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Nelson, S. and Lewis, J.

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Resident engagement in the regeneration of social housing: the case of Woodberry Down, London

Suzy Nelson, School of Architecture and Cities, University of Westminster
Jane Lewis, School of Social Science, London Metropolitan University

Abstract

In recent decades policies of renewing social housing in partnership with private developers have become widespread and critics have described such policies as state-led gentrification. Whilst resident participation in such regeneration is often viewed as tokenistic, this paper presents a case of estate renewal where a well established residents' association is having some success in influencing the outcomes of redevelopment as a result of engaging in a regeneration partnership. The residents' association faces considerable challenges as the local authority has entered a partnership with a major developer and the majority of new homes will be for sale. Nonetheless, the residents' association has been able to influence the regeneration in terms of the offers of rehousing to existing residents and in terms of maintaining their sense of place. However, many leaseholders have been displaced and there is an ongoing struggle to ensure that there is not a net loss of social rented housing. The paper highlights how sustained organisation by residents can affect the outcomes of redevelopment, but also illustrates the limitations of developer-led regeneration meeting social objectives.

Keywords

regeneration of social housing; gentrification; resident engagement; displacement; sense of place

Introduction

In the context of limited public funding, the providers of social housing in many countries are redeveloping existing housing estates in partnership with private developers. Policymakers have seen the resulting mix of tenures as beneficial, arguing that this helps to overcome problems associated with concentrations of poverty. However, much of the academic literature is critical, describing such redevelopment as state-led gentrification, and resident involvement as tokenistic. This paper aims to contribute to the debate about the impact of resident engagement.

The paper begins with a review of the existing literature on the redevelopment of social housing as mixed tenure communities, and the role of developers and residents' involvement in such developments. It presents a case study on the regeneration of Woodberry Down, a large social housing estate in London, which is being rebuilt by a private developer as a mixed tenure development, where the existing residents have been relatively successful in resisting displacement and maintaining their sense of place. The case study examines the challenges residents face and the effectiveness of their activities in realising positive outcomes, and considers the limitations in their achievements. The paper concludes with a discussion of how their experience might inform other communities facing similar challenges.

Policies of redeveloping social housing as mixed communities

Policy makers have argued that mixed communities overcome negative neighbourhood effects. In the UK they became a central feature of New Labour's Urban Agenda (DETR, 2000; ODPM, 2003). Its Mixed Communities Initiative was:

a new and more comprehensive approach to tackling area disadvantage, bringing together housing and neighbourhood renewal strategies to reduce concentrations of deprivation, stimulate economic development and improve public services (Mixed Communities Evaluation Project Team, 2009, p.9).

However, reviews of research on the success of socially mixed communities indicate that although the quality of the environment in neighbourhoods is improved, there is little evidence of improved outcomes and opportunities for existing disadvantaged residents (Tunstall & Lupton, 2010; Bolt & van Kempen, 2013).

A key feature of this type of redevelopment is partnership with private sector developers, which is part of a broader shift away from direct state provision of services. Housing provision has become increasingly dominated by market processes and financial stakeholders (Jacobs & Manzi, 2019). In the UK, neo-liberal government policy has, since the 1980s, eroded local authority housing provision; no public funding has been available for building new council homes, and the stock of council housing has been reduced by the introduction of the right of tenants to buy their homes and by transfers of local authority owned homes to housing associations (Malpass & Victory, 2010). For several decades UK governments viewed housing associations as their preferred partners in the provision of social housing, because they were seen to combine access to private finance with social objectives (Manzi & Morrison, 2018). This resulted in the regeneration of council housing becoming increasingly dependent on the transfer of stock to housing associations or private developers (Bowie, 2017). However, as a result of cuts in government subsidy, housing associations' ability to reconcile commercial and social goals is being increasingly challenged (Manzi & Morrison, 2018). Recent easing of the restrictions on local authority borrowing have enabled local authorities once again to directly build some new social rented council housing (London Housing Commission, 2016; Morphet & Clifford, 2017). However, in the context of a lack of public funding, the financing of new social rented housing in estate regeneration continues to rely on cross subsidy from the sale of market homes (Pipe & Glanville, 2015).

