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Emplacing Some, Displacing Others: Ethnic Minority Enterprises as Critical Urban Infrastructure in Lodge Lane, Liverpool

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ABSTRACT

Drawing on ethnographic research on Lodge Lane, the main commercial street within Toxteth (Liverpool), this paper reveals how fundamental ethnic minority enterprises (EMEs) have been to the regeneration of this marginalized area due to public disinvestment. Acting as critical infrastructure, they have transformed the materiality of the locale, and by extension, they have afforded new kinds of encounter and convivialities. Ultimately, EMEs appear to have a critical emplacing and displacing power, which involves urban inhabitants in a differential way over time, depending on their positionality toward the material and discursive aspects of place.

KEYWORDS

Ethnic minority enterprise;
convivialities;
materialities;
displacement;
social infrastructure

The Hood

As I walk through this long boulevard with not enough trees to earn its title,

But because of its diversity,

The cultures,

The languages,

The gangsters,

The addicts,

The different restaurants and bars as I look from left to right.

LODGE LANE: a place I call home,

Home away from home,

It's not too different from home.

The graffiti on the walls,

The kids playing outside,

The sound of traffic,

The cougars standing outside the bar,

And the teenagers smoking weed,

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A couple of blocks up, seniors shout “BINGO!” at the Bingo Club.

LODGE LANE: a place I call home.¹

Introduction

Taking inspiration from the poem above, this paper looks at ethnic minority enterprises (EMEs) and their role in enabling and obstructing social connection as part, and generator, of urban emplacement and displacement within the particular space of Lodge Lane in Toxteth Liverpool (Caglar & Glick Schiller, 2018; Hall et al., 2017). Taking a situated approach to research, in line with Cresswell’s revival of topography (2019: 2), we use the EMEs and the spaces around them, in this particular street, as a prism for exploring how social encounters evolve in a diverse urban environment (Rishbeth et al., 2018).

There has been a lot of interest in what EMEs do; migration research with a focus on the urban has investigated EMEs as an expression of migrants’ translocality (Ehrkamp, 2005), as sites of leisure and tourism (Aytar & Rath, 2012) and as actors influencing urban renewal (Rath et al., 2018). There is still scope, however, to consider the wider social dynamics of these sites (Jones et al., 2019), especially in relation to the relatively recent interest in encounter—convivial and tensed—in diverse urban spaces. These discussions foreground the kinds of low level social interactions which, although small scale, are nevertheless fundamental to the social dynamics of belonging, and exclusion, in a place (Neal et al., 2015).

Within this focus, the spatiality and particularly the non-human—the materiality and infrastructure of EMEs, can still be examined more closely (Ramirez & Stefoni, 2021), because it is this materiality which helps to co-create these encounters, providing spaces for social interaction. This paper therefore explores the extent to which and ways how the EMEs—their material and physical characteristics—serve as *critical social infrastructure* (Radice, 2016)—providing tangible facilities which support social needs and interaction. By creating new physical opportunities for different kinds of encounters, over time, EMEs appear to help shape feelings of belonging on the lane and in the broader area where it is situated.

The focus on Liverpool is useful as Caglar and Glick Schiller (2018) advocate for the study of disempowered cities as sites that enable a better understanding of migrants’ displacement and emplacement and their links with city making. In the UK context, Liverpool remains understudied on the topic of diverse neighborhoods, the use of outdoor space and dynamics of intercultural interactions (Rishbeth et al., 2018), despite the city having a long history of immigration (Belchem, 2006), regeneration (Frost & North, 2013), and increasing diversity (ONS, 2011).

Lodge Lane has been rapidly regenerating in the past few decades, and it has been doing so primarily through independent EMEs. Corner (2017) calls the lane ‘the Liverpool 8 artery’, which demonstrates its crucial role for the area. Liverpool Local Plan 2013–2033 lists the lane as part of city’s urban core. Due to its retail offer and shopping environment, it plays a major role in Liverpool’s social infrastructure, and is planned to be protected and enhanced to ensure sustainable distribution of shops and services (Liverpool City Council, 2018). Apart from putting Lodge Lane on the official city map, this ‘regeneration from below’ through the growth of EMEs has had a knock-on effect on social dynamics, opening up new spaces for social interaction after decades of dilapidation and degradation of the area following the 1981 riots and the general sense of unsafety that ensued.

