other aspects of belonging are thornier. I once asked Bill if there were any circumstances under which he might consider me English or British. His face furrowed in contemplation and then shortly with a small shrug said, 'Ah...nah, I mean...you wasn't born and bred 'ere'.

The idea that one must be 'born and bred' in a particular place in order to belong fully to it is loaded with potential for anthropological investigation. What Edwards (2000) describes as 'born and bred' kinship, a common Island idiom, underlies various layers of belonging and suggests a model of British kinship that integrates biological connections to people and places with specific ways of being moulded into a particular social person (28). The folk model assumes that neither dimension, the biological (born) nor social (bred), fully dominates the other. Islanders emphasize the importance of both aspects. Between the two, the vast ground of phenomena that anthropologists have considered as kinship is encompassed. Anthropological studies of family and kinship are most fundamentally investigations of how people conceptualize relatedness (Carsten 1995) or connectedness through various measurements grounded in biological and reproductive terms (see Strathern 1992), social obligations and expectations (see Young & Willmott 2007), moral systems (McKinley 2001), and social and personal knowledge (as with Babs and Jason above). We have already seen how being 'bred' in the East End contains certain expectations and moral systems that are evoked when people engage with housing and living arrangements (Chapter 2), and the next chapter discusses such systems in terms of illicit behaviour. However, being 'born and bred' also evokes a connectedness at scales beyond the Isle of Dogs and London's East End. This scale ranges from the household to the neighbourhood and on up/out to the city and state. In further developing the idea that

the pub is a microcosm of processes of belonging on a wider scale, I aim to support the arguments that kinship is implicated in issues of boundaries and belonging to people and places (Edwards 2000) and social class (Strathern 1981).

Many English Islanders, for instance, reveal a sense of segmentation (as per Evans-Pritchard 1941) when discussing their own 'born and bred' positionality with respect to the Island, London, and the UK. Some of the categories of belonging that people occupied in conversations – and that could overlap in different configurations – included Islander, East Ender, Cockney, Londoner, Southerner, Northerner, English, and British. Applicable adjectives included working-class, posh, gypsy, black, white and, as seen above, family. Declarations that one is 'first and foremost English, then British' were common during conversations that evoked ideas about national belonging and speak to the widely held notion among interlocutors that social complexity and the competition of interests increases with scale. There was a shared vocalized perception that people have more interests in common by being English than British. The Brexit vote result was a key example of this. With a small majority of England having voted to leave the EU compared to Scotland, which on the whole voted to remain and had held an independence referendum a few years prior, people told me that being 'British' encompassed too vast a terrain of divisive opinion, regardless of the fact that plenty of English voters opted to remain and many Scottish voters elected to leave the EU. Nearly all English interlocutors expressed their view that dissolving the United Kingdom might better enable their desired way of life. Such dissolution would simplify what they came to see as an impossible political and economic situation – the imposed amalgamation of people with, in their view, increasingly differentiated interests and ideas of how life should be lived. If Scotland (and Wales and Northern Ireland) wanted to withdraw from the United Kingdom, then, in the words of many, 'so be it' and 'good riddance'.

The case of Cat, however, is one of those that bucks the trend. You will recall from Chapter 2 that she had a professional finance job in Canary Wharf and a property investment portfolio. Cat does not give much thought to categories of class or national belonging. 'I suppose I'm working-class and, er...I don't know, English if I had to say, or British – definitely English when it comes round to football anyway', she told me before following up with, 'But does it really matter?' At other times Cat indicated that despite voting to remain in the EU in order to sustain/reproduce the UK's business interests and a healthy economy in her view, she would be able to continue to live the lifestyle she enjoys without insurmountable hassle regardless of various imagined political and economic outcomes. This lifestyle includes exercising with a personal trainer at a local gym, going

out regularly for meals and drinks with friends, attending picnic concerts with bottles of Prosecco (sparkling wine), and travelling both to domestic and international Arsenal football club matches.

The incongruence between Cat's near indifference and the strong conviction with which others declared themselves 'English first' highlights what I interpret to be the effects of financial capital. Cat's socio-economic position was perhaps the least precarious of all the actors in the Nelson, which I suggest is a point of causation rather than correlation to the lack of importance she places on certain aspects of social identification. This example should not be taken to paint broad brushstrokes about all Leave and Remain voters in the EU Referendum and their self-identifications of national belonging. Cat's situation rather shows how, in one particular circumstance, the self-assessed likelihood of lifestyle continuity perhaps foreclosed a need to identify with a category of national belonging. This was so in all cases – except when it came to the *competition* entailed in national football matches, for which Cat proudly declared her support for the English national team. In contrast, I suggest that others' precarity and consequential compulsion to feel a need to compete in daily life solidified a coalescence around the social category (i.e. 'English' as opposed to 'British') that they felt better enabled their own continuity and prosperity through a perceived shared interest in departure from the EU.

The free movement and employment entitlement of EU nationals posed an issue for many in the pub. Several working-class tradesmen voiced frequent complaints that workers from Eastern Europe in particular drove prices down for their trades as electricians and plumbers. They suggested that 'elitist Remainers' did not care about them, so long as the Remainers were able to save money for their own futures through hiring cheaper foreign labour made possible by membership in the EU. The multicultural state perpetuated in part by the UK's membership in the EU was, in the eyes of the majority of pub patrons, not a celebration of peaceful post-war diversity or mutual economic benefit but rather a dual competition of claims to a shrinking state on the one hand and a consequential competition for a prosperous stake in the market on the other. Brexit is thus germane to a discussion of born and bred belonging, not only because of how pub actors use it as a point of reference for framing their own belonging/national affiliation, but also since debates about whether the UK should remain in the European Union included explicit concerns about national belonging and individuals' abilities for social reproduction. A prime concern about Brexit shared by many working-class English patrons was whether the state had the capacity to care properly for the interests of those born and bred in the UK, such as themselves, *ahead of* those there temporarily or who had not invested as much time, money, and social

engagement in the country as one would from having been born and bred there. This concern points to another aspect of the ‘born and bred’ model – time. Or, as many English interlocutors put it, ‘being ‘ere first’. Such statements signify an entanglement of space and time, indexing an importance placed on the territorialization of belonging and ‘having a history’ that reflects a particular endurance of association to that territory (see Thomas 1983; Malkki 1992; Edwards 1998).

That time should be valued in these claims underscores its importance. I now pivot to a discussion of how people implicate time in negotiations of belonging, and probe how I might not ever be considered to belong fully as an Englishman or Briton yet could still be included as a kind of family member. What are the socio-temporal and economic forces that might test the rigidity of born and bred belonging? Copious anthropological work illustrates how diversified economic opportunity stemming from capitalism produces new forms and configurations of family and belonging (e.g. Ong 1998; Yanagisako 2002). Present conditions in London and the Island typify these processes, revealing how people who might not have been born or bred on the Island or even in Britain can in certain instances fit within a rough and shifting hierarchical structure of inclusion more readily than people who are fully born and bred English Islanders (cf. McKenzie 2015). Sustained reciprocity of various sorts in the Nelson between patrons, friends, employees, and the family who leased the pub created unique social positions. These positions show how belonging is not automatic cause for inclusion, nor does inclusion signify full belonging.

The difference time makes

Island residents, Jason told me, can be placed within three general categories: Original Islanders, Islanders, and New/Not True Islanders. Those who lived on the Island since before the dock closures in the 1970s are ‘Original’; those who moved afterwards but before the redevelopment of the 1990s, such as Jason’s parents, are ‘Islanders’; and people within the last twenty years are ‘New/Not True’. His differentiation reflects the importance placed by him and others’ on the shared experience and mutual social understanding that accompany having lived through perceived *epochs*, or the periodization of time that the long conversation of Chapter 1 illuminates. Recall too that with the shifting landscape, integration with the rest of London, and development since the late 80s, the geographical area was no longer even an obvious island to newcomers. The Islander categories that Jason identifies also hint at the value that lengths of time produce in other ways. More time implies not only increased relatability through shared lived experience and ways of life, but

also increased interaction, dedication, and contribution to both the local area and nation-state over time – and hence, social legitimization – in the eyes of many pub characters. All these elements intersected in the pub in various ways. The selection of ethnography that follows captures glimpses into the life courses of various actors and exhibits pub sociality vis-à-vis these themes, offering an analysis of how time manifests in social constructions of belonging and inclusion to engage further with the idea that difference can often be ‘matter out of time’.

On any given day, you could hear regulars, staff, and the landlords voice their concern that too many foreigners from the EU and elsewhere were siphoning off state benefits, such as housing, that could otherwise have been provided to members of their own families (see Chapter 1 & Chapter 2), without making adequate contributions to the British state and economy in return. When they made such comments, many were quick to distinguish me from ‘all these foreigners’, adding quickly, ‘not you, personally’. Many pub actors were aware that not only had I been required to pay a surcharge to use the National Health Service (NHS) for each year that my visa was valid, but that I also made monthly contributions to the (NHS) through a National Insurance deduction from my salary at my part-time job that helped sustain me throughout my fieldwork. This deduction was made without recourse for rebate despite my previous contribution made with my visa application. They knew that my situation was different to that of EU nationals, who did not require visa applications, surcharges, or administrative fees in order to enter and work or study in the UK. Under the treaty arrangements, EU nationals were also able to claim state resources after a period of several months’ residence in the country. Many interlocutors expressed the view that this time requirement should be extended to between two and five years, a length they felt would ensure reasonable, sustained economic contribution before recourse to public funds.

There were other explicitly temporal dynamics at play for non-EU nationals such as myself and some of my interlocutors.

Adelaide – buying time, buying belonging

Adelaide, the finance professional from Kazakhstan who enjoyed frequent visits to the Nelson, experienced these obstacles through the bureaucratic process involved with her application for indefinite leave to remain in the UK, a legal category without any time limitations on residence. After having completed an undergraduate degree in Birmingham, Adelaide continued her desired sojourn in the UK (and prolonged her absence from

Kazakhstan) through an entrepreneurial visa that her university sponsored before she secured a job in finance. As Adelaide put it, this new visa effectively ‘started [her] clock’, or the time spent in the country that could be counted towards the requirement for her to apply for indefinite leave to remain. None of her three years spent as a university student in the UK counted towards this requirement. With immigration rule changes over the prior decade, the government had become increasingly conservative in its granting of time for non-EU foreigners to remain in the country. Clearly annoyed by the ease with which EU nationals could freely and, in her view, unfairly, create a life for themselves in the UK while she had to ‘get in’ with merit and the considerable expenditure of time and money, Adelaide vented her frustration to me. She explained that not only did she have to meet the minimum time requirement of residing in the country, but since she was between jobs and no longer sponsored by a UK employer for a work visa, there was also a 28-day time requirement for her bank account to have continuously held a minimum balance. This threshold of time and money was a mechanism to demonstrate sufficient access to maintenance funds that in the state’s view would reduce her potential to require public funds. On top of this minimum balance, Adelaide estimated that she had spent nearly £5,000 in total for the application and in order to buy time – in this case, to receive an expedited decision on her application rather than wait up to several months. Her application was rejected, on the grounds that she had physically spent too much time out of the UK when she worked for a stint at a financial firm in Switzerland, despite retaining a permanent address in the UK. Stuck having to continue to operate and try her best to plan a life as a migrant in the ‘short-term’ (cf. Allerton 2019), Adelaide quickly secured a new job at a London-based financial firm that enabled her to remain in the country and accumulate new residence time in order to apply a second time for indefinite leave to remain. She often pointed out that individuals with access to seven-figure funds that they wish to invest in the UK can obtain a special visa with fewer obstacles than others. Such individuals can eventually apply to settle in the UK, and the length of time spent in the country before they are permitted to do so is contingent on the total amount of their investments. Currently, those who invest £2m can settle after five years, those who invest £5m can settle after three years, and those who invest £10m can settle after two (UK Government 2020). In short, money buys time.

These bureaucratic time-reckonings mirror some of those in the pub, albeit on a much different scale. Similar to the state’s preferential treatment of immigrants who make financial investments and can overcome the explicitly temporal and financial obstacles it has set for admission to the country, the landlords valued patrons who made greater

contributions than others to the reproduction of the pub. The landlords made such value apparent through various ‘perks’, or patron credits, such as admission to the pub beyond the pub’s license hours (12-11pm) and providing leftover food from pub parties or even the landlords’ own family meals. The essential value came not only from the social interaction, beverage products exchanged, or money transacted that patrons provided. More fundamentally, the value came from the time that such trade bought the landlords and their family as proprietors of a business that conveniently doubled as a residence amid London’s housing crisis and a vestige of working-class sociality that provided employment for their staff who had become their friends. The time that the landlords tried to preserve and prolong thus included those of the regulars and staff in addition to their own. Like the time that money can buy in the visa administration process, lump sums of money could substitute for smaller amounts of money – and social interaction – in order to accumulate favoured ‘credits’. The relationship between a man called Phillip and the landlords exemplifies these points.

Posh Phillip – buying time, bridging classes

In his late 30s, Phillip had been born and bred in a working-class family in the East End and works as a finance contractor in Canary Wharf. Firms employ contractors on an as-needed rolling basis, making their employment uncertain and more prone to ruptures than is true for regular salaried employees. Since the contractors take on this risk, they are compensated handsomely with considerably higher salaries than those who do the same work but in a less volatile position of employment. This, then, is another instance in which money buys time. In this case, the time bought does not contribute directly to belonging, but rather alleviates the effects of the ruptures and gaps that contractors commonly experience. The extra time, guarding against the possible knock-on effect of ruptures in a jet-set lifestyle, perhaps makes territorial belonging less urgent. Phillip had been successful as a contractor. He had managed to hop between employers when necessary rather than experience significant lapses in employment. His success was evidenced by his over £500k home that he owned around the corner from the pub in addition to a flat in the St David’s Square residential complex opposite the pub. Phillip told me that he had lived in the East End all his life, but he prefers the lifestyle and ritzy experiences to be had in the West End. He feels that he does ‘not belong in either’.

This feeling of a lack of belonging is a class issue that played out in ideas of place. Phillip suggested that his East End accent and propensity to have a quick temper after a

few drinks, if he was made to feel inferior in any way, could mark him as being working-class when he was in the ‘posh’ clubs of Central London and the West End. On the other hand, his Ralph Lauren polo shirts, designer watch, habit of drinking red wine rather than exclusively pints of lager like other working-class men, and stories of ski and golf holidays abroad, led the barmaids and some others in the Nelson to refer to him as ‘Posh Phillip’. These markers did not mark out his distinction incontrovertibly, however. Others, including a London black cab driver called Dapper Del, also wore Ralph Lauren shirts. On one occasion both Dapper Del and Phillip happened to be wearing branded shirts of an ostensibly identical lemon colour. Maxine, one of the barmaids and who held a second job as the deputy manager of a Post Office, remarked sarcastically that she wondered which shirt was the ‘real one’, implying that Dapper Del was wearing a knock-off or otherwise less expensive shirt. Del took this comment with good humour, although he later interrupted the conversation to draw attention to Maxine as she inserted potato crisps into her sandwich before eating it. ‘That’s a South London girl! Look, ask who doesn’t fit in now?’ This interjection was significant for reasons that I will make clear.

The discord that Phillip experienced in navigating his own belonging between places and classes – of being markedly working-class in the posh circles of West London yet considered ‘posh’ in the working-class East End pub – manifested in an interesting way. Speaking with Pam about the state of the pub and its uncertain future, he agreed to help alleviate the financial situation. Phillip provided several thousand pounds to Pam in exchange for a bar tab credit for the same amount, effectively paying for several months’ worth of drinks in advance rather than making a ‘formal’ interpersonal loan. Phillip considered that he would have paid that amount for drinks anyway, and it was advantageous for Pam to have the lump sum *now* in order to assuage her debt situation rather than to spread it over six months or so of Phillip’s patronage. Phillip said that it was ‘nice to be nice’, a common Island phrase, adding that it ‘felt good’ to be able to help sustain the pub, a bastion of East End working-class identity, with his financial privilege gained through non-traditionally working-class means as a white-collar finance professional. In this way, he bridged his two discordant positionalities by drawing upon one to contribute to and boost his standing in the other. The social boost included access to the pub during the ‘lock-in’ period after license hours. While others had built up to this privilege through continued patronage, Phillip’s financial contribution to the pub enabled him to gain extended access with more immediate effect, a process that mirrors the expedited UK settlement visa that could be purchased with increased investment in the country.

Phillip had been a regular. However, on a few occasions he had been turned away from the after-hours lock-in when Pam, who typically returned to the pub in order to relieve the staff at 11pm and to prepare a meal for Big Bill after she had spent the night caring for her ill mother, had decided that she was too tired to continue hosting patrons for the night, despite the vitality and money (and hence, extra time) they were providing the pub. After his payment, Pam never refused Phillip, even at 2am and even after Phillip fell asleep on several occasions on one of the two leather sofas in the pub. Pam had approached the situation with an ‘I’ll scratch your back if you scratch mine’ ethos, which she often expressed in those words.

While there are arguable parallels between the two kinds of belonging explored thus far, the exchange of money and time in the case of the pub was not as overtly transactional as it was in the bureaucratic visa process. There was no standard measurement of the exchange of time, and time that money could buy, *per se*. This exchange, in the case of the pub, was rather the result of internalized logics of reciprocity and subjective dispositions of living with time as a social actor. Such subjectivities were negotiated in various ways that evoked degrees of belonging, such as when a young man referred to Pam as ‘Auntie Pam’ and professed his love for her as a maternal figure. I asked Pam if he was indeed her nephew, and she clarified that they were ‘not related’, but she had gone to school with and had known his father ‘for a long time’. Pam explained that the young man had appealed to a sense of relatedness and belonging because he had wanted to ‘get in’ and have ‘more time’ rather than terminate his night out. By ‘getting in’, the young man could also continue to operate his own business in the informal drug economy in the back of the pub, which seen here was contingent on the continued hours of operation of the pub and the blind eye turned on the operation by his ‘aunt’.

Pam used the same language as Adelaide had when Adelaide spoke of ‘getting in’ the country. In both situations, the phrase points to vitality sought, or a continuity of time and actualization of personal desires, navigated in terms of community and national belonging. Once having made it ‘in’ and received more time, whether in the pub or the country, pub patrons could be quite individualistic in their attempts to keep out others who were not their friends. One of the logics that people had for excluding others from the pub for whom they did not care was that they had ‘made it first’. In this way, we are back to the original point: the local logic that being born and bred in the country implies having staked one’s claim to belong there in advance of others, and hence more legitimately than them due to the value people place on time.

Timothy and Bethany – irreconcilable time

Pam made this logic explicit when she told Timothy, an Englishman in his mid-20s from the southeast of England who had moved to the Isle of Dogs in order to work in Canary Wharf, that she would favour him over Bethany, his partner from whom he separated, since Pam had ‘known him first’, or longer. Pam clarified that she would still permit Bethany to enter the pub for legal, business, and personal reasons – she enjoyed Bethany’s company – but she would turn Bethany away at the door for the lock-in if Timothy was there first. Timothy and Bethany, a 33-year-old finance professional in Canary Wharf from Northern England, had met during a pub quiz in the Nelson. Timothy had moved to the Island about one year before Bethany, and both had patronized the pub as one of their first activities upon moving in order to make friends – to establish and construct a sense of belonging to what was a new place for each of them.

Among other things, the couple shared an interest in the British counterparts of American business reality television shows that popularize and sensationalize neoliberal mentalities, such as *The Apprentice* and *Dragons’ Den*, in which people compete to become business partners. Bethany and Timothy also had in common a tendency to vent their frustrations with their jobs and, separately, their relationship, to others in the pub. Both often complained about the early mornings and late nights spent in their respective offices, waiting for others to sign off on their reports, in addition to coordinating across time zones with colleagues in Hong Kong and New York. Bethany in particular liked to joke with me, saying once, ‘All you Americans and your national holidays – you love an excuse to take some time off, don’t you?! And you do your [daylight savings] time changes at different times – like weeks apart from us – what’s up with that?’ They often discussed the difficulties that ‘time’ and work presented to their relationship, such as failed attempts to coordinate dinner together that resulted in their blame of each other while knowing that their inability to coordinate was often beyond their control if they wanted to keep their jobs. Both Bethany and Timothy had told the other that the other needed to ‘put their foot down’ at work and ensure that their time was seen as valuable by their colleagues. ‘But’, Bethany told me, ‘I know that everyone else at work wants their time to be valued as well. They all have lives, too. No one wants to be working those hours, really. If anything goes wrong or one person takes more time because of whatever personal problems they’re going through it’s just a domino effect. But we all have personal issues. It’s impossible, but it is what it is’, she mused over a glass of spiced rum and Diet Coke.

Others in the pub agreed about the difficulties of relationship maintenance, endurance, and operating within everyday time-reckoning constraints, commenting that

such maintenance takes continual effort that some people are not willing to commit to or able to sustain. Everyone who took part in such conversations all agreed that 'time' is a source of anxiety and could not help but feel impatient with others, either at work or in other everyday encounters, influencing how they spend their own time. Patrons shared stories about how their family and friends could become irritated with people they did not even know because of the effect those people have on the time the patrons have to spend socializing or relaxing. Likewise, the patrons talked to each other about how their own patience wore thin for people that preoccupied the time of their family and friends, as well as their own time. People also shared annoyance with their own family and friends usurping too much of their time. As in many discussions, the consensus was that 'it's life' and 'it is what it is'.

Pam often acted as an informal counsellor to Bethany and Timothy, providing an ear for both to vent their frustrations. Yet the trouble of discordant actualizations eventually led to the couple's separation. Navigating such time pressures at work strained their relationship since both felt that they interacted too little with each other to be able to maintain their relationship. Outside of work, Timothy prefers to spend Friday nights drinking for longer than Bethany does. She prefers to not 'waste the Saturday' sleeping off a hangover, but rather hurry to the market and take care of essential errands and housekeeping first thing in the morning in order to then feel as if she 'has more time' away from her job. Resentment set in when Bethany found herself doing most of the housework. This was because of her self-admitted refusal to negotiate her manipulation of time vis-à-vis her weekly routine despite Timothy's offer to complete domestic work unaided and by himself on Sundays. They also both blamed 'time' in the sense that they felt they occupied irreconcilable life stages, with Bethany several years older and more established in her career having been promoted at her firm, and Timothy only just starting out a few years after university. Bethany also wanted children sooner rather than later, often reminding Timothy that she 'wasn't getting any younger'. Timothy wanted to wait until he was Bethany's age and more established in his career. He often invoked a song on the pub's playlist called 'Romeo and Juliet' by Dire Straits to reflect on the relationship, quoting the line: *When you gonna realize it was just that the time was wrong?* Timothy also told me that, while both he and Bethany knew for a while that their relationship would not work out, they enjoyed each other's company and were comfortable living together more as flatmates than partners. Timothy delayed terminating the relationship and moving out. This was because of the time that such a rupture would cost him; time spent on securing a new place to live and on physically moving his belongings. These were tasks which he did not

‘have time for’ and for which he ‘couldn’t be bothered’ to make time. Despite having made several friends, Bethany ceased to visit the pub after her eventual separation from Timothy. Timothy, who, like Phillip, is attracted to more ‘exciting and diverse’ experiences than what the Isle could offer him, then moved to West London after the termination of the relationship.

The Monday Club – welcomed differentiation

When they were regular patrons, Bethany and Timothy sometimes joined in the drinking group self-referred to as the Monday Club. As the name suggests, the group met for drinks on Monday evenings and carried on until at least 11pm or midnight, although members of the group were typically in the pub on every night of the week. Mondays tend to be quiet days for pub business since they fall just after the weekend as people begin their work week. The members of the group who were not part of the landlords’ family thus demonstrated additional commitment to the pub by drinking on this day, solidifying their place at the top of the landlords’ patron affinities. The core group consisted of Big Bill, Cat, Dapper Del, Adelaide (when she lived on the Island), Young William and Mary (once their children were asleep upstairs), and a man called Pierce. Pierce had been born and bred on the Island, served in the British Army, and saw armed conflict in Northern Ireland during the Troubles. He has since worked in personal security for Hollywood celebrities and esteemed political families. Adelaide considered Pierce to be ‘ruggedly handsome’ and enjoyed the thrill of flirting with a man about double her age, often messaging me to ask if Pierce was already in the pub. Eventually, they exchanged numbers. Both smiled when I brought up the other in conversation.

Hardly anything was off the table in terms of what the Monday Club discussed during their habitual nights of drinking and conversation. The one exception was income. Dapper Del, who received his nickname for the flamboyant socks and shoes, tweed jackets, and suits he often wore, made explicit one evening that the amount of money each member of the group made was ‘obviously something we would never say or ask’. General estimates could be deduced by various lifestyle indicators, and the group joked about whether they would be included in Cat’s will. Cat humorously responded that she was open to the idea as long as any beneficiary cared for her cats. Knowing that her views on Brexit differed from those of the others in the group, Cat told me that she opted not to participate in such discussions lest they rupture the conversation. Most of the Monday Club crew are Arsenal football fans, the club of choice for the landlords and their family, and a considerable

amount of time was spent discussing football. This was particularly so since Cat had season tickets to Arsenal football matches and attended most domestic and even international matches. Her blonde, curly hair resembles that of a former Arsenal footballer called Ray Parlour, hence her nickname, Parlour (an alternative to Catster, another often-used moniker). My own name served to lend me some reflected glory in the eyes of the group, as my middle name is Patrick, and Patrick Vieira is considered by many Arsenal supporters to be ‘a legend’ because of fans’ perceptions that he has immense talent and an impressive player record. Other regulars in the pub referred to the group as ‘Highbury Corner’, in reference to the site of Arsenal’s home ground in London and to the fact that the group sat at the front corner of the pub between the bar counter and one of the entrances. This was also Big Bill’s lookout spot from which to monitor all goings-on in the pub. Such were the mutual interests and affinities between members of the group that Cat and Dapper Del, who had actually met each other abroad at an Arsenal match in Germany without realising they both lived on the Island, were ‘matched’ on the online dating service, eHarmony. Cat had sought help from the Monday Club in order to complete her eHarmony profile, asking for people’s opinions about how ‘charitable’ and ‘thoughtful’ she is. Both Cat and Del found humour – rather than romantic opportunity – from the serendipitous situation. Del had just divorced his wife when the eHarmony pairing happened, and the slight increase in speed with which he drank (measured in pints per hour) increased the speed for others in the group who had to keep up in order to sustain the ‘flow’/rhythm of reciprocal rounds.