In London high land values and rising house prices have made the redevelopment of social housing an attractive option to both cash strapped local authorities and private developers (Watt, 2009). In 2015, The London Assembly's Housing Committee reported that, in the previous decade, 50 council housing estates, with over 30,000 homes, in London had received planning permission for partial or complete demolition and redevelopment at higher density. It estimated that redevelopment would result in double the number of homes, but that there would be a net loss of 8,000 social rented homes. Existing tenants have the right to be rehoused, albeit that they may not be able to remain in the same neighbourhood, but leaseholders (who have bought their homes through the right to buy or on the open market) are bought out, at prices which are generally well below the cost of newly built homes in the same area (Hubbard and Lees, 2018).

As a result of the displacement of existing residents, there has been growing criticism of the redevelopment of social housing as state-led or state-sponsored gentrification (see for

example, Lees, 2008; Uitermark & Bosker, 2014). The term ‘gentrification’ was originally used to describe the process of middle class households purchasing and renovating dilapidated houses in poor areas, and the social transformation of the neighbourhoods which resulted (Glass, 1964). Smith (2002) argues that gentrification has grown from these small scale, localised origins to become generalised as a neo-liberal urban strategy that favours capitalist production and results in the class-inflected remake of urban areas. Displacement of lower income residents is seen as the central feature of gentrification (Atkinson, 2004). In some cases, the regeneration of London social housing estates has involved the total displacement of the existing population (LTF, Lees, Just Space & SNAG, 2014).

As well as the physical displacement of existing residents it is argued that gentrification also involves the transformation of social space. Kohn (2013) points out:

Often what is lost through gentrification is not the individual’s home or apartment, but rather the neighborhood itself. Some long-term residents may stay, but they increasingly feel like aliens or outsiders in ‘their’ neighborhoods (p. 304).

Networks of mutual support will be disrupted by the displacement of neighbours, and local retailers and other facilities, serving the existing community, are likely to be displaced, negatively impacting on residents who do remain. Based on their review of recent developments in London, Davidson and Lees (2010) propose a broad definition of gentrification that, in addition to the displacement of existing residents, includes the loss of remaining residents’ sense of place due to changes in the class structure of their neighbourhoods and changes in local facilities.

Resident engagement in the regeneration of social housing

The retreat of the state from direct provision of services has in many countries been accompanied by increased emphasis on community engagement (Taylor, 2007). The participation of existing residents in the regeneration of social housing frequently takes the form of involvement in public-private partnerships, which offer potential opportunities for local communities to negotiate about the outcomes of redevelopment. Arnstein (1969) in her seminal paper on participation argued:

Partnership can work most effectively when there is an organized power-base in the community to which the citizen leaders are accountable; when the citizens group has the financial resources to pay its leaders reasonable honoraria for their time-consuming efforts; and when the group has the resources to hire (and fire) its own technicians, lawyers, and community organizers. (p.221).

Taylor (2007) recognises that communities require considerable sophistication as well as time, flexibility and resources to challenge prevailing discourses in partnership working and considers that in practice the scope for communities to exercise real influence is limited.

Powerful state and market actors can control the agendas of partnerships (Arthurson, 2003). Hence operating within the formal structures of partnership can limit communities’ ability to articulate and pursue their concerns. There are risks that community engagement professionals serve the interests of the state and developers, who are paying them, rather than local communities (Darcy and Rogers, 2014; Raco, Street and Freire-Trigo, 2016).

Neo-liberal policies of urban renewal using the language of partnership and consensus tend to mask power differentials and overlook the persistence of antagonistic positions (McAuliffe and Rogers, 2018). Darcy and Rogers (2014) highlight how housing regeneration partnerships can co-opt existing residents:

tenants' rights to participate in the knowledge-production about urban spaces, such as their home and neighbourhoods, are now explicitly co-opted into the community-building programmes of the state and a globalised and marketised sense of place (p. 252).

Independent self-organisation and activities outside formal structures of participation are thus important to the realisation of residents' political objectives (Galuszka, 2019; McAuliffe and Rogers, 2018). However, residents of social housing estates undergoing redevelopment face a number of challenges in organising to protect their communities. The labelling of social housing as 'sink estates' is frequently used to justify redevelopment and can negatively impact on the morale of residents making it difficult for them to oppose plans for demolition (Slater, 2018). Neglect prior to redevelopment and concerns about losing access to possible benefits of regeneration, as well as the significant commitment of time and energy needed for prolonged and effective engagement, present further challenges (Goetz, 2016). In the UK context, the different legal rights of tenants and leaseholders can be used to divide potential opponents of redevelopment making organising resistance more difficult (Watt and Minton, 2016).