Lodge Lane, as a defined area, offers an interesting case-study conceptually and empirically. A focus on the scale of the street allows for the in-depth study of the social life of structural processes (Hall, 2018; Cresswell, 2019), taking the everyday seriously. In this article, we also treat the neighborhood and the street *in relation* to the city and wider economic and political contexts (Aytar & Rath, 2012). The social encounters we found on Lodge Lane are explored in the context of Liverpool’s history of regeneration, within Toxteth’s diversity and marginalization history, and its recent revival (Vathi & Burrell, 2021). In doing so, we are able to highlight *how* enterprises act as social, rather than simply commercial, infrastructure.

Embedding EMEs, convivialities and materialities in the urban

Our entry to this research is our interest in the social aspects of EMEs for place making, something which has been explored in different contexts. Ehrkamp, for example, (2005, p. 355) focuses on place transformation in her research with the Turkish population in Germany, considering how place is recreated "... through the material insertion of transnational and translocal belonging" that various sites and businesses facilitate. Rath and Swagerman (2016) focused especially on the vitality of specific areas as a result of these kinds of businesses. The 'mixed embeddedness approach' further attempts to contextualize this type of enterprise in order to capture its complexity, combining the structural and the agentic of migrants' experiences with market and regulatory aspects (Kloosterman et al., 1999, p. 257). The micro-level dynamics of this vitalization, and the significance of this for localized everyday attachments and relationships, can still tell us more about how place making works in different localities, for different people (Ramirez & Stefoni, 2021).

There are more insights to glean still on the relationship between urban regeneration developments and the social encounters of city dwellers, not least for the power dynamics they throw up (Amin, 2014), and crucially here, the physical ways they reshape space (Caglar & Glick Schiller, 2018). Often these kinds of developments lead to a domestication of public space through a series of material interventions in the physical environment, underpinning the feeling of being at home in the city (Koch & Latham, 2013). For migrants, certain materialized urban processes will be especially pertinent for feelings of 'emplacement' (Caglar & Glick Schiller, 2018), enabling deeper place based, affective attachments to build.

This is where we see conversations around EMEs fitting in theoretically, with the material elements of these kinds of businesses being highlighted more explicitly. Prevailing debates have moved our understanding of the integral role materiality and physicality play in our social worlds considerably, not least through growing appreciations of the different roles that non-human actors play in co-creating urban contexts (Amin, 2014). These arguments seem especially relevant for understanding different ways of being, and emplacing, in the city. As Neal et al's work suggests, (2015), this materialized focus also promises more nuanced understandings of diverse and marginalized areas, and so seems especially relevant for EMEs. It is not enough to consider the physical simply through a focus on public spaces, such as streets, squares, parks and markets; as Hall (2015a, pp. 12-3) asserts, we can still pay more detailed attention to the "... effects of physical environments and material phenomena [...] how they condition, constrain and create opportunities for social and spatial relationships". Therefore, if we take EMEs as examples of Amin's (2014) lively infrastructures, as a particular type of complex and mutable non-human actor, we can find a more complete understanding of their significance for social dynamics in diverse areas.

These social dynamics can be most usefully viewed through the lens of debates about encounters, and, as noted, the recognition that while so much social interaction tends to have a very transient nature, especially in a city context, this does not undermine its considerable social, and potentially affective, importance (Neal et al., 2013). There is an inherent optimism in many of these discussions, depicting 'convivial' urban microplaces as spaces which offer urban dwellers rich prospects of interactions (Gilroy, 2006; Radice, 2016), involving practice, effort, achievement. Some see encounters as hopeful possibilities to forge solidarities, however short lived, across difference (Wilson, 2017; Nowicka & Vertovec, 2014). For Radice (2016), the reality of social encounters often has little to do with notions of stability, homogeneity and community, but yet are impactful in shaping urban dwellers' perceptions and behaviors. While accounts of encounter and conviviality can be critiqued for a romanticized view of social interaction (Valentine, 2008), and are as likely to be conflicted as convivial (Back & Sinha, 2016; Wise & Noble, 2016), it is the everydayness of these interactions which really stands out, whether positive or negative. People's relationships with each other, and with place, will be partially built through these short lived connections (Burrell, 2016).