Such rhythms were responsible for fostering a sense of belonging through affinities developed for others. Adelaide speculated that she ‘got on well’ with everyone in the Monday Club group and others in the pub, partially because she shared their political opinions, which likely minimized the potential for significant ruptures to the rhythm of conversation. Like the majority of patrons who voted for Brexit, Adelaide said that she too would have done so had she been eligible to vote. She emphasized her belief that merit should be the primary factor to determine who can participate as a citizen in a different country and added that while it had been difficult, she felt that it ‘was only right to learn English and for British people to expect others to speak their language in their country’. Also like other patrons, Adelaide believed that any short-term hit to the British economy as a result of Brexit would be offset by a stability and enhanced growth that would be longer-term than if the UK had remained in the trade bloc. She compared this projection to her own situation, explaining that her difficult and somewhat uncertain migrant status in the short-term would be worthwhile in the long-term once she received indefinite leave to remain in the UK. ‘It’s just that people don’t want to go through change and the price of

change, even if it is ultimately for the best’, Adelaide added. This statement seemed to echo what Timothy had expressed about his unwillingness to pay the price of time in order to change his relationship and living situation, despite his belief that a separation from Bethany would be of mutual benefit.



Figure 3.2 Dapper Del in one of his suits.

Despite how Adelaide ‘got on’ well with pub patrons, there were still ample instances in which the presence of both Adelaide and I served to rupture social flows (or differentiate the social setting). This marked us as outsiders. The other Monday Club members often, for example, were forced to explain English pop culture references to us. One of these references was to a character in a television show called ‘The Vicar of Dibley’, a comedy about a female vicar in a country village. The character called Jim has a stammer, which marks him as ‘different’ within the show because of the slowness of his responses to questions. He was invoked during a Monday Club session because of the amount of time it had taken for me to answer the question of whether I was about to leave the pub. Adelaide and I were marked as different because of the time it took initially to explain the whole reference. The same happened during my initial visits to the pub when someone occasionally used Cockney rhyming slang, in which the final word of a phrase or name

rhymes with the object or person that the phrase or name refers to. ‘Ruby Murray’, for example, refers to ‘curry’; ‘bees and honey’ refers to ‘money’; and ‘apples and pears’ refers to ‘stairs’. Although hardly used, patrons enjoyed explaining such expressions if they happened to come up.

Adelaide and I were not the only Monday Club members for whom time for explanation could be needed, despite the others all being English. One evening the older group members had recalled the British currency system before the 1971 decimalization transition to pounds and pence. Tears of laughter swelled in Big Bill’s eyes as Young William tried to grasp what his father was telling him, confusing guineas with crowns with farthings. ‘That’s right, I suppose it’s well before your time!’ Big Bill said. Also despite most of the Monday Club ‘crew’ being English, the different accents provided points of differentiation. Del, for instance, often interrupted the conversations in order to playfully ‘correct’ Cat’s ‘northern’ accent. Maxine’s differentiated way of eating her sandwich and crisps likewise interrupted the conversational rhythm when Del brought everyone’s attention to the notion that this way of eating a sandwich is ‘different’. Issues of time were also made explicit when people had to do a ‘double take’ in order to recognize someone with whom they regularly interacted. This was often the case, for instance, when Pierce shaved his beard and consequently created a slight lapse to what would have otherwise been more immediate recognition of a familiar face. Time and differentiation were also made explicit when a patron would order a different drink to what they normally consumed after the bar staff had already poured the patron’s ‘usual’ in anticipation of a taken-for-granted rhythm, which required additional time to remedy.

These examples show instances where interactional ruptures – and the expense of time they required to mend – signified some degree of social difference. Many of these ruptures were welcome because of the humour they provided in some cases and opportunity to share cultural knowledge in others, becoming a part of an expected rhythm of social interaction.

Reluctant differentiation

Evidenced by the examples above, people could describe these pub friendships in terms of being ‘on the same wavelength’ as someone else or ‘speaking the same language’, implying mutual rhythms and tempos. Time and (im)patience are fundamental to these perceptions, and there were contrasting instances in which ruptures/differentiation signified an unwanted social difference. For instance, the preference to interact with someone who

‘speaks the same language’ is often quite literal. Pam and others said they found it burdensome to communicate with Tibor, the Hungarian shop detective, and his friend, whose accents are thick, whose English is broken, and whose pub visits were sporadic. Pam told me that she liked them, but I could see her face furrow in concentration when she spoke with them, her leg starting to bounce and the fingers on her right hand spinning the rings on her left one as she began to lose patience. These subtle acts gave a clue to when she would terminate the conversation. On one occasion Pam approached me afterward to say that she ‘didn’t have time for that’. The same pattern emerged when she spoke with a Chilean man who enjoyed dance and conversation despite having less of an ability to speak English than Tibor and Tibor’s friend. Pam and others would try and ‘pass them on’ to other people to chat to when their own patience ended due to an inability to communicate.

Pam also complained about having to wait for other languages every time her chronically ill mother needed an urgent medical appointment (cf. Auyero 2012). With the NHS, you have the option to phone up and book a same-day appointment with your general practitioner rather than wait several weeks for an appointment. Phoning *first* thing in the morning when the office opens helps to ensure an appointment, at least at your preferred time, yet the lines are frequently engaged and require a wait. ‘I can be impatient anyway’, confessed Pam, ‘But before waiting on the line we ‘ave to wait through the menu options in another language before English!’ She asked why English options ‘are not given first since [the] English [language] was ‘ere first – why are *we* the ones who ‘ave to wait?’ The delayed speed at which people like Pam could operate due to language differences reminded me of a Monday Club conversation that Timothy and Bethany had participated in. Each agreed, and the others saw their point, that, as Timothy put it:

One of the pettiest but still most aggravating things [when dealing with international colleagues] is getting names [correct]. I mean, it can be so frustrating to be in a hurry writing memos or whatever, just trying to work as fast as you can, and then have this different name spelling and you don’t want to offend and get it wrong. And then if there are accents, other symbols, or whatever in the name you have to figure out with the hotkey or go search for the thing in the symbol menu. I just want to write the bloody thing, mate! I don’t have time for all that!

Fred, an electrician and general handyman, is a born and bred ‘Original Islander’ with similar interests to other patrons. He was a frequent pub-goer during my fieldwork and a native English speaker. There was no doubt that he belonged on the Island and in the pub. His lack of inclusion in drinking groups, however, points to an explicitly temporal marker of social difference. Other patrons complained that they found it difficult to speak

with Fred, who they believed took up ‘too much time’. Interactions with Fred often foreclosed an ability to actualize your own thoughts and opinions; conversational rhythms with him were marked by frequent differentiation caused by his habitual interruption and interjection of his own actualizations. One day, Fred told me that his partner had complained that he does not listen or focus properly during conversation, often interrupting her and talking too often and for too long about himself, in her view. Fred spoke on the telephone with a professional through the NHS. Fred said that the professional deduced from the single telephone conversation that Fred seemed likely to be a candidate for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The social impact of Fred’s possible ADHD contributed to a rough hierarchy of inclusion – one in which I was held in a higher regard and considered ‘family’ despite not having been born and bred on the Island, while people often preferred not to speak with Fred because – in part – of the perceived imbalance of time spent in social interactions with him.

Gabija and Sofija, the Lithuanian couple with whom I lived (Chapter 2), were vivacious like Adelaide, and patrons enjoyed their senses of humour and playing pool with them. Maxine the barmaid in particular liked to speak with them, and others speculated that this was due to the fact that Maxine’s daughter also identifies as homosexual. Gabija and Sofija found Babs to be attractive, and they both enjoyed Babs’s company when she worked behind the bar. Babs likewise considered the Lithuanian couple to be good company. While no one had anything bad to say about the couple or attempted to ostracize them from group interactions, the topic of sexual orientation and trans-sexuality/gender came up in several conversations.

Rather than dislike individual people, many interlocutors expressed what I suggest is a tacit anxiety, not so much about particular perceived differences themselves, but rather about differentiation as a multifaceted process within *la durée* – a sentiment that life continues to become increasingly complex, coupled with an inability fully to make sense of it all. For instance, a man said in a group conversation that he has ‘nothing against’ individual people who identify as homosexual or transsexual/gender. However, he was frustrated after hearing that it is becoming increasingly common for people to indicate the pronouns by which they prefer to be addressed and referred (e.g. Her/Him/Them). ‘I don’t ‘ave time to be politically correct. “im, ‘er, they, them” ... I just want to go about my day, you know what I mean? I don’t ‘ave time to be worried about what I call other people. Why does everything need to be made more complex?’ Others agreed, and a woman added, ‘Yeah, where does it stop? They keep addin’ letters [to LGBTQ+]. Will they just keep addin’ more for all the different ways people are – it’ll be impossible’.

Such common sentiments index a certain competitive element involved in shaping social constructions of what is accepted, ‘normal’, and recognized within the emergence of differentiation/time. I suggest that the irritation expressed above about recognizing the identities of others should not be construed as a manifestation of a fear or dislike of particular people. Perhaps more fundamentally, it is rather a tacit anxiety about the need to establish a stake/recognition in a differentiating social world that does not seem to ‘stand still’ – a social configuration in which many working-class interlocutors feel they are ‘losing’ as a ‘dying’ demographic on the Isle of Dogs. Another man summed up this anxiety when he said, ‘Everyone wants rights, and everyone now seems to want to be recognized for being different. ‘ow do you accommodate all that? ‘o ‘as the time for that?’

The tension was also apparent when Judy said that she ‘didn’t have time’ for what she felt was a belabouring of racial issues during the royal wedding. Similarly, many people feel that the London Gay Pride event, in which streets are blocked off in order to make way for a parade, causes unnecessary disruptions to traffic and people’s lives, a feeling also shared about a range of other issues ranging from industrial action to Donald Trump’s visit to London. These examples highlight situations in which some people’s time (desired actualizations) comes at the expense of others. I flag this issue here and take it up in later chapters.

Conclusion: matter out of time

I do not want to suggest that time is deterministic of social difference, but rather illustrate how perceptions of time manifest and become embedded in negotiations and conceptualizations of belonging and difference. Seen in the above examples, ideas of time manifest in various ways both to foster social relationships and to create perceptions of difference through what I have phrased in Chapter 1 as ‘matter out of time’. Douglas (1966) influentially conceptualized dirt as ‘matter out of place’. Several interlocutors commented that dirtiness in their house could cause them stress not so much because of the actual presence of dirt, but because of the realization that time, or durations, would need to be spent in order to clean it. In other words, dirt for them signifies the presence of differentiation, a reminder that life requires continuous effort and maintenance in order to sustain/reproduce desired endurances amid the constant potential for decay and rupture/differentiation – time.

Through the above illustrations, we can map out a general framework for examining the many ways that explicitly temporal issues shape belonging through the idea

that difference can be ‘matter out of time’. First, we see that difference can be perceived as matter that is subject to different representations of time (e.g. migrants who are subject to legal timeframes/limits and colleagues in different time zones). Second, ‘matter out of time’ can be anachronistic, or which exists outside of *epochs*, seen above when Big Bill realized that the decimalization of British currency took place ‘before his son’s time’. Third, ideas of difference are apparent as matter out of expected or desired sequence/order, such as the local GP’s automated phone directory not providing the menu options in what Pam felt should be ‘English first’. Fourth, difference can be signified as matter out of rhythm, seen when Timothy expressed his irritation about foreign names causing disruption to his desired work rhythm; when people vented their annoyance about speaking with Fred, in which the conversational rhythm was not balanced; and when Maxine added her crisps into her sandwich, prompting Del to point this act out to the group. Fifth, Dapper Del’s increased speed of drinking (measured in pints per hour) marked the situation as different because of what can be considered as matter out of tempo, also seen in the issues about communicating with people whose primary language is different to your own – the speed/tempo of interaction is perceived to slow down. Sixth, difference can be signified by perceptions that matter has ‘run out of time’, or when particular social configurations have differentiated, creating a new *epoch* and social categorization. Such differentiation is what Pam and Bill tried to prevent by seeking the financial help of Posh Phillip in order to sustain their business (*and* home/house). A common thread throughout is that difference can be viewed as matter that is antagonistic to your own time, or your ability to actualize your desires for whatever duration sought either in immediate situations or in the register of broader social configuration. Such is the fundamental element behind constructions of belonging – a sense that someone else is contributing to your own desired actualizations in a balanced/reciprocal relationship rather than jeopardize them and increase the propensity for rupture.

With this framework, we can better see how a certain politics can be ‘founded on representations of the natural connections of communities through a homogenous deep historical and cultural time that is entangled in metaphors of biological life and kinship’ (Bear 2014b: 7). Seen here, questions about where to ‘draw the line’ in terms of belonging apply to time/duration in addition to space. This framework also helps us to see how time as a perceived resource can be just as, if not more, important and fundamental to shaping belonging than class, ethnicity, and race (cf. Wallman 1984, Armstrong 1998 in Hall 2012: 64).

The next chapter takes up the theme of balance to illustrate how pervasive and important the concept is, in addition to various concerns that people have of others ‘getting one up’ on them, which index larger concerns about time and duration in the various registers that I already discuss. Such anxieties manifest in petty crime, less illicit entrepreneurial endeavours, and ideas about work and politics within a neoliberal setting.

4

‘Getting one up’ balance, work, and entrepreneurial logics

Tuesday, 29 May 2018. Tarquin, an English man in his forties who has served several stints in prison, expressed his frustration that someone else was ‘playing with his time’ and trying to ‘get one up’ on him by reporting him to the police and hence significantly curb his desired actualizations through incarceration. He had been accused of domestic violence against his girlfriend, Lucy, the daughter of a man called Reg, a few years prior. A restraining order was issued against Tarquin, which prohibited him to set foot on the road where Lucy lives, which is one of the two roads whose intersection is where the pub is located. Reg often phoned the police when Tarquin was in the pub in order to have him arrested, indicating what Tarquin called a ‘power move’, or a relational invocation of the state (cf. Koch 2018b: 155) in which interpersonal conflicts are exacerbated rather than mitigated. Tarquin often sang the song called ‘Coward of the County’ during karaoke nights, prompting a newcomer to the Island to suggest that the selection was ironic given the lyrics that champion non-violence juxtaposed to the allegations made against Tarquin. The actual social relations were more complex. On this day, Tarquin vented his irritation that he could not enjoy his time without some apprehension caused by Reg, and he noted as he did so the situational irony created by the song called ‘That’s What Friends Are For’ as it played in the pub during his expression of angst. He felt that Reg’s actions signified a lack of ‘bein’ a friend’ and ‘East End morals’ that reject interference by the state, a morality further crafted by the logics seen in entrepreneurial endeavours discussed below.

Tarquin is a gardener and painter, relying on a network of friends and family to gain business. He fancies himself to resemble the English actor Jason Statham, this having been suggested to him by Gabija, one of my flatmates and who Tarquin considers to be attractive. He told me that when he is incarcerated, he requests that the television be removed from his cell. The programme schedule reveals the time of day. He wants to ‘serve

time’, rather than ‘know the time’ that for him represents a reminder of ‘all the time’ spent in prison.

As the Lord Nelson is situated at the intersection of two roads, it has two doors, one for each road. Due to the court order, Tarquin found satisfaction in not allowing Reg to ‘get one up’ on him and also some excitement from ‘living on the edge’ by entering and exiting the pub through the door on the road he was permitted to occupy, blurring the judgment of whether he was guilty of violating the court order. Sometimes he deliberately defied the order and intentionally walked to the shops on the other road from which he was restricted. While in the pub, he often received text messages from Lucy that expressed she missed him and asked him to visit, which he showed to friends. Ignoring their advice, on several occasions he visited Lucy’s residence and within thirty minutes was arrested, shouting for vindication to the patrons congregated outside the pub who were watching the ‘entertainment’, as one barmaid put it.



Figure 4.1 Tarquin’s makeshift gardening kit.

Lucy was eventually charged with false allegations of domestic abuse allegedly perpetrated by Tarquin, and Tarquin claimed that the bruises that the police observed on her had been caused by someone else. Speculation over the truth of the relationship between Tarquin and Lucy was frequent, with many pub regulars believing Tarquin to be a harmless and ‘innocent crook’ (cf. Hall 2012: 65), or entrepreneurial actor in the informal economy of trading illicitly sourced goods in addition to his gardening and painting business. Others suggested there was guilt on both sides, and the varied beliefs reveal how ideas of truth are intertwined with local allegiances and loyalty. A fight between Reg and Tarquin in the pub was caught on CCTV camera, and patrons asked the landlords if they could watch the footage in order to judge for themselves who had started the fight and assign guilt. Those who remained neutral said it was ‘hard to tell’ while others assigned blame to the party who was not their friend. I should point out that I never met Lucy or engaged in speculation about the verisimilitude of various situations.

Towards the last several months of my fieldwork, Tarquin spent nearly every day in the pub. He was anxious about Lucy’s trial, and he became paranoid. After police officers had chased a suspect carrying cocaine and a knife into the pub and arrested him on the floor, they reviewed CCTV footage of the incident, and one officer identified Tarquin. When this was revealed to Tarquin, he panicked and began thinking the police were after him again. The following day after this incident, a police car was parked across the pub for thirty minutes, and Tarquin came face to face with it when he exited the pub on the prohibited road in order to take a mobile call. Ironically (and as a matter of humour to everyone else in the pub), the call Tarquin had taken was from a friend who had just driven past the pub and was calling Tarquin to inform him of the police car outside. Tarquin made a dash to the beer garden and, until the police eventually left after having arrested someone else from the houses across the street, continually asked those of us by the front windows whether the police were ‘still there’. He did not believe the regulars were telling the truth when they explained (repeatedly) that the police had arrested someone else.

Evidenced by the case of Tarquin, I suggest that the pub and the various entrepreneurial activities of its actors are situated within what I refer to as a ‘belonging anxiety and spirit of entrepreneurialism’ that speaks to belonging through issues of economic contribution, social reproduction and continuity, and individual autonomy and sovereignty. An anxiety about others ‘getting one up’ as in Tarquin and Reg’s conflict underlies this discussion, and I expand upon such concerns about balance through what I frame as tactical petty crime and illicit behaviour in the pub. I discuss various tensions that people have of others ‘getting one up’ on them, which index larger concerns about time

and duration in the various registers that I already discuss. Aside from such ‘dodgy’ behaviour, similar concerns about duration and balance manifest in less illicit entrepreneurial endeavours, a few of which attempt to actualize a virtual past and prevent social differentiation within *la durée*. Other entrepreneurial aspirations are sought in order to create duration on other individual levels, such as the ability to remain in the country as an immigrant-entrepreneur. The chapter then discusses work in general within a neoliberal context, showing how the same anxieties continue to manifest in competition, concerns about others ‘getting one up’ or disrupting a sense of balance, and the everyday moralities that influence political decision-making and orientations.

Theft and balance

‘I’m not racist, mate. We just want the best in this country. Because we are the best country. If you come ‘ere, contribute, pay tax. End of. We’re a small island – we can’t fit everyone’ (see Tuckett 2017). Ironically, Reg (introduced above), who made these remarks has openly offered many conversations in which he has described his own lifetime of casual thievery. He explains that it’s an ‘East End thing’, or ethic – that someone would never (ideally) steal from their mates and that the regulars in pub are honest people, with respect to each other. Many Islanders recall hopping over the dockyard’s walls to steal imports and exports, with someone on the outlook ready to whistle should the police or anyone else turn up. Large businesses and corporations can afford to essentially redistribute wealth through ‘free’ material items, Reg added. He described an instance in which he ‘nicked’ a bag of sweets with another friend his age.

‘Mate’, he said to me, ‘You’ve got an’ try these beautiful sweets sometime. They’re the bollocks’.

Judy the barmaid and I exchanged glances, and she replied to Reg, ‘You are so bad! Like a child you are!’, while shaking her head with a laugh. I followed up by asking him to clarify how he saw and measured such practices against his earlier statements about his wanting to have ‘the best people’, who contribute rather than take, as inhabitants of Britain.

His response was that he can justify it because he, as a white British citizen, was ‘‘ere first’. This statement underscores the prevalent shared belief in legitimate residence and citizenship as stemming from having been ‘born and bred’ in England in general and on the Island or East End in particular.

On another occasion, Pam and I went shopping for a few items for the pub at the local Asda supermarket. It was 1am, and the store was empty except for a few workers restocking the aisles. No one was monitoring the self-check-out lanes, and at this time there were no cameras installed above the self-serve registers to record customer faces. Pam took several reusable plastic bags from the rack next to the register and showed me the ‘trick’ that by scanning the barcode on the underside of the bags, the items appeared on the screen and receipt as £0.00 – a free and ‘legal’ transaction. The bags would have been £0.10 each had she indicated the number she had taken when prompted on the screen to do so. She gave me a wink and then scanned her items from the conveyor belt, yet just went through the motion with a few goods without waiting for the scanner to read the barcode and charge for the product. Two larges bottles of Coca-Cola were simply left in the trolley during the entire transaction.

I later spoke about this with her family in the pub, and her son William laughed, noting that his mum would never go to Asda and *not* take something without paying for it. On several occasions in the pub, different Robin Hood-esque figures entered to try and sell items they had taken from various shops, Asda included, at a lower price than they had been marked in the stores. Tarquin, for example, provided periodic boxes of steak and chicken cuts for at least fifty percent less than the ‘formal’ market value. Whether capitalist markets or the state, many interlocutors feel that they can, and should, ‘snack’ on those forces for their own benefit.

These stories illustrate how people use ‘tactics’ within their everyday operations (see de Certeau 1984), subtly consuming – snacking – on capitalist or other structural processes in small everyday acts of petty theft that enable them to sustain their own desired actualizations in the face of neoliberal austerity as a ‘weapon of the weak’ (or rather the marginalized) (cf. Scott 1985). All the while, some simultaneously point their finger at certain ‘Others’ for either doing the same thing or even working to stop the petty theft. Tibor, the Hungarian shop detective, for example, was marginalized in the pub for being both an outspoken foreigner with a thick accent, whose general company most patrons did not enjoy (which I argued previously is due to issues of time/speed), as well as a ‘grass’ or ‘grasser’ – i.e. someone who ‘rats out’ or exposes others’ involvement in theft and other crimes. Even in the Nelson itself, Kevin the barman engaged in both *la perruque* (as per de Certeau 1984), tactically diverting time away from work for his own pursuits such as recording sports statistics, and petty theft against his employers. Every day after his shift, Kevin would sit down at a table and drink pints of ‘Fosters top’ (Fosters with fizzy lemonade splashed at the top – or, as Jason (one of the landlords’ sons) served it, with the

lemonade poured first so it mixed with the lager) until he went home. Kevin the barman would often tell the next shift worker that he had a pint or several pints ‘in the wood’ or ‘in the pump’, meaning someone had bought him a drink during the day that he had not yet taken. Often no one had bought him anything. I was alerted to this when I overheard him order several pints that had allegedly been ‘in the wood’ from earlier in the day. I had been the only other person in the pub during the time he had worked that day and knew that I had not purchased a drink for Kevin. The landlords were aware of this, yet a care for him, derived from the perception that he lacks friends and other connections, prevented the landlords from making any accusations. This speaks to ideas of tolerance and belonging, as the landlords worried that over the years Kevin lost a certain vitality for the job that manifested in ‘putting customers off’ when they engaged with him. They expressed angst about whether to ‘Let ‘im go’ while also believing that their pub was the only avenue for Kevin to be able to ‘earn a living’. Their frustration about this situation manifested in their asking Kevin to perform various additional tasks beyond his job in order to ‘balance out’ what they perceived as an ‘imbalanced’ relationship in which Kevin received more from it than what he ‘put in’. These tasks included making trips to the local shops for groceries and reveal a tension between ideas of care on the one hand with an ‘I’ll scratch your back if you scratch mine’ expectation of reciprocity on the other that creates ‘fairness’ through a sense of balance.

Running throughout these narratives is a certain narrative about attempting to produce balance, an ethos in which the aim is to create at least a (highly subjective) ‘fair’ equilibrium or come out just ahead ‘at the end of the day’ in order to promote people’s own actualizations of personal desires and needs. ‘The end of the day’ can be taken literally, as an expression akin to ‘in sum’ or ‘when all is said and done’, or as a metaphor for life periods extending as far as entire lifetimes. This mentality parallels ideas of balancing debt and credit. In these cases, the balance is someone’s reconciliation of theft, or perceived unfair capitalist exploitation against them, with their own theft against others. Other justifications for engaging in or tolerating theft stem from wide-ranging tacit recognitions of lack or inequality. These inequalities range from Kevin’s lack of social connections to all the perceived unfair forces at work behind the interrelated decay of the pub business and its landlords’ socio-economic situation. Like one historical attitude towards debt that ‘it all balances out in the end’ (see Graeber 2014), one illustration demonstrates the ideal balance sought in theft, even if on a small scale. Someone in the pub asked me to lend them my lighter, and I obliged. They did not return it. Many days later, I asked an entirely different person if I could borrow their lighter. It serendipitously turned out to be the one I

had initially lent, marked by a half-folded sticker on the side, having circulated through various ‘sticky fingers’ before finding its way back to me.