Research has indicated that residents' participation in the regeneration of social housing (Gustavsson and Elander, 2016; Hall and Hickman, 2011; Teernstra and Pinkster, 2016) has tended to be tokenistic, involving information giving and placation at the lower level of Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation. Residents tend to only be involved at the end of the policy cycle, when major decisions have already been made, thus limiting their influence. However, despite limitations, some residents do organize effectively to reduce the negative impacts of regeneration. Access to support networks and professional advice can be important in minimising physical displacement and securing new facilities (August, 2016). Challenging stigmatisation and changing the narrative about public housing can change the way that residents feel about themselves and help residents to win concessions (Thurber and Fraser, 2016). Challenging attempts to rebrand neighbourhoods by campaigning for the preservation of place names and a recognition of local history can also play an important role in resisting gentrification and protecting existing residents' sense of place (Masuda and Bookman, 2018).

The literature review has highlighted the risks of the regeneration of social housing resulting in displacement of existing residents and a loss of sense of place for those who remain, the challenges of organising effective resistance, and the dangers of resident involvement being tokenistic. The key question addressed in the case study below is the extent to which existing residents are able to organise to overcome displacement and loss of sense of place.

Case Study Methods

The findings in this paper are drawn from research carried out over an extended period. Interviews were first carried out with key stakeholders in 2010 and further interviews were carried out in 2012. The authors, working separately initially, built up a rapport with members of the residents' association as a result of meeting to discuss progress of the regeneration and them finding our analysis helpful. Their insights have also informed our

teaching. They suggested that the authors work together and helped arrange further interviews with residents and other stakeholders, which were conducted in 2017 and 2018. Further contacts were made through a parents and toddlers' group, lunch clubs for elderly people, a knitting group and a community club on the estate. In the most recent round of interviews we interviewed a total of 36 residents who had lived on the estate prior to the start of the regeneration, five of whom were residents' association board members, and nine residents who had moved to the estate since the start of the regeneration, three of whom had become residents' association board members. The findings presented in this paper are primarily based on interviews with residents, but were also informed by interviews with two local councillors and six professionals involved in the regeneration of the estate.

All the interviews were semi-structured and covered similar themes, focussing on the effect of regeneration on residents and the impact of the residents' association. The interviews with board members and professionals lasted between an hour and two hours. Interviews with other residents were generally briefer and in some cases a number of people were interviewed in small groups. The research has also involved reviewing council committee meeting reports, planning applications, the developer's promotional material and other relevant documents, and observation of some residents' association meetings. Before finalising this article to ensure that we had fairly represented the residents' association, a draft was discussed with board members.

The Case Study:

Introduction

The case study begins with a brief history and description of the estate prior to regeneration. It then outlines plans for regeneration and examines the role that the residents' association has played in the regeneration. It assesses the outcomes of development, which has been implemented, focussing on the extent to which existing residents have been able to remain in the neighbourhood and maintain their sense of place. The case study concludes with a discussion of the activities of the residents' association have contributed to positive outcomes for existing residents and of the factors which have led to some negative outcomes.

The Woodberry Down Estate in the London Borough of Hackney was built in the period following World War II and consisted of 1980 homes in 57 blocks of between four and ten storeys (Figure 1 shows a number of these blocks). New primary and secondary schools, a library and a health centre as well as a row of shops were built for the residents of the new estate. The title of a film documenting 50 years of life on the estate, 'A Palace for Us', indicates the first residents' initial positive experience of their new homes (Hunter, 2010). However, by the 1990s, it had become physically run down and it housed a socially disadvantaged population. Approximately a third of the properties were owned by leaseholders as a result of tenants exercising the right to buy (Mixed Communities Initiative Evaluation Team, n.d.). The estate is a few minutes' walk away from Manor House underground station, which provides quick links to central London. To the south of the estate there are two reservoirs: one now provides a water sports facility and the other has become a nature reserve. Its location on a ridge with long views south over the reservoirs towards central London, west over Finsbury

Park and north towards Alexandra Palace make it an attractive site for private sector redevelopment.



Figure 1: Some of the remaining original blocks on the estate

Woodberry Down residents have a history of organising to improve their quality of life. Since the first tenants moved into new homes in the 1940s, residents have campaigned for improved facilities and against rent rises, and organised social activities (Woodberry Down Community Organisation & Eastside Community Heritage, 2015). Following the announcement in 1985 that the reservoirs were to be decommissioned and the land sold off to developers, Woodberry Down residents also played a key role in the successful campaign to save the reservoirs (Miller, 2018).