Encounters are also a very material concern. When sustained by the sympathetic design of public space infrastructure, these encounters become part of the everyday repertoire of inclusive places, which in turn have the potential to transform their original purpose (Rishbeth & Rogaly, 2018). Convivialities therefore rely on the material affordances of their environments—places and spaces which enable interactions to take place (Burrell, 2016; Burchardt & Hohne, 2015). Indeed, as Ganji and Rishbeth (2020) argue, good social interactions can actually be designed in. The design of the physical public infrastructure is therefore key to the micro-geographies of conviviality, affording visibility and proximity (Rishbeth & Rogaly, 2018).

An interest in EMEs inevitably also leads to deeper questions over power and ownership of different spaces and places over time. While it is possible to understand urban materiality as not ethnically appropriated but linked to much longer histories of pluralized (im)mobility (McFarlane, 2011), this does not render the spaces EMEs inhabit uncontested. It is important to remember how place is ultimately connected and asymmetrical, contingent on differentiated mobilities and power geometries (Massey, 1994) with place based materialities affecting people's movements and *vice versa* (Anderson & Wylie, 2009). A focus on the scale of the street helps to illuminate this, allowing for the study of how urban space is fleetingly inhabited or actively made by migrants, mediated by social infrastructure, or the “facilities that allow social life to happen” (Latham & Layton, 2019, p. 4). Mobility and displacement especially, as we will show later on, are key dynamics in understanding how diverse places evolve, and how people's sense of belongingness takes shape.

A further associated friction lies in defining these kinds of spaces, and who they are for. Tensions, when researched, are often broadly seen from a dichotomized point of view of mainstream *versus* minority culture (Dwyer & Crang, 2002). As this paper demonstrates, migrant urbanism cannot be dissociated from the banality of place and city making, the experiences of the local non-migrant residents and shifting micro-level dynamics of power. It is important to move away from studies, which we try to do here, of place-based convivialities which perpetuate a disjuncture between the social practices of migrants as opposed to non-migrants (Caglar & Glick Schiller, 2018; Watson, 2009). We think that the study of EMEs offers up an opportunity to understand place based social and material dynamics in a more holistic way. At present, the tensions which are inherent in the transformation and adaptation of urban space because of, and alongside, EMEs, are still underexplored, perhaps because there is an implied lack of authority of such forms of urban infrastructure beyond their purpose of employment or transactions, or as sites of belongingness, for migrants.

Thus, the process of urban transformation in the context of diversity is both contingent on structural inequality as inscribed in space, as well as on the more fluid interconnections and discontinuities across bodies and spaces (Hall, 2015b). These are all part of non-linear and transtemporal processes that make up urban and social infrastructure (Latham & Layton, 2019), in which the built environment is both impactful upon, and vulnerable to, evolving social relations (Simone, 2015). A substantial part of EME literature neglects the space of the street more generally - not just individual businesses, but the spaces around them and what they offer materially and socially (Radice, 2016). At the same time, too much focus on migrant entrepreneurs and the street (Hall, 2015b) neglects the shifting, transformative power of these enterprises for the urban areas where they are situated. Our contribution here is to draw these different perspectives together, exploring EMEs, and all the human and material dynamics embedded in them and the spaces around them, in more nuanced ways.

Historical milestones of economic and social developments in Liverpool

Liverpool, as a preeminent imperial port and the ‘second city of empire’, held on to global city status until early 20th century (Belchem, 2006). The postcolonial legacies of the city, alongside architectural grandeur and a historically diverse population, however, point to persistent tensions and distinct patterns of racialised spatial segregation. Toxteth has historically consisted of the most diverse area of the city, with racialised minority communities dating back more than two

and a half centuries, being the oldest in Britain (Costello, 2001). The enduring role of street life in local identity and racial autonomy has been documented, with the Granby Triangle area representing the historical focus of the Black community (Heneghan & Wailey, 2015).