I suggest that this ethos of sanctioned theft – a moral justification of seeking balance – is an attempt to make the world less opaque and establish a legible order to things. There is evidence of this balance and order in other registers and on different scales, such as in the more spiritual rather than financial concept of karma. According to my interlocutor and flatmate, Vinny, ‘good karma’ through moral action produces *punya* (merit), while ‘bad karma’ resulting from immoral action produces *pāp* (sin). Many interlocutors spoke of karma, especially when something had been done to them or their family that they perceived to have involved wrong, or illicit, behaviour (cf. van Schendel & Abraham 2005). If they could not be bothered to seek retaliation, or balance, then karma would do that for them. A man called Ronny who was an entrepreneur in the informal drug economy, and whose grandfather served time incarcerated with the infamous Kray twin gangsters of London’s East End, justified his own vague ‘bad’ actions in terms of karma and expressed worry about what a ‘future life’ might entail. However, he also found hope for himself through reincarnation – another signifier of potential continuity that might transcend absolute death.

In the cases I have described on the Island, there is a blurrier boundary than the idea of karma suggests between what is ‘good’ and ‘bad’, licit and illicit, yet the idea persists that for every action there is or should be a correlative consequence in the future to create balance. However, the balances sought within the status quo as they are documented here maintain the status quo; perceptions of socio-economic change require a more significant rupture and differentiation than repeated circles of small-scale theft. This balancing act rather takes on the Paretian notion of economic efficiency – a state in which one person cannot be made better off without another person being made worse off. Like more of the international residents, some Cockney residents spoke about ‘getting ahead’, which was the case for Mandy in Chapter 1 who sought ‘a better life’ as a property developer. It is far more common, however, for them to speak of ‘getting by’. Many Cockney interlocutors expressed the view that, in one person’s words, ‘The Island is really strange. Everyone wants to bring you down. Unlike Afro-Caribbeans, Asians who ‘elp lift their own, Islanders bring down anyone who does better than them’.

This ethics of balance that implies a certain continuity without anyone ‘getting ahead’ or ‘one up at your expense’ can be found in the way people respond to more severe cases of crime and punishment, raising larger questions about social order, time, and justice.

Violence and balance

Horrific knife and acid attacks plagued news and social media during my time in the field, exacerbating complaints about violent crime and dropping police personnel numbers amongst some and complaints about ethnic minorities amongst others. Just down the road from the Island's Blue Bridge, a young woman suffered injuries after a single assailant threw a corrosive substance onto her face one evening just a few days after Christmas. She did not see her attacker and nothing other than her age was disclosed to the public. Speculation that it had been a 'Paki' man who had attacked a white woman spread across the Island within minutes, particularly within the pubs and on social media, including the Island's community watch group. Not even two hours later, an 'Asian man', as the news reported, endured a similar assault by two young white men, just a few hundred yards down the road from the first attack. To many residents within the local community, that night signified that the tensions which, according to them, had been escalating on the Island for years, had escalated to breaking point. The Island's physical and symbolic guards – the walls of water and the affluence of Canary Wharf – had failed, and what many residents say is an outright 'culture war' throughout the rest of London and the UK had finally penetrated through to their own streets.

This reaction suggests a belief that matters had been taken into the hands of individual community members that night. Many residents feel the events were not isolated, but rather the two white men had, in the absence of a suspect and on assumptions of police and state apathy, actively sought revenge on a member of the ethnic community that had allegedly perpetrated the first attack. While acknowledging that the Asian man was probably innocent and that such vengeance was accordingly not right or justifiable, there was little doubt despite a clear lack of incident detail that retaliation had been the key motive. Nor was there any doubt that the actual perpetrator should ultimately suffer the same fate as their victim. This sentiment implies that many residents would have thought that the two white men should not receive punishment had those men targeted the actual attacker from the first incident.

Notwithstanding the facts of the attacks, residents' opinions highlight an ostensible social logic: that individuals looking out for themselves and community, outside of the state's legal institutions or the wider society's conventions, is not only accepted but assumed and, in some cases, even warranted (cf. Abrahams 1998). Many Islanders believe that legal reprimand in the UK is often not sufficient, that the state is too apathetic, dysfunctional and/or strained of resources to act in their best interests, and that an 'eye for an eye' penal code is more desirable, as this narrative indicates. Individuals now seem to

write off any effective intervention by establishment institutions to promote socio-economic equality or justice (see Smith 2012; Koch 2018b: 155-161). If people did call the police, it was, as in other documented instances in England, to invoke a 'situational legitimacy of the state by using its powers to bring about a change in status or relations with each other' rather than to maintain the state's idea of law and order (cf. Koch 2018b: 155). We see this in the conflict between Tarquin and Reg. Many other interlocutors expressed that they would rather not deal with the police, but rather mitigate conflict using means outside the state.

People in the Nelson were even surprised if police turned up to resolve intense pub fights when they were summoned. Jason recalled several times that police refused to show up in the midst of 'pikey', or Irish gypsy, brawls. Whereas other smaller fights could be quelled outside of state intervention or knowledge, 'pikey fights', my interlocutors claim, have a much higher propensity for severe property damage and, consequentially, higher insurance premiums. Hence, a 'situational' need for the state. According to Jason and landlords of other pubs, the landlords would lie to the police in these instances and say someone was sexually assaulted rather than disclose that a 'pikey' fight had broken out, lest the police order them to 'deal with it yourself'. When police did arrive at the scene, they would wait outside the pub until the fight had quelled on its own. Only once had Jason ever witnessed police intervening and it was, ironically for him, a police officer in a turban who had stormed into the pub and quashed the conflict.

I heard one of Jason's other vivid memories of pikey fights several times. A man was glassed in the neck by another Irish traveller while standing at the bar.

'You know in films when you see blood squirting, and you think nah, that's not real?' Jason asked me. 'This was. And the bloke [who was glassed] just calmly picked up his pint with blood gushing from his neck, finished off his drink, and said [imitating an Irish accent], "Ye fooking bastard!", and glassed the bloke back'.

Instant retaliation is apparent in these narratives, yet another type of vengeance that conjures images of infamous London gangsters involves a more calculative, deliberative, and longer temporal dimension. The idea of 'doing someone', either by yourself or contracting someone else, means to cause bodily harm in retaliation for someone having 'done you wrong'. This instigative deed could itself have been physical, but most interlocutors spoke of non-corporeal actions like 'grassing' someone to the police, or 'doing someone' in return for being cheated during a drug deal. Rather than immediate, revenge here is sought at an uncertain time in the future, when the initial transgressor might 'least expect it'. The logic is that part of the punishment still has an explicitly temporal

dimension since the initial victim cannot take the initial transgressor's time through physical incarceration. Instead, the transgressor is made to be 'on the edge' in mental incarceration, never fully relaxed, in anticipation of what might be in store for them at an unknown, yet possibly imminent, moment. On a less severe scale, I related this situation to how many occupants of flat and house shares described their living conditions to me: never entirely at ease, knowing their time 'relaxing' alone in their house, for instance, could be interrupted at any given point by flatmates. Aside from the mental incarceration 'of the street' described, there is another way the 'code of the street' (see Anderson 1999) imitates codified law. Similar to one of the logics behind the statute of limitations, some actions that would otherwise warrant 'doing someone' are forgiven, yet not forgotten. Here, the anticipation of future revenge (or imminent differentiation) is considered sufficient punishment in itself.

One of the most vivid conversations I had about this practice came from a man called Tommy who is related to someone who was a member of the bar staff. Tommy is 'afraid of' this relative, in his and others' words, which helped me in a thorny situation in which he had taken cocaine, became paranoid, and then relentlessly accused me of being the 'Old Bill' (police).

'Mate, you know me – I'm not the Old Bill. And I know [your relative] – should we take this up with [them]?', I finally asked.

He instantly shook my hand and said, 'Nah, fuck no – that's alright, you're alright mate'. I had a conversation with Pam for a few hours once about how to best approach speaking with people like Tommy who are involved in the informal drug economy, and she highly recommended that I not bother. Or, if I were to document it, she advised me to do so through people who were aware that it took place in the pub but were not actively part of it.

'They're all carryin' [knives]', she told me. 'An' the last thing you want is to speak – well, they're nice enough blokes when they aren't on anything – but the last thing you want is for them to tell you something when they're sober and not on anything only for them to 'ave a 'it or whatever and become paranoid about what they've told you and come after you because they're paranoid and think you're gonna do them in'.

I heeded her advice yet did manage to have a conversation with Tommy about 'contracts'. Pam sat next to him at the bar, although whether this was chance or a deliberative effort to monitor the discussion I do not know. Tommy reflected on the fact that he had just placed a contract on someone, beginning the conversation by looking at me squarely in the eyes and saying with a smile that it was a 'strange feeling' to instruct

someone on how he wanted them to physically hurt someone else. He refused to divulge what had been done to him to merit this contract, implying only that it was not physical.

‘That’s none of your business – you know everyone’s business in ‘ere’, he mocked when I asked him. He continued to say that he had found it difficult to decide exactly how a non-physical transgression should be punished corporeally. He listed various body parts – different appendage bones and combinations – that could be broken in a variety of ways and asked rhetorically what one would do. I recalled a previous conversation with someone else in which they had cautioned to avoid injuring heads when causing retaliatory agony, as this created the possibility of death and charges of murder or manslaughter. I asked Tommy what he had chosen and suggested again that I could better engage in hypothetical discussion about what needed to be done if I knew what the bad deed had been. He stated that his decision – his instruction to execute his own rationalized balance – was also none of my business. He turned to Pam and asked her a leading question.

‘You would want to do someone if they did you or your family wrong, right? If they *really* did you wrong?’.

‘Yeah, I suppose I would’, she agreed with a nod.

Whether Tommy was really about to contract someone who would ‘do someone in’ on his behalf remains unknown to me, yet this surface-level question should not be the main focal point of the situation. A focus on the truthfulness of this thin description ignores the thick, layered meanings of social interaction that are at work (see Geertz 1973). Different people told me different things about Tommy. Some, like Pam, advised me to ‘steer clear’ for my own safety. Others described him as a ‘wannabe gangster’ whose ‘bark is worse than his bite’. I found it difficult to gauge the truth and found myself oscillating between my assessment not only of Tommy but also of others who were quick to shake my hand with a smile and compliment yet gave me the impression that a façade had been put up. Were people saying that he and others were ‘wannabe gangsters’ merely to put me at ease? For what reasons might they have been trying to put me at ease? Was it because they wanted me to take no notice of him out of concern for what I might write ‘in my book’? Could they really be certain about their knowledge of Tommy and others? Had Pam sat next to Tommy and me – in a seat that was not her usual spot – on this single occasion purely by coincidence, or had she intentionally meant to monitor the conversation?

Whereas I began fieldwork under the impression that there was a relatively cohesive white, working-class British community in which everyone knew the inside ‘secrets’ and in which I was a clear outsider, I soon realized that the Island is much more fragmented. People who are a part of that ‘community’ shared my concerns about

determining the truth of potential criminal activity. Honesty and trust help construct determinations of truth, which in turn yield social legibility and order. However, particularly with regard to crime, all of these elements could easily become scrambled. Aside from this social fragmentation and associated questions about how people construct truth in everyday situations, seen also in people's judgements above about Tarquin and Reg, my interaction with Tommy underscores other thick meanings. Beyond the question of superficial truth, I interpret Tommy's actions as a performance of nostalgia – a romanticization and actualization of the virtual past that evokes a former East End gangsterism and images of the notorious Kray twins, nightclubs, and illicit entrepreneurial activities that seek autonomy from the regulation of the state, a long-standing culture in East London (see Introduction). Whether Tommy followed through or whether he was 'bullshitting' me is secondary to the fact that I understood Tommy to in either case enjoy having an anthropologist's ear to take seriously his conversation and enable him to actualize this element of historical gangster culture. More fundamentally, I suggest, this interaction is also a performance of a yearning for balance, a prevalent ideology that holds true as at least an ideal for everyday practice and action, even if it not ultimately executed.

Entrepreneurial endeavours – or navigating belonging and 'one-upmanship'

Towards the end of fieldwork, the landlords risked considerable expenditure of money in order to hire a Michael Jackson impersonator. They had just about broken even with ticket sales and had hoped to make a profit with alcohol sales, yet several patrons departed out of frustration that the performance was interrupted for nearly an hour so that the pub could broadcast a fight scheduled for the same night. The technology malfunctioned, so a group of those interested in the competition huddled around a laptop in the back of the pub while the majority of patrons who came to watch the performer were left to 'fill the time'. A few were annoyed by their suspicion that this schedule clash might have been orchestrated intentionally in order to keep them in the pub, purchasing alcohol for longer than necessary. One man told me that he probably would have stayed after the performance had ended, but the fact that he felt his time and money were manipulated in order to give the landlords 'one up' at his expense, regardless of whether this was true, caused him to depart early. This thought process obscured the fact that any 'one up' (i.e. profit) for the precarious landlords would help them reproduce the business as a site of refuge and sense of social continuity for its regulars.

A general sense of entrepreneurialism was prolific, which manifested in attempts to establish belonging and also indexed anxieties about others 'getting one up' through perceived imbalanced relationships. Of course, the most fundamental aspect of entrepreneurialism was a drive to actualize one's own desires, which in a few cases included actualizations of a virtual past in order to foster a sense of continuity and endurance.

Amid globalization, affluent individuals (such as Adelaide) develop a flexible notion of citizenship and sovereignty as strategies not only to accumulate capital (as per Ong 1999), but also actualize various other desires. This flexible citizenship 'refers to the cultural logics of capitalist accumulation, travel, and displacement that induce subjects to respond fluidly and opportunistically to changing political-economic conditions' (ibid: 6). In this context, 'flexibility, migration, and relocations, instead of being coerced or resisted, have become practices to strive for rather than stability' (ibid: 19). Searching for flexible citizenship is foundational to this framework, 'whereby more affluent migrants seek opportunities in different locations for economic gain or political security and at the same time retain their flexibility' (ibid.: 25). For Adelaide, her business of selling bowties with the help of her partner's family connection to a textile factory in India, helped her both to establish her legal residence in the UK through an entrepreneur visa and to foster a sense of 'being local' as a foreigner (cf. Rosbrook-Thompson 2015) through providing what she considers an item that signifies Britishness (the bowtie). The British government rewards such aspirations because of the prevalent perception that these entrepreneurial endeavours contribute to economic growth and thus continuity of the state, and which imply a certain balance/reciprocity in order to extend such a sense of continuity. In a reframing of Weber's (1905) influential thesis on the manifestation of Calvinistic Christian anxieties within a capitalistic work ethic, I suggest that people like Adelaide engage in such entrepreneurial endeavours not because of anxieties about 'eternal time' but rather in order to actualize more immediate desires, exacerbating a multicultural anxiety and spirit of entrepreneurialism.

These anxieties about actualizing particular desires can be seen in the notion that the working class must compete for resources (as per Evans 2012), fostering a sentiment that it is necessary to compete for a sense of legitimacy to being British. This competition could be seen with Jason's fish stall. His business was an attempted preservation of a Cockney 'way of life', an actualization of a virtual past through the selling of mussels, cockles, and jellied eels that he and his mother, Pam, purchased from Billingsgate fish market in the early hours of the morning to begin their days marked by issues of time-

reckoning. Jason said that he and his partner, Babs, would ‘take over’ the pub if they had the right capital and if the rent rate was lowered. He added that he ‘wouldn’t want any other pub’ and said that he had spent £3,000 of his own money on fixing up what had been a cab office several years prior in order to convert it into a fish stall.

Many other people had or have entrepreneurial aspirations that they feel provide them with some control over their own lives rather than being managed by others. The many cab drivers in the pub, for example, saw their trade as providing autonomy and sovereignty rather than be beholden to a manager. Their views show a similar friction with many people’s frustrations about being a part of the EU, a membership that they felt signified an ‘imbalanced’ relationship with ‘weaker counties getting one up’ at their expense and in which the UK lacked the ability ‘to make its own decisions’ without oversight from Brussels. These entrepreneurial aspirations included Shauna’s (the landlords’ daughter) business of crafting, painting, and selling children’s keepsakes such as toy chests and height charts, and which required the assistance of her mother, Pam, in order to operate within various deadlines. This relationship illustrates a prevalent mother/daughter relationship that is common in London’s East End (cf. Young & Willmott 2007: 44-61).

Other entrepreneurial endeavours include Gabija and her mother wanting to open a Lithuanian restaurant, Fred the handyman (with possible ADHD) wanting to start his own electrician business so he would not have to ‘answer to a boss’, and Judy’s (the barmaid) travel agency business for which she tapped into her social network for help. I was a part of this network, contributing my ‘expertise’ about California for a travel plan for a potential client that Judy particularly wanted to ‘score’. In her 60s, Judy often expressed concern that her education credentials are anachronistic – no longer understandable to younger recruiters and which might cause potential employers to ‘not spend their time’ looking at her job applications. On a broader scale, many Cockney residents feel that they ‘can’t catch a break’ and that they lack the skills required in order to be able to actualize their desire for a preserved and recognisable ‘way of life’. They often mused that social change was their fault, believing themselves not to have ‘held their ground’ against decades of private development.

These examples of entrepreneurialism contrast with contexts in which individual achievement is caught up in ideas of citizenship by contributing to state ‘renovation’ (Bayly 2013: 158). In this sense, aspirations involve not only aims to attain a certain status, typified by monetary and other assets and performed through lifestyle and consumption, but also concern how that status relates to contributions to state development as an entrepreneurial

‘citizen-achiever’ (ibid: 161). On the Island, entrepreneurial drives appear to come from a variety of reasons that implicate even a rejection of the state and include attempts to form a way of life that minimizes interactions with the state to the furthest extent possible. Given this diversity and perceived adversity resulting from a financialized social world, Evans (2012) posits that without a Labour movement with strong local leadership, the white working class has no option but to play the ‘multi-cultural game’; it must learn to be a viable ethnic group unto itself in order to compete against various diverse communities for resources.

The ontology and neoliberal logics in/of work

The frustration and exhaustion that people vented to me about their grappling with these tensions I have illustrated above – efforts to work, make money, create a sense of balance, and continue to actualize particular desires and meet needs – often accompanied the ontological question, ‘what is life’? Nora, who at one point worked three jobs as a teaching assistant at a local primary school, behind the bar at the Nelson, and as a data entry clerk in Cat’s firm in Canary Wharf, once posed the question to me on one of the few days that she was able to enjoy the pub from the patrons’ side of the bar. Nursing a vodka and Diet Coke, she shared how tired she was all the time and how she felt ‘fed up with everything’. ‘What’s the point, Jordan? What is life? What is the point of anything? Why are we here? Why do we have to work?’ she asked. On another occasion, Adelaide, the entrepreneurial finance professional from Kazakhstan, asked me nearly an identical set of questions while completing job applications and a university admissions application for a programme in energy, finance, and development. This was just after her application for indefinite leave to remain in the UK had been rejected, amid her ultimately successful attempt to find another avenue to remain in the country in order to continue living as she desires. One of Cat’s friend also asked the same questions after she had relentlessly asked me what the point of anthropology is. Interlocutors occasionally asked for my ‘expert advice’ as a social anthropologist on various topics, yet a few expressed disappointment or even scepticism of my qualifications when I was unable to provide policy solutions that satisfactorily fixed everything they perceive to be wrong with the world (cf. Baumann 1996: 118). They wanted, and I presume continue to want, immediate answers to life’s complex questions. One interlocutor went so far to as to jokingly accuse me of being a fraud and suggest that anthropology is not conducive to ‘earning an honest living’ – i.e. he did not see how the discipline can provide practical, measurable benefits to society in the same way as farmers,

tradesmen/construction workers, emergency personnel, or medical doctors. ‘Would we have the same standard of living without those people? No. Would we have the same standard of living without anthropologists? Yes! Think about it mate’, he said before quickly adding that he meant no offence by his comments. I assured him that I had not been offended.

Cat’s friend began to question the point of any job and asked how various occupations contributed to the wellbeing of the world, including her own with Cat in contract management. She asked ‘what difference’ various jobs make, indexing an idea that labour should produce some kind of perceived differentiation (the driving ‘force’ within *la durée*), thereby suggesting that labour is valued for *creating* time and a feeling of movement, rather than stagnation, through productivity. Ultimately, she arrived at the conclusion that, ‘At the end of the day, I suppose it’s about putting food on the table and continuing living – it is what it is’. Beyond posing existential dilemmas, Cat’s friend’s series of questions touch upon the value that people can ascribe to different types of work/labour. A discussion shows how this value from work can shape people’s neoliberal understandings of competitive accumulation which, in turn, influence their moral and political behaviour – one in which many interlocutors try to attempt to create a sense of balance and prevent others from ‘getting one up’. The performance of such behaviour loops back to the existential question – this behaviour forms social life and people’s experience of existence through their actions. An ethnographic vignette springboards this discussion.

I cooked a meal one evening for Vinny and Sofija during Vinny’s final week in our flat, the primary way I reciprocated to my flatmates for the time they had given me in conversation. I had the stovetop extractor fan on in the kitchen, which made hearing and participating in Gabija and Vinny’s conversation at the small corridor table difficult. I could just hear Vinny begin to discuss a book that he had started to read after a review in the *City Am* newspaper caught his attention on his commute to work one morning.

‘Did you know that Keynes said we should be working just 15 hours each week by now?’ he asked Sofija and me. ‘I think he’s right. I am not needed at my job. It’s pointless. A computer can do it’. My ears perked up.

‘Is this book you’re reading by any chance called *Bullshit Jobs* by David Graeber [2018]?’ I poked my head around the corner to ask Vinny.

‘Yeah, that’s the one! I’m not halfway through, and it’s not what I am used to reading – it’s taking me awhile to get through it, but this guy Daniel [sic] Graeber is right. My job is bullshit’, he replied. I explained that not only is Graeber also an anthropologist but, as serendipity and fate would have it, I had just learned that he would be facilitating

my graduate programme writing-up seminar when my fieldwork ended later that month. I added that I had not yet read the book and asked Vinny for his thoughts.

‘Really? That’s insane – small world. That guy Donald [sic] is on point though’. Vinny, who works on a major automotive company’s account with a large advertising firm in London, further explained how a computer can do his job. After designing several advertisement campaigns for a variety of social media platforms, a process that requires differentiation in order to come up with ‘novelty’ and distinguish the brand from others in a way that engages consumers, he selects which campaigns to terminate and which to progress depending on which campaigns ‘win’ (accumulate the larger audiences in the ‘media auction’). He explained that it would be a simple task to programme a computer to make the decisions, but that it ‘looks better to clients to see larger numbers of people working on their account, which gives [our company] more money’.

Vinny had previously told me upon his return from a holiday that he did not see how people who can afford to ‘just travel around the world add any value to the world’. He was unhappy at the time for the reasons discussed in the last chapter, and I suspect this question was posed out of envy since, unlike some of the other wanderlust people he had met, he needed to return to the UK for work. Yet, as unhappy as he might have been with the ‘daily grind’ – as he puts it, the ‘work, eat, sleep, repeat’ routine (see Stein 2017) – he had still seen value in his job. Now, having read Graeber, he felt further depressed than he already was. Like the others above, he asked what the point of anything was and questioned his decision to work and live in the UK, emphasizing that he was spending money in order to make money and had not managed to save anything. Whereas ‘native’ ethnographers have conducted research on their own communities, here is an altogether different instance of a ‘native gazing and talking back’ (as per Jacobs-Huey 2002) to reflect on anthropological work.

‘I hate this city. There is no way to make money, to get ahead. You need to always be going and pushing yourself just to survive. It’s too expensive and competitive’, Vinny added. Like others including Bethany, this economic position and experience of work has left Vinny feeling no guilt about not having anything to save for his children. He and Bethany both told me that while the idea to start a fund to grow for any children they might have sounds ‘nice’, they would rather enjoy what they make now, and their children can do the same. Their logic was ‘if I have to work hard for what I have, my children should have to work hard for what they will have’. This idea that ‘if I must endure something, then others must also’ is prevalent on the Island. Part of Bethany’s justification for voting Tory (the UK Conservative party), apart from wanting to avoid paying higher taxes, is based

both on what she and other finance workers believe, conveniently for them, is sound economic policy. It also encompasses a moral issue. She recalled ‘many girls’ in school with her who, according to Bethany, said their objective was to have children in order to avoid working, sign on to state benefits, and hopefully receive a council house. People like Bethany perceive their personal attributes (and good fortune) not as contributing to the relatively worse position of those unlike themselves. As she and others make explicit, they believe that competitive hard work alone is the avenue for people to attain better lives since they themselves have been fortunate enough to reach desired positions through this means. They also defended their positions in finance since the investments they handle include those of pension and charitable funds, thus contributing to wider redistribution. For my own part, I reflected that my salary at my part-time charity job came from capital investments, which had a similarly redistributive effect by subsidising the cost of living for university students at our accommodation centre in London.

One of Bethany’s friends and colleagues, Stella, once told me in the pub that, having studied economics at university and received a first-class degree, she felt that she could say with authority that the economy performs best and works for most people under a capitalism-championing Tory government. Her parameters for defining performance were a focus on a balanced budget and growth. Incidentally, both her and Bethany’s jobs entail seeking a balanced spreadsheet and, ideally, investment portfolio growth, at the end of each day. She added that people ‘must repay their debts’ (cf. Graeber 2012: 3-4) and echoed recent government rhetoric that there is no ‘magic money tree’. There is affirmation here of the idea that economists ‘understand risk’, but ‘what they don’t understand is money’ (Di Muzio & Robbins 2017: 2). Indeed, it had taken since the 1930s for a money creation theory to be illustrated through an empirical test (Werner 2014), discussed further in the next chapter.

We see here that the work people do creates their own empirical knowledge of the world. Like fieldwork, all work entails ‘corporeal epistemology’, or knowledge through embodied experience, and the work we do ‘crafts’ personhood (Kondo 1990). Finance workers on the Island pride themselves as people who produce wealth that, they maintain, is for the good of a variety of others. The wealth they accumulate sustains and grows the economy in order to allow the country and global economic system to continue to ‘win’. There is a certain illegibility to this narrative since it obscures the complexities of inequality and forecloses discussion of alternative economic systems and measurements (of well-being, for example). But it is a story that Adelaide, Bethany, Stella, and others tell, nonetheless.