Proposals for redevelopment

In the late 1990s, Hackney Council began discussions with residents about the regeneration of the estate. The Estate Development Committee was set up and residents worked with consultants to develop a scheme involving a mixture of houses and flats with a small element of private housing. However, this scheme would have required a high level of government subsidy, which was not forthcoming. In 2003, Hackney Council put the site of the once prestigious secondary school on the market. Woodberry Down residents launched the ‘Stop the Sale’ campaign. They organised demonstrations and in one evening rush hour stopped the traffic in the arterial road which runs through the estate, and succeeded in stopping the sale. The council then produced a proposal for redevelopment of the estate, which in order to make the scheme financially viable, more

than doubled the density of homes, increased the amount of private housing and reduced the amount of social rented housing. There was little resident input at this stage despite earlier promises. However, the Council's Regeneration Team did work with the Estate Development Committee to produce a Tenant's Charter which was intended to inform negotiations with the Council's future development partners (Hackney Council, 2007). Whilst residents felt their requirements were watered down to aspirations, the document at least made clear what they were asking for. It included aspirations about minimum floor areas for new homes, provision of gardens or balconies, short access corridors within blocks, natural light for kitchens and bathrooms, choice of galley or dining kitchens, no social housing above ten storeys and full integration of different tenures.

Private sector led development

Hackney Council sought competitive bids from developers to implement the development, and from housing associations to buy and manage the social housing. In 2006 it agreed a contract with Berkeley Homes. The principal development agreement sets out the responsibilities of the partners (Hackney Council, 2010). Berkeley Homes is responsible for the design of each phase. When work commences on a particular site, Hackney Council grants Berkeley's a 299 year lease for that plot. Berkeley's reimburses the Council for reasonable costs involved in land assembly and recoups its expenditure through the sale of the majority of the homes on the private market. Genesis Housing, who were appointed to manage the social housing, purchases leases for the completed social housing from Berkeley's. Any profits which accrue above an agreed rate of 20%, will be shared between Berkeley Homes and Hackney Council. The indicative timetable included in the agreement envisaged the completion of the final phase of the programme in 2027.

In 2008, Berkeley's obtained outline planning permission for a master plan for the redevelopment, which included a community centre, a secondary school, a youth centre, a business centre and new retail premises as well as 4664 new dwellings (Hackney Council, 2008). 59% of the new housing was to be homes for sale. The remaining 41% was to be social housing, 31% social rented homes (for which target rents are set nationally by government) and 10% shared ownership homes.

The role of the residents' association

Existing residents had little input into this master plan and the development of the old school site. In order to more effectively influence the regeneration residents formed a new organisation, Woodberry Down Community Organisation (WDCO). The organisation's constitution set out its purpose:

to act as the representative body of all residents (whether tenants, leaseholders or freeholders, regardless of tenure or landlord) and those who work from commercial premises within the designated area (Woodberry Down Community Organisation, 2008).

Tenants and leaseholders had lived alongside each other for years and worked together to set up WDCO, but over time their different material interests have proved a challenge to collective organisation. Many leaseholders, including the first chair of WDCO and another board member, have moved away. AS WDCO's role is to represent all residents of the area, it faces new challenges in integrating new residents of market and shared ownership homes into the organisation.

Having accepted the principle of a mixed tenure redevelopment, WDCO was recognised as a partner in the regeneration. However, as WDCO relies on the voluntary input of its members, it faces considerable challenges in engaging partnership led by a well-resourced, powerful developer. Retired people who are able to give more time play a crucial role in WDCO and the organisation also benefits from the support of an independent tenant and leaseholder advisor, funded by the Council, who provides it with administrative support, and advises individual residents about their rehousing options, and negotiates on their behalf, if problems arise. Good record keeping and an organisational memory have proved to be important in holding the Council and Berkeley Homes to account, when the developer tries to change previously agreed plans.

In Woodberry Down, Berkeley's have employed a strategy of regularly re-designing schemes to increase density and profitability, which has been a key element of their business success elsewhere in London (Karadimitriou, 2013). When Berkeley's submitted a revised planning application for development on a site overlooking the reservoirs, increasing the height of one block from 10 to 31 storeys and increasing the density from 294 to 405 private residential units, and including a gym and swimming pool for the exclusive use of private residents (Hackney Council, 2012), WDCO objected. Negotiations with the Council resulted in a compromise with this scheme being approved and the developer agreeing to WDCO participating in a review of the masterplan. WDCO were also assured that Berkeley's would not build any further leisure facilities only accessible to residents of private blocks.