Early 20th century developments diminished the importance of Liverpool in the global trade, and by the 1960s the city was in post-industrial decline. As the might of the port shrunk, so too did the urban population, with increased migration away from the city toward other more affluent parts of the region and beyond (Frost & North, 2013). This outmigration had an impact on housing, leading to abandonment and dilapidation, which had a negative effect on neighborhoods across its inner-core (Balderstone et al., 2014). The external perception of these neighborhoods as no-go areas presented a barrier to regeneration (Thompson, 2015)—a story that still haunts Lodge Lane today.

The considerable economic and social problems in the 1970-80s caused by de-industrialisation were felt particularly by the minority communities, culminating in 1981 with an explosion of uprisings and police violence, notoriously billed as the ‘Toxteth riots’, something which has left a deep psychological legacy in the Liverpool 8 area (Benwell et al., 2020). The aftermath of this led to a shift of political concern toward urban regeneration in the area (Belchem, 2006), and the city has since undergone more restructuring and urban change than virtually all other British cities (Couch, 2003). Historical analyses of regeneration in Toxteth speak about a market- and property-oriented policy led by Urban Development Corporations under Thatcher’s government, which cut off the local authorities. The 1960s Liverpool Interim Planning Policy marked the start of the process of slum clearance that would eventually exacerbate the decline of commerce at a rapid rate (Frost & North, 2013).

Following this decline, in 1993 Liverpool was named as an Objective 1 area to benefit from EU support (Couch, 2003). The European intervention was a major catalyst for the regeneration of Liverpool, but was of little benefit to the poorest areas around the city’s inner-core, leading to growing inequality and deprivation (Boland, 2010). Regeneration continues to date, alongside controversies and local tensions and evident inequalities. At grassroots level, regeneration appears as a localized response to state disinvestment in the area and community’s limited involvement in the state-led programmes, thus inscribed in the physical, as well as cognitive, landscape of the area (Vathi & Burrell, 2021).

While a predominantly ‘white’ city, the local population of Liverpool is nevertheless diverse, bringing together white and mixed-heritage inhabitants with long established roots of primarily working class background, black minorities, postcolonial migrants, new migrants and dispersed asylum seekers, and students (Census, 2011; McPherson, 2014; Burrell, 2017). The city thus has a particular story to tell alongside other ‘disempowered cities’ (Caglar & Glick Schiller, 2018).

Lodge Lane was central to the history of settlement of Kru seamen in Liverpool and their shift from the docks toward a more central, albeit segregated, location at the heart of Liverpool 8 (Frost, 1999) and developed into a lively area for shopping and socialization (Cornelius, 2001). However, the lane was significantly affected by the 1981 ‘riots’, with a good part of amenities burnt and then boarded up (Benyon, 1985). The contemporary make up and role of the lane in the area has been otherwise unexplored in academic research, despite its amenities making national news (Corner, 2017; Henry, 2015) and interest in the overall regeneration of Toxteth in the past decade.

Methodology

This paper is based on the project ‘Bringing the esthetics in: migrants’ relationship with urban space in Toxteth, Liverpool’ funded by the British Academy, which looks at the role of the physical and material in local inhabitants’ belongingness in Toxteth. Visual ethnographic research took place in the area in May-October 2015. Ethnography has a particular value in informing policy on the role of the physical environment and design in ethnic mixing and convivial urban lives (Rishbeth et al., 2018) and is crucial to the study of social practices (Caglar & Glick Schiller, 2018).

Forty interviews were conducted in Toxteth with 18 British-born local inhabitants, 14 first-generation migrants of various socio-economic, ethnic background and legal status, and eight key informants. Eight out of 18 of the British-born subsample were White British, the rest included Black, Arab, Pakistani and mixed-heritage participants. Migrants held 12 different nationalities, with four of them having naturalized as British. Participants were similarly divided between male and female. The key informants included local authority officials working on urban space issues, migrant community leaders, and charities working on spatial issues in Toxteth. Informed consent was gained from all participants, based on ethical clearances for the over-all study.