The politics and ethics of neoliberal logics

Island residents hold a Spencerian ‘survival of the fittest’ outlook on life. Several people conveyed that outlook with those exact words or else used phrases such as ‘it’s a dog-eat-dog world’ to describe similar views. Some companions, who harbour more socialist tendencies than others, also see the world in this way, yet they seek ways to act against it. In Chapter 1, Jason tells us that you should ‘go with the flow’ as a means to adapt and make your own success given the world’s adversity. Rather than capitulation and ‘making do’ within the present political and economic system, some interlocutors are critical of what they see as a cruel and inhumane reality and feel it is something that needs to be overcome. For them, it requires consciousness (what they term as ‘recognising’ or ‘seeing problems’), political imagination (to find ‘solutions’), and then active public effort to fight against and reshape what most interlocutors consider to be the natural or default world order, derived from a competition that can categorize people into ‘winners’ and ‘losers’. A few will tell you that those who cannot win with biological strength create their own games of cleverness in order to manufacture environments where they can win. They often spoke about ‘posh’ finance professionals, who a couple of men once joked enviously they would like to ‘put in their place’ through physical competition, or beating them up. Individual success in boxing had historically been an East End avenue for poverty alleviation and social advancement, as many former fighters on the Island will point out. Those who did not explicitly subscribe to this competitive worldview had difficulty articulating an alternative explanation for this state of affairs, saying they ‘didn’t really care’, ‘hadn’t given it much thought’, ‘it’s just the powers that be’, or ‘it is what it is’.

The disharmony between opposition and capitulation to this order fuels many differences on the wide spectrum of Island Left and Right political ideologies, respectively. Rather than approach any sense of resolution, the fervent disagreements between the sides that I overheard in the pub and elsewhere only underscored the adversarialism at the core of the debates. The few voices on the Left, explicit in their stance against finance capitalism, describe it as what I would sum up as the Stockholm syndrome writ large. They accused others of not realising the effects that capitalism and affiliated political parties have on their everyday lives, the planet, and, consequentially, humanity’s collective future. Those on the Right, opposed to the more socialist-style policy proposals, accused the others of being impractical and naïve in their suggestion of shifting power away from private enterprise and concentrating it in the hands of government. They pointed to what they perceived to be unsustainable Labour spending that would be made worse by allowing an influx of migrants into the country, by enabling London’s increase in violent crime, and by

only half-supporting what they called an underfunded and broken NHS. Above all, at this most adversarial of moments, they were critical of the ‘impossible Brexit negotiations’, arguing that competing interests inherent in government foreclosed any trust in, and ability for, the state to do anything. In this way, people appear to negotiate their affiliations in national politics by inserting everyday moralities – moralities heavily influenced by the ethics of neoliberalism and ideas of balance that prevent others from ‘getting one up’ at your expense – into their political decision-making (cf. Koch 2017b).

The prevalent logic was such that if cooperation at the state level should be prized over individualistic competition, there would still be disagreements (and hence competition) about *how* to cooperate. Even the ‘either or’ choice between cooperation and competition points to a fundamental adversarialism between two ideas – a ‘natural’ competition that some companions say would render futile any attempts to overcome. This dilemma is akin to the Hegelian parable that depicts how a quest for mutual recognition, or what we might consider here cooperation, poses a slippery slope to enable domination or even obliteration (see Graeber 2011: 494). This point is illustrated at interpersonal levels through several narratives about Island finance workers. Bethany and Adelaide, for example, reported experiencing tensions with their colleagues after their initial integration into a job wherein they had adjusted and acclimatized to others and vice versa. They first wanted to be recognized for their work, to ‘prove themselves’ as some say. The financiers expect ‘the best’ from their colleagues not just to make their daily operations more efficient, but also for the recognition of their work by people whose praise they would value. Office politics soon set in that often centre on ideas about who does the best work and contributes the most to the team. Salary increases aside, people also seek promotion in recognition of their abilities. They want to be dubbed worthy of mutual recognition amongst colleagues at increasingly higher levels, from associate to vice president to managing director.

Both sides of the Left-Right ideological divide over competition could be heard telling the other to ‘wake up’. They could also say that arguing with someone who disagreed so vehemently with them was like living ‘in the Twilight Zone’ and could accuse each other of being ‘out of touch with reality’, ‘on another planet’, or ‘in a different world’, couching an epistemological debate in ontological terms and thereby reifying social alterity. Rather than come to a consensus about how to handle such complexities and inequalities, Bethany (and others) suggested that the invisible hand of the market makes the difficult ethical decisions that no one can agree on. Bethany made such a speculation with regards to a discussion about the Labour party’s proposal of a maximum pay gap ratio between employers and employees, which prompted disagreement about what the exact

gap should be and if it could apply across sectors. Also, the question of whether one individual person has actually ‘earned’ the amount of wealth they have accumulated and whether it should be seen as ‘theirs’ is wrapped up in the same logic; ‘it is what it is’ and ‘it doesn’t really matter’ since the market has created that value. The thorny debatable question is already answered in a sense via the market.

Conclusion

The above ethnography shows how people value ideas of balance and try to foster a sense of continuity through balance and labour. Such desires for continuity implicate crime and entrepreneurial endeavours. These endeavours are not only about striving to maintain individual continuity, but also index concerns about continuing ‘ways of life’ (through Jason’s fish stall, for example) and ideas about group ‘winning’ (as individual people and as a part of a larger group). They show in the process the importance of family and friend networks and mutuality as opposed to an entirely individualistic social order (cf. Yanagisako 2002; Parry 2019). Aside from what people perceive as necessity, I now ask what else is this perceived competition *for*? How can we conceptualize this experience of local understandings of competition with regards to time? The next chapter engages with this question, showing how ideas about class are implicated in the process.

5 The will to win time, inequality, and the differentiation of lived experience

Thursday, 14 June – Sunday, 15 July 2018. One month after the spectacle of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle’s wedding and a few weeks after Reg and Tarquin’s confrontation in the pub, people packed the Lord Nelson and other local pubs during the summer to watch England compete in the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) 2018 World Cup tournament. As the national team continued to rise in the competition, so too did the excitement on the Isle of Dogs. The Cross of St George – England’s flag – adorned patrons’ shirts and decorated the Nelson in the forms of banners and scarves that hung on the walls. Several houses along Manchester and Westferry roads proudly displayed the Cross of St George, and even more of the red and white flags waved from passing vehicles. Media sources proclaimed that the entire country was alive and energized by Team England’s performance. Even the electronic information scrolls beneath the train arrival time boards at the Canary Wharf underground station flashed the message: ‘It’s coming home!’. A rallying cry for much of the country that could cut across social classes, the expression referred to the optimism that the World Cup trophy would return to England after having changed hands through other nations since England had lost their championship title in 1970. The team had won the prior competition in 1966, and the long wait for a second victory, a chance that occurs only every four years, inflated emotions. People employed the exclamation as a way to acknowledge friends and sometimes even hail strangers on the streets and in shops. A captured video of the recent Royal Air Force’s London flyover to mark the RAF’s centenary had been altered to suggest that the fighter jet formation had spelled out ‘Its [sic] coming home’. The video went viral through Islanders’ WhatsApp chats and Facebook posts.

This display of the country’s enduring military might and prowess, integrated with sport, served as a powerful symbol to which English interlocutors attached an aspiration for a destined individual and collective national prosperity. Amid decaying Brexit

negotiations, growing tensions over the American president's visit to the UK that reflected deeper socio-political divisions, and various precarious individual circumstances such as those of the pub landlords and their family, there was a sense that if the cup did actually return home, good things were possible for both the country and oneself.



Left: **Figure 5.1** Team England flag decoration in the pub for the World Cup. Right: **Figure 5.2** Screenshot of circulated video with the words 'Its coming home'.

Good things were already happening. Strangers high-fived each other when England scored. People embraced when England won. Parents danced to celebratory music with their children, and grandparents with their grandchildren, the young girls sporting red and white ribbons in their hair and the boys wearing shirts of the same colours. The pub thrived with continuously-consuming patrons, whose physical presence and money spent on drink both concealed and prolonged the business's actual decay. At the very least, England's winning streak created for many people an opportunity to avoid the burdensome banalities and pressures in everyday urban life, an *epoch* of diversion they did not want to end. For others like Kevin, Maxine, Judy, and Nora who, from behind the bar, had to contend with the onslaught of impatient patrons who wanted uninterrupted flows of drink, the continuous victory streak both intensified such burdens *and* offered excitement amid the otherwise mundane.

Recall that, at different times, on otherwise typical slow days in the pub, the bar staff had routinized ways of spending their spare time. Kevin recorded sports statistics into volumes of notebooks that he stored in a file cabinet in the cellar. Maxine, Judy, and Nora played either a points-based form of gin-rummy card game with patrons or a game called Candy Crush on their iPhones in bids to accumulate points and climb to higher levels. Any interruption of such activities by patrons asking for more drink could slightly annoy them. Now during the World Cup, pint-pouring ceased on occasion as suspenseful silence enveloped particularly tense moments, such as when penalty kicks decided match outcomes. Patrons and bar staff anxiously watched these close matches with a hunger to prolong a sense of winning, which included unity in both purpose and diversion. As Dapper Del pointed out the night before the semi-final match against Croatia, as a group of patrons attempted to stay in the pub as long as possible to enjoy the victory streak, ‘Just think, this could all be over at this time tomorrow. The entire country...*deflated*’. Del’s words proved prophetic; it was over that next day.

Up until that point, England’s sustained success in the tournament ruptured/differentiated other countries’ winning streaks. That their collective national glory came at the expense of others, either at home or abroad, was hardly of top concern for pub-goers. This changed when the opposing team was deemed unthreatening. In that instance, when England soundly defeated Panama 6-1, a few people expressed magnanimous sympathy for the Central American country. However, fierce scorn met anything that endangered England’s fragile winning streak/sustained progress and the possibility of adorning another embroidered star on the team’s shirts to signify a second world championship win. Many match viewers were quick to denigrate other countries’ players for skilled performances, shouting insults at the two large projector screens in the Nelson. These people also berated England’s players for any mistakes and lacklustre performances, quick to point out how much money those players earned and how their money, mansions, and other material possessions might make them less concerned about the hopes that so many people had affixed to England’s success. A few patrons vocalized their beliefs that FIFA was corrupt and that high-stakes betting amongst the mega-rich – rather than player talent (combined with performance enhancers, as some suggested) – might determine match outcomes.

‘They can’t hear you! And it’s only a game anyway!’ Scottish James liked to point out to the hecklers with a smug laugh and occasional eye roll, his back towards the projector screens with a book propped up in front of him at the bar (see Chapter 1). While others celebrated the national football team’s accumulation of goals and match victories, James

enjoyed the accumulation of knowledge from his (often non-fiction) books and of money from horse race bets. Most people I spoke to feel a sense of purpose gained through a sentiment of social superiority inherent in winning football matches. James, in contrast, often attempts to elevate himself through his claimed intelligence and frequent denunciation of football as merely a visceral endeavour, enjoyed by people who he will suggest to you are 'not heavily endowed with intellect'. Yet, both the performativity of football *and* its relegation produce the same accumulative and affective outcomes: gained notions of purpose and meaning, rooted in negotiations to establish one-upmanship – of winning a sports game or the broader social situation through the performance of cleverness.

What struck me most about the sensationalism of the World Cup, however, was the music. Many songs written explicitly for English football played through the pub's sound system throughout the tournament. Two tunes that implicate national food dishes in football success, appropriately titled 'Vindaloo' (with a line about cheddar cheese) and 'Meat Pie, Sausage Roll', were played more than others. This is an essential point that I will underscore here and return to after discussion below. However, another track took the prize for the most played.

Recall that my unique position as a pub patron-turned-researcher enabled me to contribute music to the pub's Spotify playlists (see Introduction). I did so on only a few occasions, and one of those was after some patrons had told me about a television program that I should watch on Netflix. *Only Fools and Horses* (1981-2003) is a record-setting British sitcom based on two working-class brothers who live first with their grandfather and then uncle in a London council flat block. Streetwise entrepreneurs akin to those in the Nelson discussed in the previous chapter, the brothers make their money selling auction-bought goods from a suitcase in an outdoor market and partaking in other schemes, all the while evading the police and imagining a future in which they are prosperous. The brothers make a fortune through the auction of a rare timepiece from their storage unit that they learn has tremendous value, only to later declare bankruptcy and experience legal woes after several new *misfortunes*.

Pub patrons often brought up the sitcom in conversation as the tactical, wily, and entrepreneurial endeavours of the brothers related to activities in the pub. The series was also referenced when someone would say 'you couldn't write it, mate' in reference to serendipitous and (often humorous) ironic or coincidental situations they might have found themselves in. Luke, for example, said this about Tarquin's run-in with the police outside the pub as Tarquin exited through the door to take a mobile call from someone who had

driven past and had phoned to warn him of the police outside (Chapter 4). When invoking the expression, patrons would recall that the creator and writers of *Only Fools and Horses* had actualized material for the show through their experiences gained in an East End pub.

I had added the show's theme song to the pub's Spotify playlist before the World Cup tournament, but others played it throughout the competition. The lyrics – *'cause where it all comes from is a mystery, it's like the changing of the seasons or the tides of the sea; but here's the one that's driving me berserk, why do only fools and horses work?* – suggest the reason 'only fools and horses' must work is a greater mystery than metaphysical questions about why there should be natural phenomena like seasons and tides. Where does it all even come from in the first instance? The singer seeks to know what one must do in order to *not* be a fool and hence not have to work. What might be the grand secret to life that forecloses the necessity of labour – and that non-fools have discovered? The song had become a pub symbol for the East End working class that people projected onto and intertwined with national football success. Pint glasses clinked as people boisterously sang the tune before matches, during half-time, and afterwards. Tarquin whistled along as he wove his way in and out of the crowd, collecting empty pint glasses from table-tops lest, as he told me, someone else commit the same act of glassing someone in the face for which he had served time in prison (Chapter 4). So integral had the song become to the pub's World Cup experience that it was the track of choice to be played on repeat several times in the lead-up to 'God Save the Queen', England's national anthem, broadcast at the opening of the high stakes semi-final match. The Thames's tide waxed and waned outside. A seasonal heatwave scorched the country, prompting news articles about climate change and the effects of humanity's aggregated accumulation and unsustainable financial capital expansion (see Kallis 2019; Hickel 2020). Yet it was an existential question about the need to work, put to rhythm and melody amid intense hope to sustain the national football team's growth, which played on minds in the decaying pub.

* * *

Not just during the World Cup but throughout my time on the Isle of Dogs, several interlocutors expressed that 'football is life'. I initially took this to mean that their own lives involved heavy amounts of football spectating and discussion, which they do, but I quickly learned that football serves as at least a metaphor for lived experience that aptly captures various tensions experienced by Island residents against the neoliberal backdrop

of austerity Britain amid Brexit negotiations. I argue that there is a deeper structural reason for why this cultural expression is so salient. For Cat, the football league structure even serves as a model for how she envisages the European Union should reconfigure itself. Watching an Arsenal match in the pub, she asked:

Is it ridiculous to think that the EU should have [hierarchical] tiers of membership like the [football] Premier League? Not all countries are equal [economically], and I think that's why so many people here [in the UK] voted to leave. Can't there be tiers of membership and, I dunno, every two years or so countries move up or down in the tiers? There's frustration that it isn't balanced, that other countries get more out of it than what they put in, and we [the UK] contribute more than we should.

Several others agreed with Cat's proposition. Given the above, I take issue here with the claims made by Scottish James, and contest his suggestion that football is just a game. I propose that beyond being a metaphor for life, football is an apt manifestation/illustration of the social processes, in a particular context and register. The football-related practices and conversations I highlight portray a microcosm of a consumption-driven, accumulative, growth-orientated social order (Bear et al 2015; Hickel 2020; see also Di Muzio & Robbins 2017: 125). Football and competitive sport in general also reflect many Island residents' worldviews, a shared neoliberal 'common sense' that sees the world as inherently competitive and individualistic (as per Hall & O'Shea 2013) and which can cut across nationality, class, occupation, age, and sex/gender. The doxa – the naturalization – of this competitive common logic underscores various everyday practices, not least the entrepreneurial activities discussed in the prior chapter. As Scottish James and Henry discuss in Chapter 1, while all people might not always be self-selecting, the neoliberal world on the Isle of Dogs is still competitive at its base stratum. The previous chapter discusses how ideas of balance can at times emphasize and other times mitigate this underlying opposition at various levels starting at the interpersonal one and reaching right up to that of the state. Still, as we see in previous chapters, much of the mitigation is based on such 'social scripts' as demands for reciprocity, rooted in an 'I'll-scratch-your-back-if-you-scratch-mine' ethos that seeks to establish balance amid desired actualizations and durations. This chapter draws attention to how practices of social enclosure and opportunity hoarding through class and work can shape a dialectic between class regimes and everyday logics that invokes ideas about competition, 'winning', and the assumed nature of the world. The chapter also shows how organized football highlights well the dual and pervasive processes of class production and reproduction, in addition to how desires for sustained winning become entangled with ideas of consumption and time, which implicate

notions of the classed differentiation of lived experience within *la durée*. I conclude with a conceptualization of what it means ‘to win’.

Opportunity hoarding and personal attributes

Both professional and national football teams spend vast financial and human resources on marketing and team branding in order to accumulate fans and increase revenue. The manager of a ‘superior’ team uses his team’s wealth to attract top players with exorbitant contracts at the expense of ‘inferior’ teams. The professional football system is also, like other sports, institutionally structured into explicit and clearly demarcated tiers of ‘top’ to ‘bottom’ leagues. Borrowing this language, Island residents project this social stratification onto other social domains when they say that a potential partner, job, or material possession such as a house (see Chapter 3; Di Muzio & Robbins 2017: 94-96) is ‘out of their league’. Similar to football league team rankings, men and women in the pub ranked potential partners, placing them on an imaginary scale from one to ten. This is a metric for ordering the world and in turn locating their own position in that order, or within imaginary ‘leagues’. People often had preconceived ideas about their own ‘rank’ and asked friends to place them on the scale. For men, the success of attracting a partner could be referred to as ‘scoring’, further reflecting an intertwining of sport and other social processes (cf. Dundes 1978: 83). There is a certain element here of gauging worthiness and compatibility for mutual recognition and desire – a deeper reason behind the ranked objectification of potential sexual partners. If a person attracts a partner for either a short- or long-term relationship who others consider as ‘out of their league’, that person is said to be ‘punching above (their weight)’, in reference to boxing and fighting categories. Cat, for instance, asked those in the Monday Club if she was ‘punching above [her] weight’ after several months of not having any success with the eHarmony dating service. By doing so, she implicated the notion that social stratification/class can be seen beyond matters of finance and the embeddedness of the British class system – it can also mark anxieties about physical appearance and other personal characteristics. I once heard the opinion that the entire United Kingdom was ‘punching above’ in its negotiations with the European Union over the terms of Brexit. The person who made this claim believed the UK was less of a political and economic power than people wanted to believe – especially those who argued that the EU ‘needed’ the UK more than the other way around.

In any case, football leagues illustrate that on the one hand, the social enclosure, or opportunity hoarding, mechanism of class is based on the idea that the ‘haves’ have things

because the ‘have nots’ do not (Wright 2015: 6-8). In other words, the advantages people gain are ‘causally connected’ to other people being excluded from those advantages by various things that the advantaged people do (ibid: 6-8), as well as the very nature of financialized capitalism (Di Muzio & Robbins 2017: 95). In a classical sense, opportunity hoarding involves property ownership (Wright 2015: 7; see also Giddens 1971), some effects of which we see in Chapter 2. Such mechanisms are not always produced by an explicit intent to exclude.

Islanders use the expressions ‘money goes to money’ and ‘the rich get richer’ to convey this concept that wealth somehow organically breeds more wealth without much intent. Bloch and Parry (1989) suggest generally that money’s ‘self-expanding’ property is due to the nature of capitalism ‘since surplus labour is the source of capital accumulation’ and ‘since it is only in capitalism that labour power is routinely exchanged for money’ (10). They draw on Marx’s distinction ‘between money as capital when it is exchanged for labour’ and ‘money as mere money when it is exchanged for the products of labour’ to make this point (ibid: 10).¹² Advantage here implies having the upper hand in a situation of financial inequality, but it can also work against inequality. Labour unions, for example, can create hurdles for entry to jobs in order to protect the interests of their members (Wright 2015: 8). The elimination of exclusionary mechanisms in this system jeopardizes the advantages of the privileged that such mechanisms protect (ibid: 8).

On the other hand, again drawing upon football, an athlete with tremendous ability who did not need to be trained in order to recognize their exceptional talent holds an advantage over someone who is not as athletic. Despite any instruction received, the second person might never attain the ability of the star athlete. That second person can still better enjoy informal recreation through community sport with their improved skills developed after being coached. This is the case for Jason (one of the landlords’ sons), who plays team football one evening every week at a school just down the road from the pub; Bethany (a finance professional), who plays netball at the same school; and Vinny (Adelaide’s former partner who seldomly visited the pub), who enjoys recreational cricket. Here we see that if a situation of perceived inequality (what might be considered ‘class creation’) is contingent on specific individual attributes rather than exclusion or opportunity hoarding, then the improvement of the disadvantaged’s position through education and other boosts in skills does not *directly* affect the position of the privileged (Wright 2015: 7-8). In the examples I

¹² While this notion is clear to Bloch and Parry (1989), what they find unclear in terms of commodity fetishism is ‘that there is any simple divide between the kind of mystical aura which surrounds the objects of exchange in capitalist and pre-capitalist societies, or that it can be money which explains the (alleged) difference’ (12).

use, the positions of top athletes are not jeopardized by Jason, Bethany, or Vinny participating in recreational sport. In this view, the world can be inherently unequal due to the value people attach to social and biological characteristics, the former of which can be difficult to alter due to socio-economic conditions and the latter of which people cannot help as a matter of genetics.¹³ Babs, Jason's girlfriend, is both athletic and enjoys the challenges involved in intense exercise. She says that her motto is: 'if it was easy, everyone would do it'. This phrase speaks to the core of the idea that advantage is based on personal attributes. It implies that certain people possess abilities to better overcome various situations while others – for whatever simple or complex reasons – do not. It also speaks to notions of striving, competition, and proving oneself.

Another attribute that I argue contributes to perceptions of social stratification, which is based on principle rather than physicality or other perhaps innate abilities, is an intentional rejection of seeking privilege. We see this in Frank's (the pensioner who worried about having to take in a lodger in his council house) successful dedication to live a simple life and for whom the accumulation of newspaper clippings, stories about the Island, and time spent with family are of prime importance. No matter how much education or other skills he might have received, his current principles would in theory prevent him from utilizing those attributes in order to seek or achieve upward social mobility. He thus implicitly accepts his 'place on the ladder'.

Beyond sport and within the wider economic arena of the Isle of Dogs and beyond, Di Muzio and Robbins (2017) suggest that the world's structural, financialized creation of money as interest-bearing debt is more fundamentally an opportunity-hoarding mechanism by its very nature than a result of elite financiers having special attributes or secret knowledge that make them wealthy (95). Simply put, the fact that money has been empirically observed to be created 'from fairy dust' when commercial banks make a loan (Werner 2014: 1, 16; see also McLeay, Radia, & Thomas 2014), but only for the principal loan amount and not the cost of the loan (interest) as well, produces a situation in which there will always be more debt than conventional money supply.¹⁴ People and various entities must compete for enough of the limited supply while relying on others to go into debt – and hence produce more money in circulation – in order to have any chance to repay their own debt with interest (Di Muzio & Robbins 2017: 91-92). There will inherently be 'winners' and 'losers' in such a vicious cycle, at least defined in terms of those who are

¹³ At least not without genetic engineering and therapy, stem-cell research, cosmetic surgery, etc.

¹⁴ By 'conventional' I mean bank-generated national currencies as opposed to blockchain cryptocurrencies, reward points, and other mechanisms that act as media for exchange, units of account, stores of value, and other attributes of 'money'.

able to overcome this financial precarity and those who are not. This deck is stacked for banks such as those in Canary Wharf to continually win in most cases, even (or especially) if they require bail outs, unless there is either structural intervention from government as a few interlocutors advocate or a widespread private distribution of money and non-conventional payment options on a scale the world has not seen.

Despite this system effectively creating a fundamental nature of opportunity hoarding and inequality, it can implicate personal attributes that perpetuate the system. On the Isle of Dogs, most people I spoke to in the pub who work in finance said they either better enjoy, or possess a better ability for, mathematics and working with numbers than reading and writing. They cherish the black-and-white definitiveness of numbers. Many speculated that they would feel sheer dread and/ boredom if they had to engage in the thorny contemplative work I described as that of an anthropologist. The one exception, who told me that he enjoys writing and was working on a historical drama screenplay for his own pleasure in his spare time, also admitted to me that he did not really know what he was doing at his job in Canary Wharf. Several finance professionals quickly differentiated their perceived innate talent for their quantitative work in finance from any enjoyment found in such work.

Bethany, for instance, despised studying maths at university and often feels unproductive stress and fatigue in her fast-paced job at a Canary Wharf bank, which she blames for her weakened immune system that has caused various health problems. She relishes the luxury of poolside reading on her holidays abroad, yet she feels that she has been naturally gifted ‘with figures’ from an early age and believed that a degree in mathematics and finance would help her create a secure future and save her from the vagaries imposed by her tumultuous childhood that saw her family endure the effects of her mother’s divorces. The nature of her job in finance might very well hoard opportunity as part of the wider capitalist structure, yet Bethany and others came to work as part of that structure through shared attributes. These include career ambition, educational qualifications, desires for financial prosperity and more stable lives (or lives that sustained an ongoing stability), strong work ethics, innate aptitudes for quantitative reasoning coupled with agile cognition, and, for many women but also some men, explicit desires for autonomy. Finance capitalism might not produce social stratification just because of people’s attributes, but people’s attributes, personal motivations, and hard work can certainly perpetuate an innately unequal socio-economic system.