A working party was set up with representatives from each of the partners to oversee the preparation of the new masterplan. The Council and Berkeley's paid for WDCO to have independent architectural advice. Initially new proposals were presented without negotiation. However, WDCO was eventually able to influence the outcomes. The revised master plan increased density by 20%, but maintained 41% affordable housing, and included commitments to a fairer share of good views and more mixing of different tenures, and to maintaining the level of open space provision.

WDCO has to be constantly vigilant as Berkeley's continue to try to alter plans to make the development more profitable. In 2016, WDCO discovered that Berkeley's were planning to again build a new private gym and swimming pool, and were outraged. By then, Berkeley's had already marketed the flats as having these facilities and had sold some off plan. Hackney's Mayor backed WDCO and eventually a compromise was reached. It was agreed that the swimming pool and gym be relocated in the basement of the new block, and that the ground floor would be available for community use. Plans are being developed for a day nursery, which is a facility particularly needed by families who have recently moved onto the estate.

Whilst there are mixed views about the benefits of the regeneration, most of the residents are positive about WDCO. Interviewees made comments such as 'They are doing a good job' and 'They are a wonderful asset'. Sustaining the organisation through voluntary effort over a long period is a big challenge. Nonetheless WDCO has grown in strength over time. Its open monthly meetings are regularly attended by more than 30 local residents, as well as representatives from Berkeley's, Genesis and the Council. These meetings are an important forum at which local people can raise and debate issues, and hold the key stakeholders to account. Initially WDCO felt that decisions were being made

elsewhere, as Berkeley's approach was to negotiate only with senior people at the Council. As a result of WDCO lobbying councillors, its board members now also have regular round table meetings with representative of the key stakeholders chaired by Hackney's Mayor and WDCO's views are taken much more seriously.

This organisational structure and effective leadership by the chairs of the organisation ensure WDCO's accountability to residents and allow them to set the agenda in negotiations with the developer and the Council. Board members have a sophisticated understanding of the power relationships involved in the partnership. They recognise that whilst Berkeley's values the role of the residents association in creating a welcoming community for newcomers to the area, its primary aim is to maximise profit. They also understand their ability to influence the outcomes of the development depends on the extent to which they can gain the support of the Council, which in turn depends on their ability to maintain grass roots support. A change in the political leadership of the Council in 2016 has meant that the Council is more prepared to support WDCO in standing up to the developer.

New social housing

The Residents' Charter (Hackney Council, 2007) stated that all existing residents should be offered new homes on the estate and all existing Council tenants do have the right to be rehoused on the estate. By January 2018, 530 tenants had moved into new social rented homes. However, most of the social rented housing built to date is located on less favourable sites adjacent to the new secondary school or on the busy arterial road running through the estate, whereas the homes for sale are located in prime positions overlooking the reservoir and the new park. Thus, the aspiration of full integration of different tenures, set out in the Charter, has not been realised. One tenant's opinion was: 'Where there is a view, it's private. Where there's a road, it's social housing.' Figure 2 shows new social housing on the main road, which runs through the estate. Figure 3 shows the contrasting setting of new private housing.

Nonetheless, most tenants interviewed liked their new flats and particularly appreciated that they were warm and free from damp. The new housing meets existing residents' aspirations in some other respects; their new homes are spacious and not above ten storeys. However, there is concern that the majority of flats have open plan kitchen/dining/living rooms, which have become the norm for flats built for the private market in London. Whilst some tenants like this arrangement, many do not. One tenant commented:

It's the open plan I hate. What annoys me is not having separate rooms. Living with my teenage son, if he has a friend in the front room and I am in the kitchen we are not separate. If you want music in the front room, it's in the kitchen too. If he goes into the kitchen to make a cup of tea, I can hear him if I am watching television.

Because the blocks have a deep plan and kitchens are usually located away from the perimeter of the building, they have no natural light, so it is generally difficult to separate kitchen areas.