The sample mixes ethnic minority and migrant entrepreneurs with ‘ordinary’ migrant and non-migrant local residents that are differently invested in the locality researched, such as key informants, long-term inhabitants of Toxteth, former residents of the area from a line of Black and mixed family heritage. Three of the participants who are named here using pseudonyms are owners of businesses situated on the lane—Dan (a travel agency), Ryio (an essentials shop), Murat (one of the main eateries). Despite the heuristic value of the categories we employed for sampling purposes, the fieldwork inevitably unsettled these terminologies, underlining the dangers of using potentially pejorative or homogenizing categories uncritically. For simplicity, our definition of migrants was simply *people who had themselves migrated*, as a lifecourse description, but inevitably our research revealed the very limitations of narrow terminologies such as ‘migrant’ and ‘non-migrant’ not least because of the rich historical context of migration into the area

The project employed a multi-method approach, including interviews, group discussions, (participant) observations and visual methods. Interviews were conducted in different settings, including homes, cafes, venues of organizations and parks, most including sitting and, particularly successfully, walking interviews (Rishbeth & Powell, 2013). The use of visual methods was also effective, as Tolia-Kelly (2012, p. 137) notes, “producing research markings that are meaningful as they operate against, beyond and more-than text”. Photography involved participants directly as they were asked to take pictures of meaningful places while a walking interview was taking place. All interviews and discussions around this visual material were audio recorded and transcribed.

Participant observations took place on Lodge Lane and in EMEs (e.g. food shops, eateries, internet center, off-licenses, migrant organizations) aimed at gaining intimate familiarity with them. Researchers shopped at the main supermarket, dined at an Asian restaurant, chatted with hairdressers, had coffee and worked for part of days in cafes, and walked about at different times of day and evening to experience the rhythms of the activities on the lane. Thematic and visual ethnography methods were employed in the data analysis process, which, whilst facilitated through NVivo, was mostly carried out through the means of hard copy transcripts and electronic format of photos.

Transforming space, (re)emerging convivialities: the rise of lodge lane through EMEs

... because thirty years ago it was very, very different... and different groups of people who have come into the area to live have made this their own (Yvette, 48, White British, F).

Like Yvette, many participants spoke about the regeneration and revival of Lodge Lane through the presence of new businesses, many run by migrants. The revitalization of the area is linked with the orientation toward, and reliance of local inhabitants on, Lodge Lane for daily errand running. The intense commerce on the lane opens up opportunities for deliberate and serendipitous encounters, with different customers ‘rubbing along’ (Watson, 2009). Oliver (53, White British, M) wanted to talk about the L8 Manchester Supermarket:

... when I go to the supermarket I see a lot of people I know and have a chat with them, and stuff like that... They’ve actually regenerated the area, like the money that was meant to regenerate areas hasn’t done it; it’s the migrants, the refugees and the local people who have regenerated it (Figure 1).

The recency of Lodge Lane revitalization makes it a street in transition, but long-standing prominent street identities within Toxteth underpin these developments. In community writings (Heneghan & Wailey, 2015), amenities in the Granby Triangle played an important role in emplacing local inhabitants, not least because of the sensorial experience related to their materialities, such as smells, colors, sound beats. Following the 1981 disturbances, amenities, related convivialities and diversity, however, were themselves displaced away from Granby to take off again on nearby Lodge Lane – somewhere else, somewhere close, without the trauma, but without erasing the scars, nor forgetting spatially. Michael (40, mixed heritage British, M) explained how the diversity center of Toxteth has shifted, from the pre-riots vibrancy of the Granby Triangle streets, to Lodge Lane, ‘... and slowly as Granby Street was being eroded by the latest tranches of decantation and kind of demolition, you had elements of the community moving up to here.’

In the context of this marginalized area, amenities are key to urban infrastructure and to the area’s resilience, revival, as well as its identity and visibility. From Michael’s quote below, for example, we see how the lane has attracted attention, cementing the space as an emblem of difference as well as an emerging ‘platform of civility’ (Hall, 2015a, p. 865).