These two aspects of class production and reproduction – opportunity hoarding and personal attributes – are intertwined on the Isle of Dogs. As I suggested above, football

similarly highlights the duality of such social stratification. Like financiers and employees in other sectors, football teams recruit and retain players through the exclusionary mechanisms *because* of their individual attributes, which are often commented upon by pub patrons to great length. Outside of football, the same duality at play perpetuates the ‘rich get richer’ phenomenon on the Island, since people who are viewed by others as inherently gifted with intelligence or other talents are perceived to be the ones who ‘make the grade’ and secure the ‘good jobs’ in banks, law firms, and medical practices.

One important personal attribute that people feel can perpetuate inequality is the ability to time-reckon according to demands at work. I spoke with a Romanian student at a London university on a one-off occasion when he came to the pub in order to experience something new/different ‘out of boredom’. He shared that he has dyspraxia and depression and had received a note from his GP that advises his potential employers to provide him with additional time to complete tasks than is allotted to other employees. The student justified his entitlement to more time by suggesting that what he contributed with additional time could possibly add more value to a business than his colleagues – the ‘slow and steady wins the race’ moral of the tortoise and hare fable. Listening to the narrative, I reflected on the hierarchical class creation through intertwined structural opportunity hoarding and personal attributes. I also thought about the tremendous value people place on speed, notably in the financial firms up the road in Canary Wharf. Such work environments can demand speediness, and strict deadlines must be adhered to in order for the financial firms to continue operation. A finance lawyer I spoke with in the pub equated the willingness of some people to endure ‘impossible hours and deadlines’ with sadomasochism, creating situations in which people ‘convince themselves that they are better than others’ in order to mitigate their subjection to exhaustive time-reckoning demands (cf. Stein 2017: 41-62). Their willingness to endure the subjection – the fatigued performance of capitalism – perpetuates the hierarchical system. That discussion and the student’s plight highlight the tension between rapid competitive accumulation and tolerant accommodation.

These tensions were evident in people’s desires for their children to have the ‘best chance and success’ in life through education (cf. Evans 2006; Butler & Hamnett 2011), illustrated by parents ‘moving house’ in order to live within school admission boundaries in a competition to enrol their children in one particular local school that outranked others in the area. Only so many pupils can physically fit in a classroom. Just up the road from the Nelson, one of the landlords’ grandsons was able to enrol there. Their other grandchild of school age who lived with them attended what his mother had deemed a ‘better’ school on the outskirts of London, even though he and his mother (Shauna) had moved into the

Nelson. His mother had not informed the school of their move in order to keep her son within the boundary ‘on paper’. She drove a three-hour round trip every day to enable him to attend. Shauna felt that such devotion to the education of her son was belittled when his teachers allegedly attempted to minimize competition in the classroom, encouraging students not to clap during games or otherwise celebrate ‘winning’. Moreover, Shauna felt that such actions ‘set [her] son up for failure’ by not adequately preparing him for the ‘real world’ – a world she feels is plagued by competition and inequality. A video circulated on social media after my fieldwork during the 2019 general election shows Prime Minister Boris Johnson, Theresa May’s fellow Conservative successor, iterate that social enclosure/opportunity hoarding and unequal personal attributes are ‘good things’ *because* they create and perpetuate inequality, which, according to him, in turn create ‘healthy’ competition and productivity – making explicit his ideology.

Once footballers and hires in other professions are contracted, their job is to ‘win’, be it a football match, construction job bid, or investment procurement, and accumulation, of course, underlies all these activities.

‘Winning’, concealment, and ‘touches of class’

Many young to middle-aged Island residents from across other social categories, including the financiers, use the idiom ‘winning’ to describe various elements of their everyday lives. If they beat someone else to receive a job or promotion, they are winning. If they find the time to complete everything on their weekend to-do list and get their children to bed so they might relax and catch up on their favourite television program on a Sunday night before another intense week of work, they are winning. If they get away with an intentional non-payment of extortionate Docklands Light Railway fare, they are winning. They are also temporarily victorious in their everyday life battles if they were the shopper to purchase the last of an item from a shelf at Asda or other market.

I bought the last stock on a few occasions as a student on a budget when tinned mackerel, an already relatively inexpensive animal protein at Asda (£0.67 per tin) that at the time made the sustainable fish source list, was discounted (£0.55 per tin). If others had not already purchased the stock, which was often the case, I would take a page from my interlocutors’ book and hoard the last few boxes of ten tins, saving £2.40, the cost of the travel fare to get to my part-time job. In acknowledgement of the irony that I had temporarily depleted the stock of a ‘sustainable’ product, which foreclosed an opportunity for others to engage in sustainable conscientious consumption, I once light-heartedly and

sheepishly confessed my guilt to a cashier at the check-out register. She assured me that others do, and would have done, the same thing and that I should think nothing of it other than feel gratitude that I had managed to buy the stock before someone else had.

Bethany might consider this action greedy. She had this reaction when her partner, Timothy, used the last of our table's bottle of mint sauce while we ate a Sunday roast dinner at a restaurant across the river in Greenwich. He shot right back, criticising her for buying a large American-style refrigerator that contained a freezer so she could hoard meat from the grocery shop section for discounted products that are sold on or near their 'use by' date. She defended herself by arguing that the items' limited shelf-life justified her actions – that she provided a service for the store so it would not have to waste out-of-date (or 'out-of-time') products.

'But you go first thing in the morning to make sure you get *everything* [before others]!' Tim replied as Bethany started to laugh. 'How is this [finishing off the mint sauce] greedier when they have more over there?' he asked, pointing to a sideboard with additional condiments. Tim later confessed to me that he himself enjoyed hoarding various products with the large fridge-freezer for the convenience of saving time, energy, and money, yet had grabbed at an example to counter Bethany when faced with her accusation of greed. He admitted that he did not want Bethany 'to have the satisfaction of winning the conversation'. For Bethany, Timothy, and others, hoarding tangible things such as food saves time. They are not being 'greedy' in the face of scarcity, but rather building up stock at regular intervals in order to last as long as possible so that trips to the market (or unwanted expenditures of time) can be kept to an absolute minimum. As Rodney, the man who suggested that social 'truth' is 'what people remember' (Chapter 1) and who is a building manager, explained, he relishes in the satisfaction felt by having a replenishable stock of supplies such as toiletries and food at his house as soon as an item depletes – it creates prized continuity.

'Piss off', Bethany jabbed in acknowledgement of her double standard. The couple eventually separated. Tim claims that Bethany only allowed the relationship to continue for as long as it had since his monthly contributions of half the rent and utility bills enabled her to save that amount each month for a deposit in order to purchase her own flat.

We saw a similar tension and double standard in Chapter 2 when Adelaide, a foreigner herself, who out of frustration with her residential situation in London's competitive housing market, derogatively called her Spanish flatmates 'travelling gypsies'. She suggested this gave purchase to her claim that they should return to Spain. The tension is also evident from the case of those who made the after-hours pub lock-in only to rejoice

that others who were not their friends had failed to make it in as well. We see the tension again in the preceding chapter through a logic such as Reg's: that being in the country 'first' and being 'born and bred' there excuses people from being held to the same social standards to which they hold others. Not only do these cases show how people develop logics and craft narratives that suit their own purposes, but they also reveal how these frustrated positions derive from anxieties over access to perceived limited resources and both the fatigue and fragility of sustaining personal needs and desires – of continuing to 'win' and to live. Tensions can flare in these examples of double standards since the person holding others to such standards is confronted by the proposition that they are still subject to the same competition as others. They are faced with the implication that they are not exceptional with some transcendental claim to social legitimacy and entitlement to resources. Several people, exasperated with their life circumstances or exhausted from the effort to maintain a comfortable life, told me that they do not want to be like the billions of other humans in the world, and certainly not like the millions of others in London. They want to be special in some way – to experience some recognized stake in privilege either through citizenship benefits, secure finances, increased intelligence, good looks, or talent, that translate to what they say would be an easier and/or more fulfilled life in which they might then more easily actualize their desires.

Like Sandra laughing off the situation in the restaurant, humour in the Nelson quite often pointed to both an acknowledgement *and* deflection of the big picture: the contradictory facts of competition for resources while trying to sustain a desirable life. Given the sporadic beer deliveries and issues with the timing of cash flow discussed in Chapter 1, the stock in the pub frequently depleted. Big Bill and others would humorously tell other drinkers to 'not be greedy' and consume in excess of the stock when it neared depletion, particularly when those patrons consumed the same drink as them – Carling, in Big Bill's case. Humour in this manner is preferred as a means superficially to acknowledge underlying tensions in life such as those caused by scarcity, rather than engage in intense political or economic debates. These would have offered little more than a tension release valve for people to 'have their say' and ended in either further opposition or, as we see in Chapter 1, the stalemate agreement that life simply 'is what it is'.

Humour here is a masquerade that, like other activities, conceals the raw struggle for basic needs and survival. While appearing ironic, this was usually a guise. Humour was often not actually ironic, but rather underscored a particular (usually uncomfortable) social 'truth' that indexed concerns about social stratification and time lack. Laughter in this way creates a façade that brushes aside discussions of real issues. The higher 'classed' someone

can be on the Island, the more performative social concealment there is in their everyday practices to remove themselves from what people conceive as a raw competition for resources – to mask their subjection to what they say is the natural order in an effort to instead establish domination over it. The annual Wimbledon tennis tournament that took place concurrently with the World Cup, for example, is widely considered by Islanders to be a ‘posher’ event than the World Cup, due chiefly to what some interlocutors believe is a superficial courtesy and etiquette performed by the players and spectators. What several pub patrons remember as one of the most humorous events they experienced in the Nelson also serves to illustrate this point.

I had purchased the last of the pub’s rolls at the end of the night for myself and no sooner had I removed part of the cellophane wrapping when Tarquin appeared from behind me and took a bite of the roll from out of my hands. It was the last one, and he was also hungry. I shrugged as those present laughed, a few nearly in tears. Someone with ‘more class’ would not have done what Tarquin did. His actions and the pub’s tacit tolerance for them expressed through laughter point to the recognition and acceptance of certain life realities. We see previously that there is still pub etiquette and social rules, but they are different to those that apply in ‘posher’ contexts since many working-class interlocutors do not see the point of performing masquerades to the extent they feel posh people do. At a certain subjective point, working-class Islanders think that one can become too classed in an attempt to distance oneself from raw competition and natural/biological processes – that posh people, as Nora the barmaid and data entry clerk from Northern England put it to me, ‘forget they also shit like everyone else’.

Interestingly, while Tarquin’s actions point to a lack of class ‘refinement’ in that instance, people consider the broader comical narrative that his actions produced as ‘class’. Particularly humorous situations, narratives, videos, and internet memes are referred to as ‘class’, signifying senses of ‘quality’ and being ‘cool’. In Tarquin’s case, laughter both recognized human hunger and foreclosed discussion of hunger and potential food scarcity as real human problems. Humour aside, the idioms ‘a touch of class’ or just ‘class’ are also used to describe social elevation akin to ‘winning’. This phrase is more commonly employed by working-class Islanders and speaks to the idea of social enhancement through what I suggested above is the masking of raw competition. It acknowledges attempts to further remove oneself from the reality of baseline adversity, while still performing winning.

In the pub, the expression ‘having class’ most commonly manifested in recognition of a swift apology or someone’s decision not to engage in provoked argument. To say

someone's actions are 'class' or show a 'touch of class' is to imply that they are the better person in these situations. Even if someone were to demonstrate a 'touch of class' and not charge a mate interest on a personal loan, an act that in the formal financial world would perhaps constitute 'losing' for the creditor, that class act reinforces a position of advantage and marks the creditor as a socially elevated person. They are still winning, which is in part why several people vocalized their refusal to receive government assistance and prefer to feel that they have earned for themselves what they have. In this way, the humour that Tarquin's actions provided constitutes class, but so does my lack of reaction to having a portion of my food taken from me. However, class acts such as those described here do not pose the risk that someone will reach the point where they, as Nora claims, 'forget' that they are still subject to biological processes 'like everyone else'.

Social media posts that also tacitly acknowledge underlying competition and anxiety over inequality and which confess (as per Foucault 1998) acts of one-upmanship will typically end with '#winning'. Another similar hashtag that interlocutors use is '#smallvictories'. The connotation of these expressions is that each day is a competition to get to the next. They suggest that, rather than look at the larger picture and at systemic or even perhaps natural reasons for the adversity, people should find satisfaction from overcoming everyday struggles and from occupying positions of social privilege, no matter how short-term – what I refer to as tactical 'snacking' like we see in the petty crime discussed in Chapter 4. Incidentally, if someone gets away with petty crime without reprimand, they are also #winning.

As the disparities between the ends of the socio-economic spectrum increase in the UK and elsewhere, it should come as no surprise that emphases on #winning and achieving #smallvictories in marginal efforts to overcome the disparities have entered common discourse. We might be able to draw a connection here with the popularity of organized league football in Britain as an avenue for people to experience winning of sorts through leisure in the face of capitalism's reinforcement of social stratification through neoliberalism and, before that, industrialization. If the working class cannot win through the accumulation of labour capital and surplus value, they can do so through the accumulation of football match victories within a league structure that mirrors the wider social processes of class creation discussed above (cf. Clarke & Critcher 1985). But why should people have a desire to win? *What*, exactly, do they win?

The differentiation of class and lived experience

Football, with its language of stratified leagues, or classes that revolve around winning and losing, is not only reflective of certain class processes, but is itself a classed mode of activity, associated more on the Island with the working class even though others enjoy it as well. Much work has been done on class tastes, showing not only consumption habits but also how people of certain classes are more influential than others in shaping what a society views as ‘tasteful’ (as per Bourdieu 1984). New work specifically on Britain points to how rigid socio-cultural categorizations of people through such mechanisms as the ‘Great British Class Survey’ (see Savage 2015) can pejoratively perpetuate those categories (Edwards 2017: 189; Evans 2017b; Skeggs 2015) without consideration of the ‘overlap of habits, social practices, and expectations’ across classes (James 2015: 15). I aim to draw more attention to structural and epistemological elements of class disposition than cultural tastes, showing how the commonalities of accumulation, competition, and some efforts to mask that adversarialism can drive class processes, logics, and performances on the Isle of Dogs. This does not mean that such social elements do not influence and manifest in cultural expression and consumption. The pub’s World Cup scenes with the performances of accumulation anxiety intertwined with music about food and the mystery of work should now make this clear. Allow me to further emphasize these relationships.

The anxieties about consumptive accumulation are exemplified by interlocutor language about their East End way of life ‘dying’ and being ‘consumed’ by the ‘sharks’ in Canary Wharf. Just over one month after the World Cup, a shark film called *The Meg* (2018) was released in UK theatres, and Babs and Jason viewed it in the cinema. Jason had previously told me about his interest in sharks, and others in the pub had on several occasions shown me sensationalist YouTube videos of shark attacks. This fascination with sharks points to a larger anxiety that the idea of consumption illustrates – not only of being consumed, but the anxiety of knowing that your own consumption sustains the life of your consumer; another being’s life comes at the expense of your own. One aspect of the cultural sensationalism of shark attacks is that the body, and hence identity, of the individual are ‘irretrievably lost’ (Peace 2015: 5) through consumption. This sentiment parallels those of pub patrons who believe and resent the notion that their way of life is being irretrievably lost and destroyed *in order* to sustain the life of finance capitalism in Canary Wharf.

Graeber (2011) argues that ‘consumption’ as an analytical term distinct from ‘production’ implies the destruction of things that are not actually destroyed through cultural consumption (television viewing and sports spectating, for example). I suggest that if we take one analytical step back, we can frame consumption as merely a form of

accumulation that has been linguistically differentiated. In Yoruba, for example, the single verb for ‘to eat’ and ‘to marry’ also means ‘to win’ and ‘to acquire’ (Lévi-Strauss 1966: 105). We might say then that in English, the act of eating (or consumption) also signifies accumulation (or winning) but has been linguistically differentiated to specify a form of accumulation that also explicitly entails destruction. Importantly, the destruction of food through consumption *sustains* the life – the time/endurance – of the consumer.

Language aside, the social practices on the Isle of Dogs that I document above also conflate victory, accumulation, consumption, and reproduction. From point accumulation games with food and drink in their names (Candy Crush, gin-rummy) to football victory songs that implicate food (vindaloo, cheddar cheese, meat pies, sausage rolls) to ranking potential partners as in sports leagues (and in Babs and Jason’s case, the enjoyment of food with sexual activity discussed in Chapter 3) – activities all performed while consuming continuous flows of drink – there is a commonality that unites these practices, whereas analytical frameworks and language differentiate them. I refer to the common denominator as phenomenological accumulation, or the continuous, uninterrupted experience of life – a desire for which drives competition and, in turn, some class processes. Food and sex are required for what my interlocutors conceptualize as sustained winning, or continued accumulation and the social reproduction of that propensity for accumulation. Such accumulation is not purely the accumulation of material things in a classical sense. More fundamentally, it is the accumulation of experiences, which includes the experience of difference, although ideally according to your own terms rather than imposed by others.

Such accumulation feeds into discussions of desire. On the one hand, some philosophical ideas about desire focus on perceived lack (Graber 2011: 493). On the other hand, another tradition ‘starts off not from the yearning for some absent object but from something more fundamental: self-preservation, the desire to continue to exist (Nietzsche’s “life which desires itself”)’ (ibid: 493). These two veins do not have to be mutually exclusive. As I highlighted above, many people expressed desires for attributes they lacked and which they believed would better facilitate their continued existence. Recall the prior chapter and the expressions of lamentation that Cockney people as a collective group do not possess the required abilities to stave off the displacement and dispossession of their way of life by finance capitalists. In this chapter, the insults shouted at the football players on the pub projector screens expressed desires for perceived absent skills that could prolong England’s actualization of sustained winning. Tarquin’s hungry bite from the last ham roll helped, albeit in a small way, to sustain his life. And while life might very well desire itself, some people can be driven more by the desire to *not* experience what they conceptualize

as oppositional to life – death (if we can say that such a state is ‘experienced’ at all). As all my interlocutors made clear, they do not want to die. Secular thought and religious cosmological doubt among my interlocutors are the norm, not the exception (cf. Taylor 2007). For both the faithful few and others, desires to accumulate the experiences of phenomena is the most baseline purpose of life.

Money and the competition for more of it not only enables Island residents to continue to accumulate, but it also allows differentiation of the phenomena they accumulate. It provides a wider range of *options* of lived experience that become classed, or socially stratified. Cat has her home in Spain, and the pub landlords have one in Malta. Almost all interlocutors have smart phones for what they say is convenience rather than any performance of status or other conspicuous reasons. Albert, for instance, says his favourite aspects of his iPhone are the touch-and-go Apple Pay feature, so he does not have to concern himself with carrying cash or card payment, and which provides the ability to source information immediately from wherever he is. Smart phones and technology in general provide different ways to exist in the world, as do going out for a meal or ordering takeaway when residents say they get bored with finding that they cook the same dishes repeatedly. Curry is a favourite among my interlocutors, despite a few lamenting the way they perceive social change caused by foreigners as ‘too much difference’. There is an element of ‘wanting your cake and eating it too’ – of desiring to experience difference, yet wanting to exert some agency that manages how widespread and influential that difference is.

In the Nelson, patrons often reflected that it ‘must be nice’ to have certain different experiences. My height, for example, was often a source of very mild envy when people asked with ostensibly genuine interest what ‘life is like’ when experienced from my height. I often countered that I would never experience the phenomenon of skin tanning, adding with a shrug that ‘it must be nice’. Additionally, cruising on your own private yacht in the Mediterranean must be nice. Receiving immediate medical attention from the best doctors in the world must also be nice. Stories of phenomena such as these were shared in the pub by Pierce, the former army soldier who fought in Northern Ireland during the Troubles and has since worked in the security entourages of a renowned Hollywood star and of a wealthy former prime minister of a Middle Eastern country. ‘It’s another world’, he would say when describing the various experiences that he witnessed money can buy. Without the money and time to be able to jet off to a home in Monaco for a week or to a personal island in the Caribbean, Islanders find other ways to experience, as they put it, ‘something a little bit different’.

A BT (formerly British Telecom) worker, for example, informed me that he had just tried poached eggs with hollandaise sauce for the first time in his life – what he considers a posh dish. He added that it was ‘good’, ‘but at the end of the day it’s just an egg, and an egg is an egg’. This illustrates the classed differentiation of lived experience and meanings attached to perceptions of difference within *la durée*. On another occasion, several patrons engaged in a conversation about the ‘classed’ stratification of supermarkets, in which they noted their perception that the ‘quality’ fresh produce in ‘posh’ shops lasts longer than that found in other markets. Through their discussion, my interlocutors further indexed the value that people ascribe to time, implicating money. They discussed bell peppers and the higher concentration of particular nutrients that one of them had read could be found in red bell peppers and that in theory foster personal health/longevity. However, it takes additional time to grow red peppers than green peppers due to the duration of ripening, hence their higher price. For my interlocutors, this is another illustration of money ‘buying time’.

I once accompanied a group of Islanders in a hired van to the horse races in what marked something ‘a little bit different’ for many of them (and me); it was the first and only time many of us had experienced horse races in person. The trip was organized through the pub, and Pam acted essentially as a chaperone for the group of obstreperous men who saw the event primarily as a day away from the pub and the Island to potentially make some money and poke fun at the upper classes. Dapper Del wore a tweed three-piece suit with a hat and saddle Oxfords. As the horses set off, he pretended to tap away ash from a fake gran corona cigar while shouting, ‘Tally feckin’ ho!’ in mockery of the posh British racing establishment and with enough volume that the ‘serious’ spectators in their fine suits, dresses, hats, and fascinators could hear. Del had grown a moustache for the event – what he later informed me was the first and last time he had grown one. In this way, the event provided another avenue, an excuse of sorts, to try and experience something he had never done before. About the same time, two semi-regular patrons from working-class backgrounds who earn good money in finance attended the final day of the annual Royal Ascot races in the presence of Her Majesty the Queen. For them, it was also a different experience to dress up in special attire and take part in something they had not previously done. It struck me that the races are a celebration of ‘being first’, again emphasizing the importance of this concept and which I discuss below.

These scenarios reveal something deeper than attempts to subvert class structure or keep up appearances through performing class. They suggest that accumulation, or winning, is not just conspicuous in order to establish and perform status (Veblen 2017: 33-

47), a mechanism to ‘fit in’ socially and culturally (Douglas & Isherwood 1979) and ‘keep up with the Joneses’ (see James 2015: 46-47), or a way to fashion individual identity (see Graeber 2011) amid processes of appropriation (Miller 1988). Nor is it a passive action without any value attached. Accumulation can do or be all those things, but we see here that there is also a phenomenological value attached. It enables people to corporeally – sensorially – experience what already is and, in the case of new technology such as smart phones, is emerging and becoming possible in life through the differentiation of *la durée*.



Figure 5.3 Dapper Del in his ironic horse races attire.

Posh Phillip, the finance contractor who aided the pub with the hefty upfront drink payment (Chapter 3), once told me that ‘what Marx got wrong was not reading Darwin’. I suspect he meant Spencer rather than Darwin, but his argument was that a socialist revolution would never occur because too many people today from working-class backgrounds such as himself hold on to a dream of experiencing the wealth that can oppress them. They aspire to be the ‘fittest’ or at least ‘fitter’ in order to experience the possibilities that money can buy, rather than striving for generalized upliftment for all. Phillip might have a point. Whereas the Island had been ‘derelict’ and yet ‘everyone was happy’ in the

words of residents, signs of differentiated phenomenological accumulation accentuate the socio-economic discrepancies. From the continuous aircraft passing overhead that carry travellers to and from London City Airport in the Docklands, to the occasional passenger being chauffeured in a Rolls Royce en route to Canary Wharf, to the frequent luxury cruise ships moored in the Thames at Greenwich opposite the Island, people are faced daily with others having what they perceive to be starkly different experiences to their own. Another song ('Sit Down' by James) played often in the pub sums it up as: 'If I hadn't seen such riches, I could live with being poor'. We might substitute 'experiences' for 'riches'.

Such tension was evident when several interlocutors complained about Americans being 'greedy, obese, and over-consuming' yet said that they themselves enjoyed the all-you-can-eat restaurants and sizeable portions when they visited America. A favourite restaurant among my interlocutors for special occasions, such as milestone birthdays, is an American-style establishment in Canary Wharf with specials on Sundays, which consist of unlimited BBQ and house beer or sparkling wine within a set time limit. This example shows again a certain double standard – that of balancing and reconciling a desire for difference on the one hand with continuity on the other. In other words, people desired to experience difference, but again preferred to do so on their own terms, since too much accumulation of that difference by others on a broader scale would create a larger rupture/differentiation to the 'way things are' or 'should be'. Another example can be seen vis-à-vis complaints people made about other holiday-makers while they were on holiday – other people who had 'ruined' their holiday because there were 'too many' of them who it might be said were also trying to relax and experience something 'a little bit different'.

Conclusion: winning as time (management), time as money

This chapter began with an examination of class production on the Isle of Dogs – in terms of anxieties about opportunity hoarding, competition, and unequal personal attributes – that are evident in football as a sport that reflects the wider social processes in which it is embedded, in addition to serving as a metaphor for life. Such discussion included what I propose is an embedded drive for what can be viewed as phenomenological accumulation – to experience what is different and possible in life – amid attempts to sustain notions of 'winning'. As a framework for going into the final body chapter before the conclusion, I suggest here that these ideas about 'winning' index tensions that involve differentiation/time within *la durée*. Analytically, we can formulate 'winning' as being in a position that enables, to some extent or another, the management of differentiation/time

within *la durée*. Being ‘first’, for instance (as in a horse race), reveals a triumph – a control – over emerging differentiation within *la durée*. ‘Winning’, then, entails the feeling that one is in a position to be able to manage the experience of unwanted change – of continuing a way of life and certain actualizations while also trying to improve them. It underscores desires to experience difference, but on your own terms and in a manner that, for the British working class, will not jeopardize the actualizations of a virtual past that they wish would endure.