Figure 2: New social housing on a main road



Figure 3: New private homes in a favoured location adjacent to the East Reservoir

Lack of storage, lack of adequate ventilation, poorly designed balconies and problems with heating and hot water, and entrance and balcony doors were also raised as issues by many tenants. There were mixed views about flats opening off shared internal corridors. One tenant said that her friends told her: ‘It’s like a hotel’, but others commented that they never met their neighbours and said that they preferred the access balconies of the old flats, which they found much more friendly.

WDCO are addressing the problems, which have emerged with the new homes, through the Design Committee, which involves Berkeley’s, Genesis and the Council. Again, it has the benefit of an independent architectural advisor. WDCO tries to ensure that lessons are learnt from past mistakes, but one WDCO board member explained:

It is lessons learned for the developer, but the people who move into the flats have to live with that for the rest of their lives. Retrofitting never works out right, because it is a patch up job.

WDCO have pushed for more separate kitchens and more dual aspect flats. The Design Committee agreed that in the next phase of social housing 50% of the flats would have separate kitchens. As WDCO had found that previously flats had not always been built as agreed, the Design Committee signed off the plans for each flat. Berkeley’s obtained planning permission for the next phase on the basis of these plans (Hackney Council, 2015a), but is now again arguing that increased density is necessary to ensure financial viability.

Tenants have also raised concerns about the management of the new homes. Many tenants complained that that Genesis was not rigorous about ensuring snagging items were dealt with before handover and did not ensure defects were rectified by Berkeley’s during the defects’ liability period. Although the rent levels for the new flats are only marginally more than council rents, tenants’ outgoings are higher when service charges are taken into account as well as rent. WDCO has successfully lobbied for Genesis to maintain a local office, but the view of tenants was that Genesis was slow at sorting out problems and that the Council had been more responsive.

Table 1: Numbers of homes built and with planning permission

		Private	Shared Ownership	Social Rented	Total
Total built	No.	1234	278	530	2042
	%	61%	14%	25%	
Outstanding planning permissions	No.	2109	837	596	3542
	%	60%	23%	17%	
Total built and outstanding planning permissions	No.	3343	1115	1126	5584
	%	60%	20%	20%	

Source: Authors’ analysis of Figures supplied by Berkeley Homes in October 2018

Whilst all social housing tenants have the right to be rehoused, WDCO has ongoing concerns about the amount of new social housing being built. A total of 1126 homes for

social rent have been built or have outstanding planning permission (see table 1). This is also significantly less than the estimated two thirds of homes, which remained in Council ownership at the start of the regeneration, and would result in a loss of over 200 social rented homes. Social rented homes will only amount to 20% of the total, a significantly lower percentage than the 31% included in the original master plan. Whilst the overall proportion of affordable housing remains at 40%, the proportion of shared ownership, which is more profitable for the developer has been increased. WDCO is actively lobbying the Council to increase the number and proportion of social rented homes and the authors have been able to assist by providing detailed analysis of the changing percentage of social rented homes in the developer's plans.

The displacement of leaseholders

Whilst, in theory, leaseholders have an option to remain, most have not been able to afford new homes on the estate. When their homes are due for demolition, leaseholders are bought out at an agreed market price or, if a price is not agreed, by a compulsory purchase order. However, these prices are much less than that of a new home in Woodberry Down. Leaseholders are therefore offered an equity share in a new flat. Initially leaseholders were required to purchase 70% of the equity. They would not be required to pay rent on the remaining 30% of the equity, which would be owned by Genesis. In practice, the amount offered for the old flats has been less than 70% of the value of the new flats, which resulted in most leaseholders, whose homes have been demolished, moving away, many reluctantly. Only three leaseholders have moved into new flats. Hackney Council's response to a Freedom of Information request was that it had had no record of the number of leaseholders displaced. However, as over 700 homes have been demolished and approximately one third of homes on the estate were occupied by leaseholders, it likely that over 200 leaseholders have been displaced. One leaseholder, who has moved away, described her experience:

It was hell to go through. We lived in limbo for 6 years. It was the most powerless I have ever felt.

The leaseholders interviewed, who were still living in old blocks on the estate, many of whom were elderly, wanted to stay in the neighbourhood, because they had friends locally. The programme for development is now not due to be completed until 2032 (Hackney Council, 2015b), so the remaining leaseholders face years of uncertainty. WDCO has recently negotiated a better offer for leaseholders, whereby there will no longer be a minimum equity stake required provided that leaseholders reinvest the full sales value of their current property (Hackney Council, 2018), which should make it possible for those who want to remain to do so.