Figure 1. Mundane errands and encounters: the L8 Manchester Supermarket.

I don't know if you have heard the story of the white men march, the Nazi march². There were elements of them saying they were going down Lodge Lane as if they knew from the outside that this is the centre of diversity.

Part of the affective responses to the street are linked to the lane's dilapidated recent past and the velocity of the transformation of its physical and material dimensions. Charles (42, Black British, M), for example, recalled the lane with a rich material description: 'old, dilapidated, unkempt, grassy areas not maintained, shops with old signage, lots of shutters down, not much in terms of local business.' Peter (53, Black British, M) had first-hand experience with the informal start of enterprise as his family used to own a fruit stall on the lane, building up new material infrastructure from nothing:

It was proper dead; I think there were only about three shops open... So we would just go and if we ran out of peaches or something then my Dad... but I always remember being a little intimidated up here compared to in town just because there was nothing here, you know. It was like "why the hell have you got a fruit stall here; there is nothing here".

The prominence of commerce *and* convivialities on the lane today was reflected in the majority of participants' narratives on Toxteth, with Lodge Lane referred to extensively. The lane has become Toxteth's 'normal' high street, where daily walkabouts reflect a localized urban freedom and sense of safety, affectively engaging the residents of different group ages in different ways (Ehrkamp, 2005). In the words of Fislal (18, British Somali, F), who was born in the UK to a Somali couple who own a few businesses in the area:

I think it's quite a nice atmosphere! Yeah, Lodge Lane is—it hasn't always been this busy. It's become more busy now, a bit more vibrant, a bit more happy... I think people come to Lodge Lane, for, you know, shopping of any kinds, so I think we³re just a normal street, with shopping, yeah (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Growing daily walkabouts on the lane.

The strengthening of street identity based on affect and convivial commerce appears to have been developing alongside very limited local authority control over the area. In contrast to what has been noted elsewhere in Europe (Rath & Swagerman, 2016) the topic of ethnic entrepreneurship has not become politically sensitive at city level. As Corner (2017) observes, ‘In Lodge Lane, they seem to be just getting on with it and the owners of umpteen restaurants and take-aways and food stores make no mention of “ethnic food hubs”’. The lane seems more accurately described as a ‘lively infrastructure’ (Amin, 2014) of the commons, with fuzzy and emerging entrepreneurial ideologies not necessarily linked to national, or city-level, agendas.

Nonetheless, the ethnic minority food and dining enterprises and the social opportunities they generate have attracted investment in neighboring areas; Aza (40, Iraqi, M) described Lodge Lane affectionately as a fast-changing area, where ‘... there’s a lot of money being invested in new houses’. Joe (45, mixed heritage British, M) pointed to the role of business and the intensification of convivialities in propelling investment in public space infrastructure, such as maintenance of the street, a public square and leisure centers⁴. Thus, the urban texture and infrastructure of the lane has been increasingly generating and sustaining affect, encounter and shared perception on its urban purpose. Its physical and material aspects are involved in an “integration of effort and sensibility” (Simone, 2015, p. 153) as enterprises enliven the street. The relocation of these amenities to Lodge Lane materializes the fluidity of local demographic and commercial dynamics, etching social change into the urban landscape, while still echoing the mnemonically resonant social vitality of Granby before it.

Social materialities: convivial street life and connectivity

As Lodge Lane’s contemporary identity is increasingly associated with its commercial and public life, so the premises and surrounding spaces of businesses on the lane are transformed into public spaces by locals. Indeed, Lodge Lane appears as a place where the mundane and the necessary of urban lives meet. Enabling encounter and convivialities, the lane is also a hotspot for community building and interconnectivity with other parts of Toxteth and the city further away (Watson, 2009). Murat (30, British Yemeni, M) stated that just working on Lodge Lane means he gets to know many people from the community and meet many others that visit. Newer migrants also appear visibly comfortable in the area, stopping to chat outside the L8 supermarket. The lane seems to have created a safe space for daily life to unfold; women shopping, chatting to friends inside stores, hairdressers and inside The Coffee Lodge, as children play on the side streets or gather in front of their doorsteps.