There is an underlying anxiety here about the continuity of life and time. Returning briefly to football, one additional germane aspect of the game that sets up the concluding chapter is an explicitly temporal one. Not only has a winning team mastered time in a sense by preventing rupture/differentiation to their growth in a competition, but teams in the lead during individual matches often use a time trick to safeguard their position. This is referred to as ‘running down the clock’ and includes faking an injury in the final seconds of the game or refusing to engage with the opponent effectively to stop the play of the ball lest the opposing team get a hold of it. There is an ethics of time here in which those in a position of advantage manipulate and manage/control how time is spent and differentiated, in an effort to gain more competition time through winning the match. Such is the plot of a film called *In Time* (2011), in which time is substituted for money in a futuristic economic system wherein the wealthy accumulate time to live indefinitely.

‘That’s really ‘ow it already is’, someone in the pub suggested during a conversation that invoked the film. ‘You need money to buy time, and the rich ‘ave all the money and time. It’s no different really’. The final chapter picks up this notion through a discussion of ‘temporal’ agency and a further evaluation of the idea that money is time, and vice versa.

6 ‘We need more time’ stretching a finite resource and ‘end of an era’

Friday, 21 September 2018. I stood at the lone sink in the men’s toilets on a busy fortnightly karaoke event at the Nelson during my final week of official fieldwork. My washed hands dripped water into the porcelain basin as I waited to use the sole air dryer. The music’s soundwaves from the front of the pub reverberated throughout the largely green-tiled room – the repeated *oooo, don’t you look back* fade-out refrain of Fleetwood Mac’s ‘Don’t Stop Thinking About Tomorrow’. It was always the first song that the karaoke presenters played after they had set up their equipment, which I thought aptly captured many interlocutors’ inclinations to look to the future and refrain from dwelling on the past, despite their many nostalgic conversations and relational issues rooted in prior conflict, such as those between Tarquin, Lucy, and Reg. You could clearly hear the otherwise muffled lyrics in brief segments, as well as the collision of cue sticks and pool table balls, when men entered and exited the loo through the two sets of doors. Traffic and pedestrian noise entered through the window above the adjacent stall. Heady cigarette smoke and a cacophony of laughter and loud conversation permeating from the beer garden through the two open windows above the three urinals added to the sensory concoction.

After three or four seconds of wringing his hands beneath the loud yet inefficient jet of hot air, the man for whom I waited looked at me and said, ‘An East End trick’, as he stepped aside and rubbed his hands inside the pockets of his denim jeans to finish drying them.

‘Cheers’, I replied and followed his example. I had performed this trick out of impatience myself and had seen others perform it many times before, both at this washbasin and elsewhere in London, the UK, and beyond. To save more time, or to allocate that time elsewhere, some men would not bother with the dryer, opting instead to wet their hands with a single splash of water from the tap before giving them a small shake and then wipe

in their pockets. Others bypassed the sink and dryer altogether. The man's decision to indicate that his time-saving trick is a characteristically East End practice struck me as I recalled the many other tricks and 'life hacks', or tactics, that I had been made privy to in the course of fieldwork. For him, it was neither a general trick nor a Londoner, English, or British one. The man chose to signify the practice as somehow of the East End. There is something to be said here for how he and others conceive of and perform their personhood and East End identity – the tactical, streetwise, and entrepreneurial logics I discuss previously. This chapter highlights another aspect of the situation – time.

Ideas about time, and some of the ways it can shape social relationships, are evident throughout the preceding chapters and form a central theme of this thesis. Chapter 3 examines how issues of time shape interpersonal relationships that reveal processes of belonging and social difference. Chapter 5 concludes with a discussion of the connections between, and anxieties surrounding, class, competition, winning, and what I refer to as differentiated phenomenological accumulation. I argue that time and differentiation are essential components of these anxieties and relationships that deserve explicit ethnographic engagement, as they are too often assumed and ignored in analyses. That argument is reinforced by a discussion in the pub about the *In Time* (2011) film, in which time is structurally substituted for money in a futuristic economic system so the wealthy can live indefinitely. Plainly put, the sustained experience of time – continual actualization – on the Isle of Dogs, like elsewhere, requires financial capital. I have also challenged the class dichotomy, exploring how both the precarity of the working class and the perceived relative stability of the white-collar-professional class amid secularism, neoliberal austerity, and private capital development produce a shared sense of time lack, which was evident in the alignment of the 'squeezed middle' with the Brexit 'Leave' vote discussed in the Introduction. In one register, such sense of lack manifests in anxieties over sustaining oneself, family and/or desired way of life into an unknowable, yet speculative and ultimately finite, future. In another register, such sense of lack creates irritation about disruption in more immediate situations.

This final ethnographic chapter continues the discussion on time to further develop the idea that the lived experience of time is monetized, with parallel if not congruent notions of transaction and management. I further analyze how the constructions of time and money are mutually constitutive of each other and generative of various aspects of sociality. As a consolidation of ethnographic material and notions of time interwoven throughout, I continue to explore the fundamental importance of time and, as a corollary, impatience, to constructing social relationships and practices. I also demonstrate how Island residents

tactically operate against temporal constraints in their everyday lives in attempts to trick time. In doing so, I present different ethnographic examples that illustrate issues similar to those already presented. However, I approach them from a different angle. Rather than show how belonging is implicated in the cases that follow, for example, I hope that this will now be self-evident. I push the argument further by considering specific manipulations of time as expressions of agency that *create* and actualize time, as opposed to ‘filling time’, ‘passing time’, or ‘killing time’. I resume the account of the karaoke night and its implication of time and agency, including actualizations of the past and worries about the future.

After discussion, ethnography from Pam and Bill’s final days as landlords of the Nelson and the pub’s closure – and a brief epilogue of the aftermath – concludes the chapter to also close the work’s overarching chronological narrative, drawing together many of the themes discussed throughout.

Tricks of the (time) trade

As I returned from the toilet at the back of the pub on the karaoke night to re-join the group of people with whom I had been sitting at the bar, the visual inputs paired with the audible. Immediately outside the toilets, two men played pool as a group of others observed. I paused in my tracks in order to allow one of the players to take a shot. There was not enough space to walk around him and the pose he held with his drawn cue stick, suspended temporarily in intense aim. As I stood waiting, I heard one of the karaoke presenters call upon Albert as the first performer of the night.

Having walked this path and waited for pool players countless times before, it had previously dawned on me that pool is inconspicuously a game of time. The player who wins is the first to pot all their balls in the table pockets. This means in practice that they are the player who can master time better than their opponent by operating within a shorter timeframe, reducing the length of a game and hence, time spent. To use the conceptualization of ‘winning’ as grounded in *la durée* that I present in the prior chapter, a winning pool player emerges as the temporary manager of differentiation in the immediate social situation by completing the game before their opponent. On several occasions players jokingly, yet still with clear impatience, bemoaned that their competitor took too long to make their move, thereby delaying the game and consuming more of their own time. An exasperated ‘Get on with it!’ was one of the choice exclamations to encourage the other player to act more expeditiously, a statement sometimes echoed by

those waiting to navigate around the pool table. In these instances, at the table and elsewhere, people could accuse someone else of being ‘a lot of work’. This expression not only suggests that the other person is annoying, but also implies that the reason they are a source of irritation is because they are in some way, like work, taking too much of someone’s time that they do not wish to spend in that manner. Having to take the extra time to explain a joke, story, or concept to someone is another situation in which that person can be said to be ‘a lot of work’.

The game highlights another fundamental tension with time. On the one hand, pool is a welcome activity of ‘free’ time spent away from labour. On the other hand, too much time spent playing pool can become repetitive and monotonous – perhaps even laborious given the above language my interlocutors employ – causing patrons to seek differentiation by accumulating other phenomena away from the pool table. Such mild annoyance caused by an opponent taking their time at your expense, though expressed through humour, reminds us of the more severe irritation and anxiety discussed in the previous chapter. It speaks of the notion that the consumption of your own time/life serves to sustain the accumulation of time/life of someone or something else. Recall the previous discussions in which I suggest that anxieties rooted in explicitly temporal issues exacerbated by capitalism produce some of the most vivid perceptions of social alterity, fragmentation, and competition.

The pool player for whom I and others waited eventually took his shot and missed, perhaps due in part to the pressure he might have felt from the extra pairs of eyes of the waiting patrons on either side of him (like me) who were all trying to navigate around the pool table.

As I passed the table, I encountered a former drummer in his late 50s called Jack, who had gone to school on the Island with Pam. He had a cigarette tucked behind his ear on his way to enjoy a smoke in the beer garden. ‘‘Ey, ‘ighwayman!’ he exclaimed to me and shook my hand. We had developed a rapport some time before during a conversation in which I had helped him name all four singers of the American country/folk group, The Highwaymen. Jack had once successfully recruited me to sing the group’s eponymous song, ‘Highwayman’, with him on a karaoke night. He had told me that the piece is one of his favourites because of the message of continuity expressed through lyrical images of reincarnation that are reinforced by reflective instrumentation and a chord progression that ‘speaks to’ him. Like Ronny in Chapter 4, the concept of reincarnation for Jack also generates hope that there is some phenomenological accumulation to be had beyond death – some sensorial experience of differentiation and endurance of (time) consciousness.

Just beyond the partial wall separating the back of the pub from the front, Gabija and Sofija had immersed themselves in rounds of Deal or No Deal on the brightly-lit game machine for £1 per game. The objective is to correctly answer as many trivia questions as possible within a time countdown in order to prolong the game through the accumulation of ‘lives’, or opportunities to reveal the contents of briefcases that contain various monetary amounts. A deal is offered based on the value in the remaining briefcases. This deal can be accepted and paid out or, in a bid for a better deal, the player can press their luck and continue to answer additional time-limited questions to try and accrue more chances to whittle down the remaining briefcases to only those of high-value. The couple had recently developed a fixation with this game, playing it every time they visited the pub and often encouraging others to join them with their laughter and gregarious dispositions. I suggest there is an element of subversion inherent in the Deal or No Deal game, in which people enjoy as leisure the same forces – time pressure and money accumulation, in this case – that can otherwise produce angst in other contexts. The machine itself was a mechanism for the pub to make additional money that might help prolong the business.

Behind Gabija and Sofija, Scottish James stood at his usual spot at the crux of the bar, facing the singer. He had his hands raised in the air, his eyes closed, and his eyebrows furrowed in an expression of sentimental reflection. Albert had begun to sing ‘American Pie’, one of Scottish James’s two favourite songs, the other being the Irish ballad, ‘Oh, Danny Boy’. These songs were typically the only ones that elicited a response from James, who, as on other occasions such as football match screenings, more often read his books and newspapers at the bar, as if in his own world and unaware of the music and noise in which he was enveloped. James never told me why he enjoyed the two songs, and Albert never divulged why he sang them. I found it interesting that issues of both biological and social continuity expressed through images of death are themes in each piece, particularly as Scottish James had been diagnosed with congestive heart failure and Albert, now using a walker, had suffered two heart attacks in the prior ten years.

But something touched me deep inside... the day...the music...died.

Big Bill and Dapper Del often joked that Albert sang ‘American Pie’ because of its renowned length of over eight minutes which, as they put it, provided Albert with more time at the microphone. They did not make their conjecture without evidence. Albert would often be the first of the regular singers to arrive at karaoke night, embodying the ‘early bird gets the worm’ philosophy by securing his songs and on occasion ‘stealing’ those sung by other regulars. Before his reliance on the walker, Albert would offer to help the karaoke hosts, a couple called Roberta and Joe, transport their equipment from and back to their car

before and after the event. In what had become a repetitive fortnightly counter-performance to the karaoke singers, many of the Highbury Corner group humorously criticized amongst themselves the karaoke singers and the song repetition. Jokes aside, they had no doubt that Albert's actions were purely transactional, offering his time in return for more performance time than others. Another singer offered to help Roberta and Joe as well, once it had become widely believed that Albert had received more time at the microphone. He had also been dubbed 'the Karaoke Kid', because of the relationship he had developed with Roberta and Joe through the exchange of time.

The matter of time had posed such a taken-for-granted concern that Joe approached me once after someone had asked me to sing and I had placed a song in the queue. He offered me the chance to select another piece to perform immediately afterward. Joe informed me that my selection, 'La Bamba', was just over one minute long, and he assumed that I would want more time. I respectfully declined. The piece's brevity is one of the reasons why I had selected it, lest I deprived someone else of performance time. Pam had sacked the two previous karaoke presenters, both professional female musicians, since patrons felt that the presenters performed too frequently and for too long between patron performances, reducing the amount of time before the 11pm cut off in which patrons could sing. One of the professionals is a saxophonist, whom several people requested at every karaoke night to play 'Baker Street', with its well-known intro and repeated interludes consisting of a driving, steady percussive crescendo into a riveting saxophone refrain that often moved patrons to exclaim, 'Ahhh, what a tune!' The sheer volume and difference in sound quality of the live saxophone when it entered over the backing track added to the sensationalism, often giving me goosebumps. Despite this stirring visceral quality of the music, a few of those people who requested the song were also the ones who complained that the saxophone player was too repetitive – not phenomenologically differentiated enough – and took up too much of their own time for performance. Pam extended the karaoke event to midnight on a few occasions when the drink-buying crowd was sizeable enough to justify spending the extra money to buy more karaoke time, and when Roberta and Joe felt that an hour's worth of additional cash was worth their delayed return home on a Friday night.

Carefully manoeuvring around James and his closed eyes on this karaoke night, I edged my way between the ceiling support beams and patrons crowded up at the bar in anticipation of their drinks. Having worked behind the bar, I could empathize with Babs and the pressure thrust upon her as she worked on her own this particular night. At this point Babs was pouring two pints at once. She held her arms extended apart, each hand

pulling a different tap in order to pour as many drinks as quickly as possible. ‘The taps only flow so fast’, Nora, the barmaid from Northern England, had said when she trained me for work behind the bar several years earlier. By this she meant that bar staff should not allow impatient patrons to cause them anxiety, as the physics of both the gas taps and speed at which humans can operate set a minimum possible time that it takes to pour a drink, a reality that the bar staff felt many patrons did not often appreciate. On busy nights such as this one, patrons waved their arms to catch Babs’s attention in bids to trick time and jump their position in the queue in order to be served first and avoid spending so much of their free time waiting at the bar. Any sense of an orderly queue often disappeared on busy nights when only one member of staff worked, due to the onslaught of patrons around the full length of the L-shaped bar.

Many patrons waved rolled cash notes at Babs, believing they would be served first due to the perceived value placed on cash purchases (cf. Fox 2014: 133-35). Although cash transactions can take more time than a contactless card payment, card payments required the pub to lose a small percentage of each purchase to a card transaction fee, and cash is of course easier to conceal from Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs. Patrons made these assumptions on their own, based on their streetwise, common-sense epistemologies discussed previously. I knew from conversation that Pam and Bill did prefer cash because of the card fee, but I made a point never to enquire either on or off the record about their income reporting practices for tax purposes.

The manner in which patrons waved cash always reminded me of a conversation I had with Frank, the Labour-voting ‘gentleman’s gentleman’ from Chapter 2 who worries about having to let his spare room to a stranger. He had disdainfully referred to people with private medical insurance as ‘queue jumpers’. Frank feels that these people consider themselves to be better or more important/valuable than others. They try to shorten the wait time to receive the kind of urgent medical care that they could otherwise have received on the NHS, in an attempt to maximize their life time. In other words, they trick time with money. On this night, many people attempted a similar subterfuge with cash in an effort to maximize their experience of free time.

One of the two pints Babs poured as I walked past the bar in front of her was a Guinness, which has its own ritualistic manner and tempo in which it is poured. Two-thirds of the glass height is poured first, just up to about the bottom of the harp emblazoned on the side of the pint glass. The glass is then left to sit until the cloudiness subsides and the gas currents settle to form the distinctive dark, rich colour, as well as the cream-coloured layer of froth at the top (ideally the rough height of the width of one’s small finger), for

which the stout is known. After about a minute, the tap is then pushed forward, rather than pulled, to fill the remaining third of the glass without disrupting the ratio of liquid to froth. Getting this right during busy nights while also pouring other drinks requires multi-tasking and fine-tuned, fast-paced management of time. One of the Guinness brand's slogans is 'Guinness: Worth Waiting For'. Patrons who consume a different drink and must wait for someone else's Guinness to be poured do not always share the sentiment. On this night and even on other days when the pub was barren, patrons often ordered their next drink well before their current one depleted, (lest there be a lapse within the differentiation of *la durée* that would rupture their sought-after continuous flow of drink), similar to those who hoarded various items in their household in order to foster continuity and prevent the experience of rupture.

Pub regulars favoured the bar staff who could best maintain this sense of continuity, and they placed the staff in a loose hierarchy based on their perceived aptitude for the job, which also relied heavily on personality. This hierarchy does not need to be presented here in detail. It suffices to say that speed was an essential component of the ranking discussions. Speed of mind, which contributed to personality, could be just as much of a factor as speed of pint-pouring, and the ability for quick-witted banter often served as a benchmark for bar staff assessment. One example is when I ordered a drink from the barmaid who William considered to be the best of the bar staff. She had taken over from someone else's shift in between my ordering drinks. I asked her if I could please have another pint, and she looked back at me with a vacant expression.

'Sorry, another Fosters please', I specified, before adding in an attempt to be humorous, 'Sometimes I'm not very good with specifics'.

'That's alright, Jord – sometimes I'm not very good with telepathy', she replied. Fast wit is often a standard for assessment of fellow drinkers in addition to bar staff. Tarquin, for instance, once called several unknown people who had come to the pub for a wedding reception 'thick' (stupid) because he felt their ability for well-paced conversation lagged after they had had a few drinks. Another example is when Harry, the retired finance professional who liked to goad others in the pub, expressed his admiration for Dorothy Parker, American writer and satirist who is remembered for her quick wit. Parker was a member of the famed Algonquin Round Table – a group of actors, critics, and writers in 1920s New York City – that met regularly for lunch and to exchange witticisms. Henry shared the alleged story of how Parker 'did not miss a beat' when confronted with the task of making a witticism with the word 'horticulture' after she had supposedly claimed that she could turn a phrase with any single word. 'Without so much as a pause, she said, "You

can lead a whore to culture, but you can't make her think" ...I mean, wow – I *like* that', Harry remarked in admiration of Dorothy Parker's mental agility – an admiration that ignored the misogyny of the 'turned phrase'. On another occasion I fostered my relationship with Luke, the former greengrocer, when he suggested that after all the time I had spent in the pub and in the East End, I still did not understand his Cockney sense of humour.

'Did you ever think you're just not funny, mate?' I immediately asked with the best poker face I could muster.

'Alright, you've got it!' he exclaimed with a handshake, just before adding wryly, 'About time'. We both laughed.

The perceived speed and time that people so value in particular circumstances is a point of contention for many, illustrated by the case of the Queen Mary University student in the prior chapter's discussion of social stratification created by opportunity hoarding and personal attributes. Recall that this student requires additional time to complete tasks at work and at university. The student explained that his constant feeling of temporal angst, compounded by doubts about his ability to succeed in his desired future career in the fast-paced environment of investment finance, contributed heavily to his depression. He shared that he remains awake in his bed watching Netflix programmes until the early hours of the morning, in an attempt to prolong his experience of 'calm' and avoid the following day for as long as possible. In a sentiment echoed by many others, notably Bethany (the finance professional), the student described the perceived acceleration of time into another day that the act of sleeping produces – an acceleration that he and others can often seek to avoid. Bethany had summarized this temporal angst as a 'frustration from knowing that as soon as you go to sleep because you are exhausted, the morning and work will come that much sooner to start the cycle all over again'. Such avoidance of the future (of differentiation) is one reason for many regulars' attempts to prolong the actualization of a relaxed vitality through alcohol consumption in the pub until the late hours of the night/early hours of the morning, perpetuating their life rhythms.

Of course, not everyone in the pub experienced this vitality in the same way. Those behind the bar still had to work. Despite the fatigue of working behind the bar on busy nights, the bar staff preferred their fast-paced nature to the tedium of slow days. Time 'passes' faster at work that way, they told me, and I had experienced this phenomenon myself. They also agreed that a busy night felt like it had not been wasted, even though they received a wage whether the pub was animated or not. The time to think that was afforded to them when the pub was slow often led them to mentally list the many other things they could be doing with that time. Sentiments were more complicated on the other

side of the bar, where patrons balanced their preference for social effervescence on the one hand with the more continuous ‘flow’ and rhythm that an empty pub provided them on the other. I could not help but be slightly irritated a few times myself when I would be in deep conversation with someone working behind the bar, only for another patron to interrupt the conversation by asking for service – a sentiment shared by others.

After passing Babs on the karaoke night, I reached my chair in Highbury Corner between Cat and Dapper Del. Big Bill and a man called Grant stood opposite. Dapper Del (the cab driver) had his phone out, continuously hitting refresh on an application that enables him to accept pre-booked black cab journeys. Del usually works on a Friday night due to the expected volume of leisure seekers in the capital city, many of whom cab drivers also assume will have consumed enough alcohol that they feel better about spending the extra money to get home without the hassle of public transportation and intoxication. Del had wanted to spend this Friday night at the pub away from work, and he now looked for a job that could financially compensate for the period he had taken for his own ‘free’ leisure time. ‘Free’ time only lasts as long as Del and others can afford to prolong it without income (see Marx 2013: 146-204). His trick to compensate for an entire night off work is to take a booking from one of London’s airports during morning rush hour traffic.

As part of the iconic London black cab trade, Del prides himself on the trade’s ethic to provide rapidity and, consequently, the lowest financial burden possible for the passenger. The examination that all registered black cab drivers take after a three year average of studying London’s streets is called ‘The Knowledge’ and consists of the candidate sitting before a panel to provide the most direct routes between randomized sets of start and finish points, without the aid of maps or any other form of technology. Del failed his first knowledge test and apologized to the exam panel chair for ‘wasting his time’.

“‘You didn’t waste my time’”, Del told me the examiner had replied, “‘You wasted yours’”. Del ultimately passed a subsequent test and, like other cab drivers, immediately realized that rush hour traffic allows for the highest accrual of time, and hence money, while still operating by the ethic of driving the most direct route in order to provide the passenger with the lowest fare possible. Extending the length of time in rush hour traffic with a journey from an airport on the outskirts of London adds to that accumulation. Although both the driver and passenger can be frustrated with the reduced speed and increase in journey time, the passenger is willing and able to spend a higher amount for the more private and convenient transportation, and the driver collects more money in return, which they can use as Del does to extend their free time for as long as possible.

‘Time is money, Jord. And it is what it is’, Del had summed it up. His portrayal of the cab trade reminded me of a conversation I had had with Big Bill about his work as an electrical engineer. One of his customers is an acclaimed music producer, a multi-millionaire who Bill claims ‘may be even close to a billionaire’. Bill had installed lighting throughout the man’s country estate in the south of England in a job that lasted for several months. ‘I even put in lights in the little lake, so the water glows at night’, Bill had told me with a proud, reflective smile. He added that the estate is one of several residences the music producer owns and that he seldom visited the property while Bill worked there. The producer finally visited to inspect Bill’s work upon its completion. Bill walked the man around the estate, showing the work he had done, and revealed that all the fixtures could be controlled from a large panel he had installed outside. The producer had praised Bill for his work but then, as they turned to walk away from the panel, turned back to look at it again.

“‘You know, this really would be a great view if this panel wasn’t in the way’”, Bill told me the man had remarked. The producer then asked Bill if he could re-route the cables to another less conspicuous location. ‘Fuck me, I thought’, Bill said to me. ‘But then I thought, it is what it is, and it’s just a job and actually it gives me more money anyway, so why should I care as long as I’m paid for the time?’ Bill added to alleviate the sudden alienation he felt from his labour. It was a well-known fact in the pub that Bill spent much of his electrician income to keep the pub afloat so, although he did not state this explicitly, I assumed that the money gained from the extra time called for by this job on the country estate contributed to prolonging Bill and Pam’s time as landlords of the Nelson. After telling me this story, Bill paused for a moment before adding, humorously:

You know, maybe that’s what I’ve done wrong. For years when I installed alarm systems, I built things to last. A lot of them are still going – been decades. Obviously you want to be fair and not take any liberties and be reputable, but just think if I ‘ad made ‘em somewhat less quality – still good but not quite as long-lasting – ‘ow much more business I could’ve ‘ad replacing ‘em!

As discussed in the previous chapter, humour here again demonstrates an attempt to both confront yet also gloss over and conceal the reality that calculative tricks can extend time in what my interlocutors perceive as an innately biological competition to prolong time/life.

Back during the karaoke night, Dapper Del soon received a job on his iPhone app for Stansted airport on the following morning at 7am and announced to the group that he needed to go home and get some sleep. Bill said he would buy him a drink – a tactic often employed in an attempt to convince someone to stay for your own (or group) benefit to

extend the merriment of drinking in the pub. Del contemplated the offer for a moment before refusing, shaking everyone's hand and giving Cat a quick hug on his way out. Grant looked up at the clock and declared that he also needed to go. Such subtle yet constant glances at the clock made by patrons to gauge and act within their perception of time 'passing' over the several years I had frequented the pub led me to speculate that the clock was the most looked at feature, perhaps even more so than the projector screens that displayed the football matches since football is only occasional and the experience of time is constant. 'Time stands for no one', several interlocutors had reflected. Patrons could have had their phones out, which display the time, and still glance up at the clock above Highbury Corner, inconspicuously yet also authoritatively adorning the wall at the end of the bar.

Grant justified his departure by explaining that he had left a stew on in his slow cooker. After record-setting heat in the summer and a final burst of heat earlier in the week, the weekend forecast predicted cool autumn nights to set in, and the stew would provide warmth and comfort. I had had several discussions about the magic of slow and pressure cookers – so many in fact, that they had persuaded me to purchase my own when I saw one on offer. Reg had conveyed how great a cooker with the dual option could be, allowing for the greatest flexibility of time. 'It's brilliant – you can prepare a nice stew in the morning and it cooks all day and is waiting for you when you get 'ome or, if you don't 'ave the time in the morning, you can pressure cook it when you get home'. He added that he often pressure-cooks a whole frozen chicken, which requires limited time and allows him to do other tasks or even 'nothing – to just sit and be' while the pressure cooker does all the work.