Living in the remaining old blocks

Many residents continue to live in old blocks, which have yet to be demolished. In 2018, 1259 units in the old blocks remained; 373 were occupied by secure tenants and 213 owned by leaseholders. The council is continuing to maintain these homes, but some occupants have concerns about damp and condensation. Residents feel in limbo and they do not know when they will have to move, because the phasing of the development has changed and the timescale extended.

There have been no new lettings since 2006, resulting in an increasing number of vacant flats. However, since 2014, some empty flats have been used for temporary

accommodation for homeless people. Existing residents have welcomed the use of empty flats, but there is a lot of coming and going, as these short-term occupants are moved onto permanent accommodation elsewhere, which is unsettling for long-term residents.

Maintaining existing residents' sense of place

WDCO is not just concerned about what is built and rehousing. It has continually stressed the importance of community and maintaining existing residents' sense of place. Many residents have lived on the estate for decades and brought up their families there, and have a strong attachment to the neighbourhood. An issue, which was highlighted in our interviews with existing residents, was the importance of intergenerational ties on the estate and many of the people most active in the community have family on the estate. One woman whose daughter is a WDCO board member explained:

I live with my son and my daughter – my daughter's 27 and my son is 17. They are the fourth generation to live in Woodberry Down. My grandparents came to live here in 1954.

The current WDCO chair has particularly recognised the importance of holding onto the identity of the area and valuing its history. As part of the negotiations in the masterplan review WDCO secured a commitment to the development of an art strategy reflecting local history and local circumstances. The chair also initiated an oral history project, which produced a book, *Woodberry Down, The People's Story* (WDCO & Eastside Community Heritage, 2015). This records the experiences of residents moving into the newly built flats, growing up on the estate, building a community, and campaigning for improved local facilities, against rent rises, and more recently, for regeneration to benefit local people.

WDCO has successfully resisted Berkeley's attempts to rebrand the estate. When Berkeley's marketed the area as 'Woodberry Park', existing residents felt alienated. One comment at an WDCO away day in 2012 was 'Woodberry Park is nothing to do with us'. WDCO persistently challenged this rebranding and Berkeley's eventually accepted Woodberry Down as the name of the area. Although members of WDCO recognised that this concession did not cost Berkeley's anything, they saw it as an important symbolic victory.



Figure 4: The parade of shops and homes above being demolished with hoarding advertising swimming pool for exclusive use of residents of a new private block

WDCO had less success in protecting the shops, which had been at the heart of the community. The parade of shops, which included a butcher's, a baker's, a betting office, a Chinese take-away, a fish and chip shop, a laundrette, an electrical goods shop and an off-licence (selling alcohol), has now been demolished (Figure 4 shows the shops being demolished with a hoarding advertising the swimming pool for the exclusive use of residents of a private block). WDCO tried to negotiate with the Council for a relocation offer for the existing shopkeepers, but without success. New commercial accommodation was included on the ground floor of a number of the new blocks, but only the newsagent's, post office and mini-supermarket moved into new premises. The remainder of the businesses either closed or moved away; some because the nature of the new accommodation and lease conditions did not suit them, and others because their business activities are not permitted under the planning permission granted. The arrival of Sainsbury's Local in 2016 had a negative impact on the existing newsagent and mini-supermarket. The newsagent, whose proprietor lives in the area, kept going for another nine months, before closing down. The newsagent was mentioned by many people as being a particularly important, and now much missed, meeting place. One tenant explained:

You used to meet people and have a chat in the shops, particularly Brian's Newsagent. Now you have to go to Sainsbury's and people don't mix in Sainsbury's.

As the regeneration progresses, existing residents will be outnumbered by new occupiers of market and shared ownership homes. As WDCO is open to all local residents, it is now working with new residents. Although the majority of board members are tenants, there

are now shared owners, owner occupiers and private tenants on the board. The oral history project and local arts strategy means that newcomers are aware that they are moving into the established community. Whilst the current leadership of WDCO remains committed to obtaining the best outcomes from redevelopment for social housing tenants and leaseholders, it is also seeking to build shared values within the increasingly mixed neighbourhood. It is as yet unclear how the involvement of new residents in WDCO will influence its priorities, but their involvement in campaigning for a new day nursery suggests social infrastructure will be a priority.