Reg enjoys cooking, but he weighs that enjoyment against a calculation of how long it takes. It becomes a question of time allocation, a notion shared by many others about cooking and other activities. Based on several conversations, I suggest that various activities are dreaded not because of the practice itself, but rather the time required. In another example, Judy arrived late for work one evening at the pub, creating a knock-on effect in which the staff member working the shift before her was delayed to collect some items from Asda for Pam, which had the additional knock-on effect of forcing Pam to cut her time short caring for her mother. Judy had been in a minor car collision – a 'fender bender' – en route through the Blackwall Tunnel from south of the Thames, which would have had other knock-on effects in very real, yet unknown, ways caused by the delay to the many other motorists. Clearly frustrated, Judy said the actual collision was not bad, but rather the issue of time is what made the situation onerous. 'It's just something else now that I 'ave to do – deal with insurance and get the car repaired – I don't 'ave time for this!'

An unknown patron asked for service from the other end of the bar, and Judy produced an instantaneous smile as she turned to walk towards him, disguising her agitation in order to perform customer service.

Not long after Grant had departed the karaoke night, Young William popped downstairs to collect his take-away order from a local Indian restaurant. This restaurant employed time tricks of their own, using a base curry gravy and pre-cooked marinated meat from which a wide range of dishes could be produced as rapidly as possible for everyone else who might also be trying to trick time by ordering a take-away meal. William greeted his father, Cat, and me. He indicated that he and Mary would be down later once their children were asleep, but they never made it.

Bill, Cat, and I discussed a story that Cat had heard. It was about someone who lived up the road and had broken his ankle when he landed improperly after a jump from his first floor flat. According to Cat, the man had not been bothered to spend the time to take the stairs or wait for the lift, thinking the most time-effective way to make it to the street was a leap from his balcony. She noted her understanding that the man had not even been hard-pressed with an urgent matter or emergency, but simply suffered from ‘incredible impatience’ – ‘and probably some alcohol, I would’ve thought’, Cat added. Her story reminded me of several other regular patrons’ indications that they preferred to miss a bus (and even several subsequent buses) and continue their drinking in the pub rather than ‘wait for too long’ at the bus stop in order to get home. In these examples, we see how the impatience for the ‘time it takes’ to complete certain activities motivates people to attempt to minimize the experience of a ‘gap’ between their desired actualizations. Sometimes patrons intentionally missed the buses when they debated whether to stay longer in the pub, claiming that ‘time passing’ had settled their indecisiveness for them. As one regular put it upon checking his phone to see that his bus had just come through, ‘Ah well, too late now. It is what it is – guess I’ll just ‘ave to stay and ‘ave another [lager]’.

On the karaoke night, the conversation transitioned to Cat describing her impatience for ‘small things – like rinsing out recyclables. I do try my best, but sometimes I think that I simply just cannot be bothered, and the cats’ food tins go directly in the rubbish [rather than the recycling] bin’. We can analyze this situation as a parallel example of financial investment and management. For Cat and others, sentiments of not having enough time and desiring more time abound, seen here in mundane impatience and unwillingness to ‘spend time’ on the task of recycling. Cat later acknowledged her slight guilt for not ‘taking the time’ to recycle ‘properly’, adding that it would take everyone ‘doing their bit’ in order to combat the aggregate effects of humanity’s growth and consumption, despite

her scepticism that anything could actually be done in order effectively to reverse climate change. Her logic was such that ‘spending time’ on recycling is, like financial investment, a speculation on indeterminate future returns – in this example, the possible extension of humanity’s collective *epoch* within *la durée*, to which individual recycling might contribute.

Towards the end of the karaoke night, patrons’ phones occupied all the spare smartphone chargers kept behind the bar, as their battery charges had depleted, in an exhibition of another race to be ‘first’ (to secure an available charger) amid inevitable decay (of battery energy). Patrons typically evoked a sense of urgency through claims such as their partner desiring sustained or frequent communication when making their request to use the charging devices and sustain the life of their phone. On a busy night such as this one, the decision of when to retrieve your phone from behind the bar involved a balancing act. Too much time spent on charging it would annoy those who expected sustained or frequent contact, and too little time spent on charging the phone would not charge the battery sufficiently in order to sustain its life through the duration of the remainder of the night, placing you at the back of the queue to use the charger again. The gap in communication was a source of irritation for waiting partners and friends of those in the pub, which the patrons told me about the following day after a late night out with statements like ‘my missus wasn’t too ‘appy’. On another occasion, a handyman had received a job enquiry on his mobile phone while in the pub. The phone battery died in the middle of the conversation, and the would-be customer found another man for the job in the time it had taken the handyman to charge his phone sufficiently in order to call the number back. ‘Shit, I just lost probably an £800 job – *fuck!*’ the handyman said.

Posh Phillip, the man who helped the pub with its financial situation, has a ‘trick’ for coming to terms with such difficulties and frustrations created by problems with time. Pam authorized me to permit Phillip’s entrance on the karaoke night upon his knock on the curtain-drawn window. It was now well after 11pm, and Pam had returned from caring for her mother and had arranged with Roberta and Joe to extend the karaoke session for an additional hour due to the number of patrons, whose money spent, justified the karaoke extension. After shaking everyone’s hands in the group by the door, Phillip proceeded to tell us about his ‘hectic week’. His wife had recently received a job on ‘the Continent’ (continental Europe), and he had been spending the weekends with her, flying to London City airport near Canary Wharf for work on Monday mornings and returning to the Continent on Friday evenings. His flight had been delayed on the Monday, which marked a week of unfortunate events. Phillip’s manager expressed his annoyance and suggested

that Phillip fly back to London on Sunday nights in order to avoid missing work. On this Friday night, Phillip had remained at work in order to finish a project until just before coming to the pub. The project should have been finished by noon earlier that day, and Phillip had missed his return flight as a consequence.

‘I’m tired of rushin’ and apologisin’ all the time! To my wife, to my manager. I think the trick is to just not apologize – not acknowledge being late and bringing attention to it. It is what it is – things ‘appen, get in the way – that’s life’.

Wayne, a regular singer on karaoke nights, was in the middle of singing Frank Sinatra’s ‘That’s Life’. A petite man in his 70s, Wayne has a powerful voice that drew acclaim, which counterbalanced some regulars’ critique that he sang the same handful of tunes on every karaoke night.

‘Exactly’, Phillip said with his finger pointed towards Wayne. ‘Finally, some *good* timing for me [this week]’, he added in reference to the serendipitous convergence of the song lyrics and his remarks.

About twenty minutes later, just after midnight, Roberta brought to everyone’s attention that it was ‘that time of the night – the final song’ and called on Wayne to sing his typical karaoke night ‘closing’ tune – Frank Sinatra’s ‘My Way’.

‘Is it that time already?!’ Cat asked with wide eyes as she twisted around on her bar stool in order to take a glance up at the clock. ‘I swear, this place is a time warp’, she commented. Such statements were often made with some degree of lamentation that the night was coming to an end. The general consensus of the regulars was that alcohol initially slows time as you begin to drink in the evening, yet the chemical effects cause people to consume faster as the night continues, which in turn creates the perception of time acceleration. Such acceleration conflicts with patrons’ general desires to ‘stretch’ or prolong the night.

And nowww, the end is nearr...

‘My God, ‘ere we go’, Big Bill shook his head with a laugh as Wayne sang the opening line. Bill, his family, and the bar staff preferred ‘livelier’ music that they hoped might have created a sense of pub vitality in order to entice new patrons to return. For Bill and his family, this particular song also drew attention to what they and others saw as the approaching end of their stewardship of the pub, which they tried to put off for as long as possible. ‘Why does ‘e always ‘ave to sing *this* song?’ Bill asked rhetorically. However, this tune and the others mentioned above were part of the repetitive familiarity of the pub. Despite the dismay displayed, this very repetition, and the humour with which people faced

uncomfortable truths, constituted part of the social fabric of the pub. This fabric is in part what the landlords tried to perpetuate as temporary proprietors of the Nelson.

The song lyrics reflect on a situation of imminent death from a first-person perspective, in which the singer finds satisfaction from having lived a full life and having done ‘it my way’. Patrons often joined in with the song’s swelling climax – a booming and sustained *MYYY WAYY-EEEEEE* – followed by instant applause, cheers, and whistles for Wayne before the calm, reflective denouement: *Yesss, it was...my wayyyy*. I was always struck by the irony of multiple patrons joining in at the climax – that each and every one of those people enacting a hypothetical ideology of doing things ‘their way’ all the time would conflict with the others who might also be trying simultaneously to do everything ‘their way’. There is a similar paradox inherent in the above Guinness slogan that it is ‘worth waiting for’ – it omits the questions *for whom is it worth the wait?* and *for whom might it not be worth the wait?* These possible tensions hint at individualistic, neoliberal ideologies and logics that underscore issues of time and questions of agency, discussed below.

Roberta immediately thanked Wayne for his performance. She concluded, as she always did, by saying, ‘On behalf of Pam, Bill, and all the bar staff, thank you for a fabulous evening and see you in two weeks’ time – enjoy the rest of your evenings, good night, take care, and God bless!’ As usual, Roberta then played the dance remix of a Phil Collins song called ‘One More Night’ while she and her partner, Joe, began to pack-up. The lyrics express a request to be given ‘one more night’ by a partner, in another implication of anxieties about extending – ‘having more’ – time, or duration.

Most patrons remained in the pub rather than depart after the karaoke, in their own attempts to prolong the night and have more time.

Trick-or-time pass

This night in the pub vividly shows the timescape in which it was embedded and the interplay of various attempts to actualize personal desires, which I now discuss in terms of ‘time-tricking’ and agency – a discussion that perhaps has hopefully by now emerged as apparent. Laidlaw (2002) has claimed that anthropologists have often used ‘agency’ as a ‘temptation to describe the world as we would like it to be, rather than as it is’, which has resulted in identifying agency only ‘when people’s choices seem to us to be the right ones’ (315). Discussions about agency have since shifted and, particularly with regard to explicit analyses of time, better illuminate the material circumstances in which people find themselves rather than championing ‘correct decisions’ of our interlocutors.

With regards to time-tricking, agency can be seen when knowledge of the past is ‘tricked’, or when perceptions of the virtual past are manipulated rather than the ‘past itself’, which only exists virtually (Ringel 2016b: 25-26), in addition to the ‘future contents of time’ (as per Ringel 2016b: 29). The language ‘future contents’ somewhat obfuscates my aim here: to show how rather than ‘timepass’ (cf. Jeffrey 2010), ‘killing time’ or ‘filling time’ – language which implies that time is a pre-existing container that can be filled with human practices – people actualize personal desires and, in doing so, *create* time as an emergent property of their social interactions. An additional drink at the bar, for instance, is not ‘filling time’, but actively a form of agency in which people create time and foster a sense of endurance away from labour time through staying in the pub rather than take the bus home. ‘[H]uman beings are not just subject to time. They exercise agency in relation to time (Moroşanu & Ringel 2016: 18). Of course, such ‘leisure time’ for patrons marked ‘labour time’ for the bar staff. Karaoke performances can also mark attempts to ‘win’, as discussed in the previous chapter – to have things ‘your way’ and be in a position that manages the process of differentiation for others by creating for people some feeling of a desired endurance through ‘singing time’, which in Albert’s case could be extended through an exchange of time with the karaoke hosts. Evidenced in the sociality discussed above are tacit ‘improvised efforts to act on foreclosed or potential futures according to ethical and relational aims’ (Bear 2016a: 126)

The landlords and patrons were effectively in a mutually dependent relationship grounded within *la durée* and a timescape regulated by bureaucratic licensing hours, debt repayment, and patrons’ balancing of free time and labour time. The landlords were caught up in a precarious position to sustain their business that provided a home in different registers: a place to live, but also an actualization of a virtual past that saw the pub foster a sense of working-class sociality and, as such, an extension of ‘home’ for others. This depended on money in an environment marked by austerity, which could create some resentment from others who wanted to experience the sociality that the pub offered but also had to balance such a desire with parting with their money – a material unit that has the ability to create a larger endurance of sustaining their lives in a context of austerity. In order to increase their pub’s income that could help alleviate their debt and hence extend their time as landlords, we see ‘a quest to conform to the rhythms of regular payments, passing on the ripple effects of economic deterioration that come with household austerity’ (cf. Streinzer 2016: 54) Their tricking of time through extending their hours of operation beyond legal hours thus ‘tricked time for others, too’ (ibid: 54).

By engaging with notions of time-tricking, we can ‘refine Marx’s influential discussion of free time and labour time’ (Bear 2016a: 127), in which he contrasted free/disposable time and surplus labour time (Marx 2013: 146-204). Free time, when contrasted with the time of labour, illustrates that it is not truly free and ‘reproduces our compliance to surplus labour’ (Bear 2016a: 127). This notion is evident in Dapper Del’s use of free time to plan his labour time with the app on his phone (which also included a sense of ‘ethical’ time-tricking through his tactical selection of particular jobs that provide increased cab journey time and hence more money with which he can extend ‘free’ time, but which comes at the expense of others’ money). People tried to slow their experience of free time in order to feel that it is extended. This is similar to an account of London ‘liveaboard boaters’, who could be found in the many quays in the Canary Wharf area and who attempt to slow their experience of time through actualizing tempos that challenge hegemonic representations of time and follow more natural rhythms than social emphases on speed (Bowles 2016). In short, the conceptualization of time-tricking made evident in the pub on this karaoke night shows that we can move beyond identifying agency only as intentional action in order to show also how relations are (re)produced in concrete practices (cf. Streinzer 2016: 54).

By way of closing this chapter and content of this ethnography, I now present the pub’s closure, which highlights the themes discussed here and throughout.

Final countdown to the ‘end of an era’

Saturday, 2 February 2019 – the night of the landlords’ pub-closing party. Between my interlocutors’ propensities to find at least humour, if not larger meaning, in the ‘you couldn’t write it’ nature of serendipitous convergences, coupled with their tendency to relate works of popular culture to their own lived experience, I could not help but notice that this day was ‘Groundhog Day’ in America. The 1993 film of the same name is about a man who relives – continues – the same day until such repetition eventually ruptures. This night in the pub was for many patrons one final night of vitality before Pam and Bill’s time as landlords of the Nelson – and consequentially much of the habitual social activity within the pub – would rupture within the week.

Pam and Bill had known about their eviction since before Christmas, having been formally notified that their lease would terminate in February due to insurmountable debt. They informed me and most of the regulars in January, many of whom patronized the Nelson more frequently over the final month in attempts to maximize their time in the pub

while it was still in operation. Whereas Pam had previously concealed the fact that several regulars and friends had loaned her money, she now openly shared this information in order to paint a more vivid picture and understanding of the pub's situation. She also assured those to whom she owed money that they would receive priority over the repayment of her debt to the brewery. Pam claimed that she 'would rather go bankrupt than not repay [her] friends', adding that it did not make sense that the brewery did not forgive her debt. In her reasoning, doing so would have made conducting business easier and ultimately more financially prosperous for both her/her family *and* the brewery.

On the night of the party, Cat and I volunteered to prepare most of the food for Pam so that she and her family would have more time to speak with their friends, other family members, and regulars. In Cat's kitchen, notably smaller than the commercial-sized pub kitchen, we did our best to orchestrate the timing of cooking pizzas and trays of fried chicken strips and sausages, but we ran forty-five minutes late. With the help of one of Cat's neighbours who had plans to attend the party, the three of us managed to carry all of the food to the pub in one attempt – despite my nearly being knocked over by a man throwing open the pub door on his way out as we approached.

The inside was packed, and the deafening music and conversation were cacophonous. After placing the trays of food on a table, Cat and I admitted ourselves behind the bar to hang our coats in the passageway to the cellar. This act prompted many people – faces that neither Cat nor I recognized – to stare at us with somewhat bemused expressions. Two people who were unfamiliar to them – yet clearly not bar staff since we did not remain behind the bar – had freely admitted themselves to a restricted space. They did not know that Cat and I were considered 'pub family'. I quickly learned that these people were friends of the landlords, many of whom had known the landlords and their family for decades. These were the people to whom several regulars had assigned partial blame for the pub's closure and the 'East End way of life' and 'Island community dying' – people who on this night bewailed the fact that this was happening yet had not patronized the pub in order to help sustain it. Dapper Del and others believed that these people were taking too much of Pam and Bill's conversation time – time that Dapper Del felt had 'not been earned' due to these people's absence over the last several years – which caused resentment.

Kind words were spoken about Pam, Bill, and their family. These words called attention to what patrons repeatedly referred to as 'the end of an era' and a 'dying way of life' more broadly. The night carried on past 3am.

The following Thursday was the final day that the pub was open under Pam and Big Bill. The locksmiths and the area manager of the pub company were scheduled to arrive

the following morning to proceed with the eviction. Pam and Bill had debated closing earlier in the week in order to have more time to pack and move out, but they decided that they needed as much last-minute income as possible. A few patrons speculated that the landlords were in denial about the closure and had underestimated the amount of time it would take to pack and move everything – several storeys worth of possessions. Pam and Bill had managed to rent a house on Cat's road from one of their friends, but it was not big enough to accommodate all the family members who lived above the pub. Young William and Mary attempted to expedite their application for public housing, and several of their friends and pub regulars offered to house them in the interim. William and Mary were ultimately successful after much anxiety and daily visits to the local council office, yet their allocated house was a few miles away from the Island in another borough, removing them from their family and friends (see Chapter 2).

On this final evening/night in the pub, William asked me to 'play some songs for nostalgia' in the presence of Cat, Tarquin, his dad, and a few others. Some of the titles that I queued on the Spotify playlist included: Kenny Rogers's 'The Gambler' (which Tarquin and I had performed together at his request on the final karaoke night), 'That's Entertainment' by the Jam (for Big Bill), 'Cool for Cats' by Squeeze (for Cat), Dire Straits's 'Walk of Life' (for William), and the theme from 'Only Fools and Horses'. I ended with Joan Baez's 'The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down'. Big Bill stared at the bar, his knuckles pushed up against the edge of the countertop, mouthing the lyrics to the chorus. 'Brilliant tune, thanks for that Jordan', he said at the end.

Cat and I enquired about the family's plan of action for the move and offered to help. 'We've just run out of time', Big Bill said. William had been selling as many items as fast as possible on eBay and in other markets in order to reduce the amount of 'stuff' and make some money on what would otherwise be disposed of at a local 'rubbish tip' (waste centre). Yet on the whole, the family seemed to have made few preparations. A lorry had been hired for the morning, as well as a storage unit to keep things that would not fit in the new house. However, very little packing had been done, and nothing had been moved. The rest of the family soon arrived, and we began to carry and drive furniture around the corner to the new house over the next several hours while Pam and Mary packed upstairs. Tarquin and I also removed some of the pub fixtures that Bill wanted to keep but had 'written off' due to the time it would have taken him to remove them. These fixtures included the two ceiling projectors, screens, and speakers. I was goaded one final time for being an anthropologist by a married couple who were having a final drink in the pub, who teased that I had 'wasted all [my] time on education' and 'should've been an electrician'.

‘Don’t worry about anything else’, Big Bill told Tarquin and me. ‘We can’t *win*, we don’t ‘ave the time. We just waited too long. We could work through the night, but there’s no point. *It is what it is*’.¹⁵ His words and the family’s postponed actions expressed a resignation about the entire ordeal – a paralysis caused by sadness, frustration, and the realization of being up against an impossible deadline. The family had not sought help, and Cat and I quickly realized that help would be needed the following morning if they were to move required belongings before the eviction. In this case, more money could have bought time – and perhaps some peace of mind – by hiring professional movers and/or being able to secure new housing faster rather than find last-minute help from a property-owning friend – money they did not have.

Pam and Bill had allowed regulars to claim various items as pub ‘mementos’ over the course of the prior two weeks. Dapper Del took the reprint painting of Lord Nelson’s dying moment. Tarquin claimed the picture of The Queen from the corner of the bar ‘as a reminder of all the time [he had] served under her [in prison]’. The cab driver who had made the point about The Queen’s importance for national stability/continuity in reference to the picture (Chapter 1) offered to pay Tarquin £100 for it, but to no avail. As I had by this time determined that my thesis would discuss ‘time’, I asked for the clock behind the bar and a menu from my very first day in the Nelson (Introduction). No one else had enquired about them, or else I would have obliged. Approaching midnight on the final night in the pub, I decided to get some sleep and return early in the morning.

As I took the clock, Cat said it was appropriate that it was one of the final items to go, emphasizing the centrality and importance of time and its measurement within the pub. A song called ‘The Final Countdown’ by Europe played through the remaining speaker when she made this comment. Our eyes locked in a moment of mutual realization of yet another serendipitous convergence. ‘That is really eerie’, Cat remarked. She reflected that some of the lyrics – *will things ever be the same again...it’s the final countdown* – were uncannily apt for describing the pub’s situation. Moreover, the fact that they were sung by a band called Europe added another level of meaning for Cat given the negotiations over the UK’s departure from the European Union at the time. It was, as Cat put it, ‘the perfect song’. ‘But what does it *mean*?’ she asked, trying to locate some metaphysical explanation for the convergence that might point to a deeper reason for what Cat perceived to be unfortunate events – both the pub’s closure and the UK’s departure from the EU. I responded as best as I could at the time. I simply shrugged.

¹⁵ Emphasis mine – see Chapter 1 and Chapter 5.

The following morning was marked by stress, extreme fatigue, combinations of haste and lethargic demeanours of resignation, and expressions of ‘just wanting it all to be over’. The stress was compounded by the fact that an Italian handyman, who had been hired by the owner of the house that Pam and Bill were moving into, had not had sufficient time of his own to finish all the required work. Several doors still needed to be placed in their frames, paintwork had to be done, and light fixtures required installation. The pub family made complaints amongst themselves about the perceived sluggishness of the Italian worker, saying ‘what else do you expect – he’s Italian’, highlighting the perception of social alterity in moments of impatience/temporal angst (Chapter 3). The Italian worker did not help to improve such perceptions of him by taking frequent cigarette breaks every time the family brought a load of items to the house. The man quit the job after a few hours due to the impossible task of completing the required work amid the onslaught of possessions that occupied an increasing amount of space.

Indiscriminately filling bags of items to be taken to the waste centre, Pam said repeatedly, ‘We’ve got no time – we need more time’. The locksmiths/window-boarders and area manager for the pub company arrived just after 10am, all surprised by how many possessions remained in the building. The locksmiths agreed to provide more time until the afternoon, and the manager offered to allow the family to return the following morning for any additional items they might need. After countless trips to the waste centre, the storage unit, and the new house, by 3pm the family decided that enough belongings had been disposed of, stored, or moved. After exchanging handshakes and hugs with the handful of people who had turned up to help – Cat, Tarquin, Grant, and myself – the family emphasized that we would all remain in touch. Shauna immediately set to work to finish painting a toy chest for a client who had ordered the chest as a birthday gift. According to Shauna, her client had shown no empathy for Shauna’s situation since they needed the chest for a party – just as Shauna and her family had shown little tolerance/patience for the Italian handyman. Such is the nature and frequent impossibility of time-reckoning. Shauna and her family, the Italian handyman, and Shauna’s client were all attempting to ‘win’ – to be in positions of management of differentiation within *la durée* (Chapter 5).

Some weeks later, both Dapper Del and Pierce told me that they would have helped with the move but were abroad. Pierce had been on duty with the family for whom he provides private security, and Del had been away in Ireland with his girlfriend – a trip that had been booked before Bill and Pam told patrons about their eviction notice. Del did not want to cancel the trip and possibly sour his new relationship, as it marked the first time that he had grown quite romantically fond of someone following his divorce. Del said that

he was ‘absolutely gutted’ (upset) by not having been able to help with the move. With clear vexation, he added:

‘ow is it that people can talk about community an’ “East End morals” an’ all that an’ yet no one turns up to ‘elp? For fuck sake, ‘alf of you [who did ‘elp] aren’t even Islanders – or East Enders! Cat’s from up North and you’re a bloody Yank! ‘Ow does that ‘appen?! No offence, mate, but you see what I mean? So much for community...put *that* in your book, Jord!

While spoken candidly and passionately, Del’s words ignore the complexity of social life and the allocation of time for competing obligations – an allocation of time that he himself chose to direct elsewhere for his own particular personal reasons rather than on helping the family move – thus deflecting blame and helping to alleviate his (later admitted) sense of guilt. Like Pierce, even though others might not have been abroad, they still had work and potentially urgent matters of their own. A few patrons later told me that they had not helped because of their harbouring of some bitterness towards the family from having loaned Pam money out of a ‘sense of community’ and support. They were now not willing to spend their time, as they had already spent money without due repayment. In other words, the relationship had become imbalanced (Chapter 4).

Conclusion: an epilogue

The pub reopened under new management several months later after much speculation about what would happen to it. I returned to the pub for the first time in the summer of 2019. Some of the previous regulars were there, but most of the faces were unfamiliar to me – including those of the bar staff. Unlike previous reconfigurations of the pub after management transitions, none of the staff under Pam and Bill’s tenure remained through the rupture. Cat and Pierce were in the pub and said that they had caught glimpses of Pam, Bill, and ‘the family’. William and Mary made frequent trips to the Island, contacting friends to arrange ‘catch ups’, but they chose to drink at another pub rather than the Nelson. Pam and Bill kept to themselves, with Bill working increased hours as an electrician and Pam focused on caring for her mother.

On this night in the Nelson, a song called ‘Let it Go’ from the Disney animated film, *Frozen* (2013), began to play through the new sound system. ‘What the ‘ell is this?!’ Pierce exclaimed with a look of disgust. The ‘vibe’ created in part by the music was now somewhat different to what Pierce had been used to. It occurred to me that the last song I had heard in the pub before my visit on this day – ‘The Final Countdown’ – was released

in 1986 and contains the instrumentation that many interlocutors use to periodize music of the 1980s: a powerful, bold, and ‘spacey’ use of a synthesizer accompanied by a ‘driving’ bassline. The 80s were also the final years before Canary Wharf was constructed and a period for which several interlocutors had particular feelings of nostalgia. The docks had closed by 1980, and the construction of what are today’s buildings in Canary Wharf began in 1986. Not only, then, did the song capture a ‘countdown’ to the pub’s closure and the UK’s position within the EU, but also a potential end to the pub serving as a stronghold of a certain form of sociality and such cultural expressions as 80s music amid an ongoing process of development initiated at that time.

In addition to the difference in musical taste of the new manager – a Scottish woman from Glasgow – a new clock had been placed against a wall opposite the bar rather than behind it like the previous one. Despite various degrees of change that ‘old’ regulars perceived, such as that of the music, there was at least one notable continuity – a ‘ghost’ (Chapter 2) of the previous configuration/*epoch* of the Nelson. Throughout the night, I noticed that every regular glanced up at least once – several times, in most cases – to where the old clock had been. So engrained and habitual is a need to know and measure the time.



Figure 6.1 The pub clock behind the bar.



*Top left: **Figure 6.2** Empty pub facing the bar. Top right: **Figure 6.3** Pub exterior with 'lease this pub' sign, and Canary Wharf in the background. Bottom left: **Figure 6.4** Pub exterior at night, after closure and being boarded up. Bottom right: **Figure 6.5** Empty pub facing the far wall.*

Conclusion

‘at the end of the day’

What have we learned about time and its pervasiveness through an examination of its immanent constitution, rather than transcendent measurement, of lived experience? While my interlocutors will suggest that several points discussed about issues with time are socially evident and even ‘common sense’, this study has tried to go beyond such an assessment in order to interrogate precisely why this might be the case.

Within the context of a post-industrial, financialized, and politically divided Britain, this ethnography has explored how epistemological pluralism coupled with perceived difference in various registers of everyday life illuminate interconnected class tensions, negotiations of belonging, and a complex timescape. The work has analyzed how such entanglements manifest in everyday attempts to establish a sense of social legibility – to make sense of the shifting, ever-differentiating world – and to live desired lives against the backdrop of socio-economic and political fluctuations. This work’s core contributions accordingly sit at the theoretical intersection of epistemology, difference, and time, discussions of which are interwoven throughout. In order to investigate this nexus, the ethnography has focused on the everyday and the ordinary, as the conversations and interactions found here are the primary avenues for individuals to learn and construct knowledge about the world (Williams 1989). Through participant observation and a focus on individuals, the ethnography offers an alternative view to recent composite anthropological studies of Europe. Rather than make generalized ‘objective’ claims, this study has sought to unmask ‘the *profoundness* that lies beneath the surface of the ordinary’ in order to make visible ‘the actions, commitments, and struggles of people in ways that are often disguised because, from an inside or indigenous perspective, these are just everyday, just part of how life is, of what one does’ (Mattingly 2014: 206). In this way, the ethnography you have before you has attempted ‘one of anthropology’s most important tasks’ in detecting and ‘illuminating the drama of ordinary life’ (ibid: 206).

Time and the everyday

We have seen that a significant aspect of such drama in everyday life comes down to the interaction of, and value people attach to, the desired, assumed, and actual durations of various elements and configurations of lived experience within a continuously differentiating ‘living present’. Such timeframes range from the durations of specific buildings and neighbourhood structures, to the duration of business proprietorship, to individual ‘alone time’ one gets at home, to the amount of time singing at karaoke night, to the desired longevity of particular individual and community ways of life. These discussions are underpinned by capitalism’s own continuity and the taken-for-granted expectations of growth and stability rather than recession, austerity, and decay. Due to the stress points of this economic environment that is particularly prone to rupture due to gentrification, population growth, financial speculation, and debt-driven growth, the interplay between epistemology, alterity, and time is acutely evident in how Island residents produce their own knowledge and assessments of difference based on daily perturbation. Recall that ageist, sexist, classist and, or, xenophobic speech accompanied several narratives of daily disruptions, for instance, showing how stressful capitalist urban time-reckoning pressures amid attempts to live life according to how people want (or need) to can provoke fundamental biases. Such provocation can arouse anxieties about perceived disruptions not only to particular durations and rhythms of everyday life, but also the timescape of the broader social order. By using a fine-grained methodology that takes seriously the subtleties of everyday interaction, this ethnography was able to explore whether dirt might not be so much ‘matter out of place’ as perceived social difference and alterity more broadly can be ‘matter out of time’ – that is, out of rhythm or tempo with the life cadence either expected or desired in a specific ‘immanent moment’ amid the daily grind or a more prolonged period (Chapter 1).

Such subtleties enabled us to craft a general typology for thinking about how time as differentiation mediates and produces social categories of difference (Chapter 3). This analysis was animated by an epistemological framework made possible with an ontology of time that enables us to see time as immanent differentiation in everyday life and social interaction/sociality. In this respect, the ethnography has extended the use of this ontological framework, moving beyond its initial employment to investigate the actualization of a broad historical past (Hodges 2007) to everyday interaction in an attempt to answer the call for ‘novel theorization of “conflicts in time” within the politics of lived experience’ (Hodges 2008: 417). Apart from theorizing social difference as ‘matter out of time’, this epistemological model yielded further original ethnographic insights into how

issues of time shape sociality and lived experience, implicate inequality and political orientations, and mediate constructions of value and difference beyond writing various concerns off as merely ‘neoliberal and uncertain futures’. Allow me to summarize some of these findings.

The pub was a site to create time away from work in order to craft and manipulate durations of leisure. The time people created in the pub can be seen as both the actualization of recuperation and regeneration for the sake of social reproduction and capitalist work. Through humour and social critique and commentary, there was *simultaneous* subversion, even if tacit, of that social reproduction while still performing it. The time created in the pub indexes a larger desire for individual autonomy – a freedom of movement, of experience, of personal actualization. It signified a mediation between the more recuperative and social reproductive elements of house/home and the subversive arena of leisure – a ‘third space’ between home and work, with many regular patrons considering the pub as an element, and even extension, of home itself. This was also true in the broader sense of providing long-term residents with a feeling of being ‘at home’ in the neighbourhood and on the Island as a whole (Chapter 2). Yet leisure itself can become ‘work’ through subtle instances of domination and subjection and perceived competition over control of differentiation in order to manage time – to ‘win’ (Chapter 5). The extended narrative of the karaoke night made these elements vivid through its analysis and illustrations of overlapping and contested attempts to actualize and sustain multiple individual and collective durations in various registers (Chapter 6).

We can theorize these instances of perceived ‘winning’ as instances of power mediation, but now with more precision why – they are situations of managing various lines of differentiation/actualization. ‘High stakes’ winning – in politics, for example – is then winning that places an individual or entity in a position of management of more lines of differentiation that then control the immanence of time that we can analyze in a delineated ethnographic zone. We saw how individuals negotiate such power relations through the situational intervention of the state (Chapter 4). People indeed used, as elsewhere in Britain, ‘the police as personalized tools in their pursuit of their own daily relations’ (Koch 2018b: 155). These evocations were not intended necessarily to resolve interpersonal conflicts, but often precisely to enflame animosity between parties and perform ‘one-upmanship’. ‘Playing with someone’s time’, as Tarquin phrases it, is another form of the subjection of waiting (in Tarquin’s case, the potential to have to wait for release from prison), the politics and anxieties about which Bourdieu (1990) postulates is a negotiation of power. Even *unintentional* subjection in everyday interaction is created by

the nature of time as differentiation and can thus be brought on not only by people but the nature of things and biophysical properties, such as the speed and waiting of pint-pouring (cf. Latour 2005).

Here I suggest that future anthropological research about time can extend our epistemological framework to include even psychological and cognitive anthropological investigations to examine how particular orientations to this differentiation develop. What deeper factors beneath socio-cultural constructions might articulate with them to craft dispositions that react differently to perceived competition, immigration, and everyday frustrations about continuous differentiation that go beyond social forces of inequality, class, masculinities/femininities, and other social categories? Socio-cultural forces are not helpful, for instance, to explain why people who grew up in/with the ‘same’/very similar conditions and experiences can have diametrically opposed orientations towards those experiences and the politics they implicate (cf. Bloch 2012). Further research in cognitive anthropology can examine time and differentiation to understand better how cognitive bias is shaped. In the ontology of time used in this ethnography, racism can be considered to include a component of impatience with differentiation/time due to the very real, material reasons discussed in this ethnography. This notion is presented merely to understand better the human condition rather than as an excuse or reason to in any way legitimate the behaviour that can accompany racism. We might be able to explore more deeply the implicit cognitive bias argument and *how* that psychology is *formed* and manifests in dispositions/orientations towards continuous differentiation.

To that end, further cognitive anthropological research to which this ontology of time and immanent methodology can contribute is the importance of memory not just in a historical sense, but as it forms everyday practices and interpersonal relationships. As the individual and collective capacity and ability to remember, memory influences interpersonal and social relationships, rhythms, affinities, and frustrations (when it fails). Partners become upset because one has not remembered something to which the other has ascribed particular value. The memory of a bar worker causes unwanted differentiation and lack of ‘flow’ when they forget patrons’ orders, implicating the thorny notion of inequality of personal attributes that are highlighted in larger structures of inequality and opportunity hoarding that this ethnography documents (and which I return to below). Strong memory can better overcome continuous differentiation of immanent time – it enables the retention of virtual knowledge that is readily available when it might need to be actualized and drawn upon in the face of differentiation. On the other hand, failure of memory provided a point

of conversation to share a story, to perform memory and negotiate the ‘truth’ of the virtual past through group collaboration.

The pub was an enduring site of this virtual past. As a symbol of home and historical working-class Islander identity, a close-up scrutiny of the formations and experiences of time in the pub, including its closing, index the continued displacement of the working class and the transformations of class positions brought about by gentrification in a rapidly changing, financialized, and ‘professionalized’ city. The pub was used to find and create time and maintain a sense of place amid changing class relations and the differentiation of public space. Its closure signifies a loss of specific sites in which individuals can discuss and enact class and other forms of identity and even solidarity. As documented elsewhere in London, with change comes ‘a disjuncture from local life of a hierarchy of formal political institutions that were deeply connected to the organisation of work and labour’ (Hall 2012: 133). While not explicitly political, the labour of the Island had been intimately connected to working-class pubs, and we see quite evidently with the pub’s closure that ‘to secure the everyday, far from being something we take for granted, might be thought of as an achievement’ (Das 2007, 2010: 376 in Mattingly 2014: 78). This achievement comes only after constant effort, even competition perhaps, to construct socially and mould the everyday into a desirable environment.

Hall (2012) suggests that ‘what we may well need is a new ontology for understanding the local’ amid the everyday, ‘one that refers far more to a myriad of layers, histories and networks’ (ibid: 130). Building upon Hall’s framing of the local as layered zones of ‘familiarity and intimacy’ that can span ‘neighbourhoods, cities and even countries’ (ibid: 130-1), I suggest that our ontology of time is well-suited to articulate to this ontology of the local. The ontology of time argues for the same – layered zones, or braided strands – of differentiation that can span various registers. Hall’s proposal for an ontology of the local works in sync with our examination of time, and we can use the two together for a more robust ontology of what constitutes ‘local’ that can, as in the case of the pub, implicate time in the various registers in which it is implicated. At stake here, for example, is the tension inherent in ‘born and bred’ ideologies that can give way to embracing a ‘foreigner’ as ‘local’ because of their potential to be both ‘in sync’ in everyday interaction and contribute to the viability, social reproduction, and duration of the pub.

Amid such contestations about defining and performing an identifiable and legible everyday, this ethnography has documented concern, yet also ultimate resignation, about the intense differentiation of the local neighbourhood. The expression that so often signifies this resignation, ‘it is what it is’, indexes fundamental socio-economic and political

frustrations. The state and individuals attempt to control, regulate and, in some cases, maintain, differentiation with the aim of simplification that might produce a sense of management of differentiation – of time. Indeed, ‘people who hold power, in governments or in organizations, are bound to simplify the issues and variables, or else they would be quite unable to make decisions’ (Cohen 2002: 328) – the ‘paralysis by analysis’ *leitmotif*. This tension has recently been evident after fieldwork amid the Covid-19 pandemic and Brexit negotiations when President Trump stated, ‘It is what it is’, in response to surging Covid cases and an apparent inability of the US government to manage the emerging severity of the pandemic. A British minister likewise made the news for suggesting that ‘nothing lasts forever’ in response to issues with UK-EU negotiations about fishing quotas and agreements. Such statements index the sentiment that governance and (everyday) life itself are fundamentally irreconcilable and impossible to fully manage. Some interlocutors consider this attitude as state ineptitude, highlighting a stark contrast between those who see an unchangeable and problematic ‘human nature’ and those who feel that whatever ugliness of human nature there ‘really is’ can be overcome or at least mitigated through policy and social welfare. The latter are people for whom ‘it is what it is’ is not good enough, who demand a better social imagination for what is possible in terms of equality, equity, social and environmental justice, standards of living, and quality of life.

Yet our ontology of time has illustrated how ‘life necessarily entails confronting the novelty of the open future. In myriad differing and contingent ways, then, it is something which all human beings must contend with, as they seek to create the durable in the face of transience and ontological dispersal’ (Hodges 2007: 62). How, then, might we now conceptualize the pervasive perceptions of competition and competitive ‘human nature’ this ethnography presents? We can be more precise than to say simply that competition is seeking to win in variously defined contexts, which is at once productive for some and destructive for others. More precisely, we can now define competition as the result of never being able to reconcile differentiation fully to our own or others’ satisfaction; we can never fully ‘win’ (cf. Hoy 2011: 219). This is not as simple as claiming a competitive human nature, but rather showing precisely how time itself is the problem with its continuous differentiation. This is why, for instance, so many interlocutors evoke the language of competition when they describe everything from a perceived lack of personal attributes to everyday rows with partners to the exasperation brought on by opportunity hoarding and inequality within capitalism. ‘It is what it is’ thus denotes resignation to senses of inherent life competition and everyday attempts to ‘win’, to manage the relentless differentiation of *la durée*, of time itself. Specific contexts and *contests*, such

as football, can then be theorized as the ritualization of a tacit recognition of this constant differentiation and fundamental needs/urges to manage difference/time.

With this discussion in mind we can complicate claims about the Isle of Dogs and orientations towards development. Whereas Foster (1999) suggests that ‘two very distinct views about the impact of the development existed among established Island residents: those who regretted and resented change, and those who sought to accommodate it’ (302), this study has shown that this argument is now too binary. There is a tension here that is often a source of internal individual conflict, cognitive dissonance, and oscillating ambivalence that is exemplified in the conversation with a cab driver (Chapter 1) in which he indexes the general feeling that modernization and development needed to be done, but it has come at a price of differentiating a particular way of life; people will complain about the rate and amount of change in the area while often eagerly partaking of it.

On this point, we can examine ideas of time and value, moving beyond questions of meaning to how desire is structured and how that structures power, pleasure, work, and material wealth (Graeber 2001). I have shown that people value time, which taken on its own is a simple statement. But I have shown what that encompasses in a very precise way and how that value of time interacts with economic structures, pleasure/leisure, and desire through what I have termed ‘phenomenological accumulation’. This concept takes inspiration from Mercurian dialectical phenomenology that integrates materialism with phenomenology, adding a differentiation-as-time epistemological and ontological framework. I suggest that we might reframe material or class aspirations as rather *temporal* aspirations – desires for time. Importantly, such desires do not foreclose materiality, as this study has shown how aspiration for different experiences and a sense of time moving rather than stagnation are mediated by materiality. For many interlocutors, ‘class’ aspiration is a desire to experience difference and possibility, and to have the financial ability to create that sense of autonomy and freedom, rather than to ‘become middle class’. While not included in the body chapters of this study, Big Bill best exemplified this idea, both for himself and others, when he once told me that if his family were to ‘come into money’, he would keep the pub and not change anything about its working-class character, but rather hire people to run it for them and maintain its duration.

The idea of phenomenological accumulation as an experience of differentiation and thus time articulates with Heidegger’s (1993) argument that boredom ‘is as ontologically basic as anxiety’ (Hoy 2009: 33). The experience of material difference, of ‘beating boredom’, can create a sense of time moving rather than stagnation (made most evident in circumstances of lockdown amid the present Covid-19 pandemic). Scottish

James summed this up best when he stated emphatically that he would not deny himself ‘the tastes and flavours’ that he enjoyed as part of his phenomenological accumulation despite his congestive heart failure and other health issues. We might use the idea of phenomenological accumulation to help us make sense of phenomena beyond the Isle of Dogs – for instance, the more extreme case reported in the *Daily Mail* of a young American girl who murdered someone because she wanted to know what that experience ‘felt like’. While at the morbid end of the spectrum of what different experiences are possible in life, this discussion implicates conflicts between my interlocutors’ assumptions about capitalism and socialism. While exacerbating inequality, recall that an interlocutor speculated that people embrace capitalism because of their perception that they can better experience difference when they want to. The circulation on WhatsApp of a picture of a ‘typical socialist Cuban market’ with rows of identical products highlights this anxiety of limitation while foreclosing discussion of the fact that in the UK a handful of large corporations provide the majority of manufactured food products and create an illusion of difference with multiple brands. There is a value of producing (rapid) difference that creates a sense of time moving and a consequent hierarchy in which I was at the bottom by taking years to complete a PhD, viewed as a single product, while tradesmen can complete more immediately useful jobs in a single day.

The humour and jokes with which interlocutors addressed these points is a vital aspect of pub sociality that at once upholds and negotiates perceived social stratification. As a part of the very phenomenological accumulation that people could find in the pub, humour demonstrates the value of time and rapidity (through jokes made about time and quick wit in making a joke) rather than sluggishness while acknowledging fundamental and inconvenient truths through the guise of irony. Yet in doing so humour seemed to foreclose more serious calls for action to do something about those truths that implicate inequality.

As for inequality, the implicated themes of austerity, neoliberalism, and financialization reveal that beyond acting as world systems or governmentalities, they are also processes of social sorting that create ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ in specifically defined contexts such as access to affordable housing and debt repayment. It has been particularly beneficial to focus on the everyday through participant-observation rather than rely on composite data for exploring issues of inequality. While social groups can be disadvantaged, it is individuals who experience the suffering. Here, ‘paying attention to the individual...does not privilege the individual over society’ (Rapport 1997: 6; Cohen 1994: 192). Indeed, individuality is opposed to individualism, which is a context-specific conceptualization of how society values ‘the person’. On the contrary, individuality is

universal (ibid). Whereas *individualism* as a socio-political and historical process has led to a state of meritocracy, *individuality* offers us a way to explore the effects of inequality at the very real, individual level in order to foster a ‘common liberal morality’ (Rapport 1997: 200-1).

What Sandel (2020) terms the ‘tyranny of merit’ is touched upon in Chapter 5 that shows the interrelationship between individual attributes (which includes merit) and structural opportunity hoarding. Despite how it might come across, I suggest that my interlocutors largely do not want to be the exception to social rules, but rather want to be *exceptional* in terms of possessing individual traits or merit that might better enable them to succeed when playing by the rules. I further suggest that at the core of inequality is time in the final instance. While Bear (2014b) argues that ‘we would have to look beyond the question of time towards the deeper one of inequality to resolve the dilemmas of labouring in/of time’ (20) this study has crafted an approach that places time at the deeper level, as differentiation that produces inequality and different social perceptions of inequality. Regardless of how one wishes to conceptualize this exact relationship, there are still two general issues we face with regards to inequality. By focusing only on the structural (opportunity hoarding) element, people discuss ‘levelling the playing field’ so that those from disadvantaged groups can seek upward mobility through merit and ‘God-given potential’. Yet such a field still ignores the second issue that some fortunate people are equipped with particular abilities, ‘God-given’ or otherwise, that help them build merit with more ease than others. This second issue then addresses not just groups of people, but particular individuals, and raises thorny questions about the kind of life one can have or aspire to have based on perhaps immutable abilities rather than group membership. Does a ‘naturally talented’ singer, for example, deserve more wealth and potential for phenomenological accumulation even when they have already been born with a ‘gift’? Ethical and moral questions such as these were side-stepped with statements that ‘it is what it is’ and a resignation to the creation of value inherent in capitalism, even if people found such mechanisms of evaluation to be flawed. These questions can also be probed through a focus on individuals and the everyday, whereas composite, objective, and generalized studies omit them.

A larger consensus was illustrated by concerns about (im)balance and worries that others will ‘get one up’ on you. This angst is exacerbated by the state’s neoliberal agenda that is calculated to discourage ‘dependency’ on the state (Fraser & Gordon 1994; Ferguson 2015) and which conceals ‘the fact that many beneficiaries are simultaneously wage-earners’ (James & Kirwan 2019: 2). The resulting stigma pits taxpayers against benefit

recipients, lest the latter ‘get a free ride’ at the expense of the taxpayer (see Hills 2015). This ethnography engaged with how this embedded logic that is present on the Isle of Dogs among both the working class and finance professionals obscures the reality of debt-driven money creation amid financialization. This obfuscation fosters accusations that household debt forgiveness is unfair to those who have already paid off their debts by ignoring structural socio-economic reasons that create debt in the first instance. This logic also illustrates what some of my interlocutors believe is an imbalance. The sense that ‘if I must endure something to get ahead, then others must as well’ is prevalent. This is particularly the case when people perceive these others to be more socially removed from themselves and their families, although some individuals have this outlook towards their children and other family members in addition to strangers. Many research companions also share the sentiment that EU citizens had been ‘getting one up’ in what they perceived was an imbalanced relationship between countries that are not on equal economic levels, and some interlocutors use the tiered football league structure to make sense of inequality and generate ideas for reform vis-à-vis the European Union (i.e. placing the member states into tiers of EU membership and associated benefits).

In short, pub discussions exemplified that ‘disagreements are not settled on the facts, but are the means by which the facts are settled’ (Fish 1980: 338). The only ultimate fact that seemed to be settled through disagreement is that life is inherently competitive and differentiating, and this ethnography has engaged with precisely why that is and many of the social consequences. Friendship and family networks can both mitigate and intensify this feeling of everyday angst and competition, often depending on the extent to which senses of balance and reciprocity have been achieved.

Don’t stop thinking about tomorrow

Considering the above discussion, allow me to make some final reflections that move beyond the anthropological endeavour to a more political one that takes lessons from this study to propose state action. This ethnography has illustrated that ‘the financialized predicament of humanity is now more profound and more universal than ever before. Every life-course and social biography, everywhere on the globe, is willy-nilly infested with and structured by moments of financialized extraction on behalf of the owners of money capital, via public or private relations of indebtedness, or some combination’ (Kalb 2020: 2). The economy does not exist in a vacuum – there is no purely economic aspect of human life – but is relational with the political and social, including subjectivities,

moralties, and ideologies (ibid). If there is any trickle-down effect in the present economy, it is the trickle-down of anxiety about the time/duration and rhythms of financial speculation that infuse everyday life with even more potential for imminent rupture and differentiation. Margaret Thatcher famously remarked that the problem with socialism is that you run out of other people's money. Ironically, that is precisely what is occurring under the capitalist regime, but in the opposite direction to what Thatcher meant, with ever-increasing concentrations of wealth in the ever-increasing higher percentage points of the global population (see Piketty 2014), along with ecological imbalances due to capitalist extraction, accumulation, and growth (Hickel 2020).

In this context, it is important to 'differentiate between austerity as deficit reduction or fiscal consolidation and as a political economic process intrinsically linked to power relations and growing inequalities' (Berglund 2018: 806). For the former, austerity has been widely critiqued by both academics (see Krugman 2013; Bear & Knight 2017) and Labour politicians. However, the lack of such critiques' influence on policy shows how vital it is to move beyond a view of austerity as a means of achieving economic growth through reduced spending (Berglund 2018: 806). Austerity is linked to structures that negotiate and mediate power and coercion, which include various everyday epistemologies grounded in the logics of neoliberalism and financialization that this ethnography explores. There is an inherent contradiction of creating individualistic, 'free' and 'empowered' citizens on the one hand only to strike down that illusion of autonomy through austerity and an oppressive system that controls lives and provides more regulation on the other (see Koch 2018: 214; see also Graeber 2015b). Yet a particular form of 'economic storytelling' that no amount of expert opinion can alter (made evident in this study through various examples of the scepticism of expert opinion) includes a debt story and myth that is used to justify austerity in order to maintain financialized debt as a means to grow the economy (Montgomerie 2019; Weeks 2020). By instilling worry about government debt through these narratives, the state legitimates austerity while preventing 'the much-needed structural reforms to the economy', thereby foreclosing an alternative to austerity (ibid: np; see also Weeks 2020).

I posit the question: can we imagine an economic system that does not incentivize its own critique to the extent that capitalism does, or is differentiation through academic analyses and critique and other social conduits inevitable in pursuit of novelty within the differentiation of time itself? However, if we take this ontology seriously, we might have the beginnings to craft a political project that addresses explicitly the continuous differentiation that is time. This enterprise can be a politics and ethics that works *with* time/differentiation and tries to mediate and mitigate it rather than attempts to harness time

or overcome it in order to grow capital or to acknowledge implicitly the frustrations with time yet respond simply with ‘it is what it is’ and that ‘all things come to an end’, as we have seen recent right-wing politicians do. What might such a politics look like? We are already witnessing its tensions amid the Covid pandemic and can now interrogate them precisely as issues of an ontology of time. Moving away from the logic of getting ‘back to normal’, let us restructure society with a social, rather than purely economic, calculus in economic and social policy (Bear, James, Simpson et al 2020) that considers universal basic income and/or universal basic services (Standing 2017), a reduced work week, *degrowth* restructuring of economic systems (Hickel 2020), and increased availability of social housing through significant curbing of the financialized housing market. Can we emerge from the pandemic with a new social imagination that both reconsiders what is possible and acknowledges capitalism’s limitations and outright dangers?

All that remains now is to ponder the origin of differentiation – of time – and the virtual Whole. Is there a more fundamental guiding force beyond mere perceived coincidence and serendipity that creates convergences of differentiation and, in doing so, produces meaning in people’s lives? Perhaps the answer will emerge, but, for now, debates and differentiation rage on, producing time itself in the process.

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