Discussion

The residents' association has been able to resist some, but by no means all, of the negative impacts of regeneration. It has had some significant success in resisting displacement. The majority of the residents, who were council tenants at the start of the regeneration continue to live in the area. However, most of the leaseholders, who lived in blocks now demolished, and most of the businesses in the local parade of shops have been displaced. WDCO has done much to maintain existing residents' sense of place by successfully campaigning to resist the rebranding of the area and by celebrating local history. Nonetheless, many existing residents, particularly older people, miss neighbours who were forced to move away, and the local shops, which were at the heart of their community.

Whilst the Woodberry Down case illustrates how regeneration partnerships are dominated by powerful state and market actors, it also shows that residents can negotiate concessions through engaging in partnerships (Arnstein, 1969; Taylor, 2007). Although the neighbourhood is undergoing a radical transformation, WDCO have been able to limit the displacement of existing residents and their loss of sense of place. The majority of residents being able to remain in the neighbourhood is a very significant achievement when compared with the scale of displacement elsewhere in London (LTF, Lees, Just Space & SNAG, 2014).

WDCO's activity exhibits all the features of effective resistance identified in the literature. Establishing an independent organisation has been crucial (McAuliffe and Rogers; 2018). This enabled residents to move from being consulted to shaping the agenda within the regeneration partnership. Challenging stigmatisation of the estate (Thurber and Fraser, 2016) and resisting rebranding of the neighbourhood (Masuda and Bookman, 2018) have also been important. The art strategy and oral history projects, by recognising the pride local people have in their community and their history of active organising, challenged negative views of the estate. Maintaining the name of Woodberry Down for the neighbourhood has been significant in maintaining the existing residents' sense of place. Support from independent advisers has also played an important role (Arnstein, 1969; August, 2016). Administrative support and good record keeping have been crucial in holding the developer and local authority to account. Technical advice has helped residents to challenge and improve development proposals.

Bringing together groups with different material interests is particularly difficult. Whilst WDCO represents leaseholders as well as tenants, it has struggled to protect their interests. WDCO remains committed to representing the interests of existing residents,

but it now faces the additional challenge of working with the occupiers of new market and shared ownership homes.

The case study also illustrates the challenge of residents' maintaining effective engagement over a long period (Goetz, 2014). Over twenty years have elapsed since the regeneration of the estate was first discussed and it is likely to be at least another decade before it is completed. Not only has WDCO kept going, but it has gained in strength. Whilst at the start of the regeneration, participation involved information giving and placation at the lower levels of Arnstein's ladder of participation, it is now actively engaged in negotiations and influencing the outcomes of development. Board members have become skilled negotiators, aware of the need to maintain grassroots support and build alliances with local politicians in order to challenge the developer. However, faced with powerful, profit orientated developers and a cash strapped local authority, negotiations often result in mixed outcomes for existing residents. As the regeneration of the estate will take at least another decade to complete, WDCO will need considerable resilience to continue to protect the interests of existing residents and push for more social housing, whilst building a shared agenda with residents of market and shared ownership homes.

Conclusion

The Woodberry Down case illustrates the difficulties faced by existing residents, when their estates are being redeveloped by private sector-led partnerships. It illustrates how private sector developers put profits before the interests of existing residents. Nonetheless, it provides an example of how a residents' organisation can through engaging in partnership win some significant concessions. It has highlighted the importance of independent organisation, challenging stigmatisation and support from independent advisors to effective resistance. WDCO's experience can usefully inform residents of other estates facing redevelopment of the strategies employed by developers and help them in developing their own strategies to protect their communities from the negative impacts of regeneration. Some local authorities in England are now taking the lead role in the redevelopment of social housing, Such public sector led development offers potentially better outcomes for existing residents. However, in the context of the continuing lack of public funding, they are reliant on cross subsidy from the sale of market homes to finance the building of social housing. Thus, commercial pressures will continue to influence such regeneration. Existing residents will therefore need to continue to organise to protect their communities from the potentially negative impacts of regeneration and to access appropriate resources to enable them to actively shape the future of their neighbourhoods.

As much previous research on the regeneration of social housing has not taken into account the length of time redevelopment takes, further research on the regeneration of social housing estates might usefully focus on how residents' organisations sustain themselves and evolve over time. Previous research has also paid little attention to examining the extent to which residents with diverse material interests are able to work together, so this would another useful area of further research. Investigating how the outcomes of newly initiated public sector redevelopments compare to private sector led redevelopments will be another important focus for future research.

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