The openness of the space of the lane stands out. For Hugo (26, French, M) the street offers casual, yet convivial, inhabitation of public space to diverse groups in the area and in the city—an atmosphere resonating with the North of Paris, his home city:

... you have like Africa, Arabs, Polish, you know, everyone’s there and it’s just like, you know, some days it’s just a total mess, like total mash of everything. Yeah, it’s really diverse. It’s like all the communities are meeting on that street. Like anywhere else it would be community areas, like just people from, you know, Ghana, or just people from Jamaica, or just people from the Democratic Republic of Congo, and they are on Lodge Lane, it’s like everywhere (Figure 3).

The sense of welcome and rest that the area provides clearly gives rise to new encounters. But it is what these businesses offer physically and materially which really stands out, given the otherwise marked lack of public space infrastructure such as benches, squares and playgrounds in the immediate area. The interviews underlined that this affect and orientation toward the lane is closely linked to material and sensorial characteristics of these businesses (Amin, 2014)—color, merchandise and design, which challenge the dilapidated image among long-term residents and attract newcomers. Dan (53, Iraqi British, M) described L8 in visual terms as a ‘patchwork quilt’, referring to Lodge Lane as the most colorful area due to the diversity. Basma (37, British Yemeni, F) pointed out the materialities of the shutters (Ehrkamp,



Figure 3. Homing community life: food feast in the Coffee Lodge.

2005), particularly those of The Lodge Café, which often combine esthetically pleasing designs to ease the disruptive effect they may have on social and urban cognitions, as well as belonging to the lane; when all the shutters were closed, they did like some kind of cultural design all along the shutters’.

The social infrastructure of the lane is signified by these affective responses and is concentrated on a number of amenities that appear as gravity points, which play different functions in terms of social interaction (Radice, 2016): the L8 Manchester supermarket and interconnectivity; the Coffee Lodge and intimacy of presence indoors; the restaurants and food transnationalism; the call centers and ‘home abroad’ overall feel. Maria (34, Spanish, F) underlined the welcome role of the supermarket in particular in stocking different foodstuffs and offering a different consumer experience as an independent store. Thus, the L8 superstore performs a multitude of purposes such as containing, displaying, transnationalising, spilling over into the street with its veranda on the pavement, exerting an esthetic sensorial affect, affording both connectivity and casualness (Figure 4).

Both the wide range and particular provision of food, such as Halal meat, and other materialities also enhance the interconnectivity of the area with other parts of Toxteth and with other parts of the city. Ivana (35, Slovenian, F) spoke about Lodge Lane as the origin of take-aways for her family, even though she does not visit the lane much. Furthermore, hosting a diverse range of ethnic businesses, Lodge Lane has a spillover effect on the rest of the city as restaurants feed in to city festivals, such as Africa Oye⁵. In turn, these materialities also contain mobilities of the area within as Lodge Lane provides options for socialization and food experiences ‘if we don’t want to go far for food’ or ‘to town’, referring to Liverpool city center.

Thus, enterprises on the street have given rise to new social encounters, affected by the overall symbolic and functional qualities of the EMEs, as well as the design and the material and physical aspects of their premises. As the lane embeds the human and non-human dimensions of urban transactions, it helps shape the social lives of its residents and visitors.



Figure 4. Color and food feast: the L8 Manchester supermarket and veranda display.

A place to just be? Power dynamics of emplacement and displacement

We turn now to consider how the socio-materialities of the lane are undeniably and variously gendered, classed and racialized—and tensed. Inevitably, there are different interests and influences at play within these social encounters. In particular, gender appears especially pertinent in shaping who inhabits the urban space, where and how (Ehrkamp, 2005). While the lane is populated with women mid-errand, bringing children to and from school, shopping or using public transport, it is the men who ‘hang out’ together outside shop fronts, on street corners or outside restaurants. According to Tegan (22, British Caribbean, F):

I’ve noticed a lot of Arabs; they go to Lodge Lane. And they seem to go into, like, restaurants in there—men, mostly men, not really women as much ... Yeah, it’s just too many men; there’s definitely a place on Lodge Lane that everyone jokes about ... it’s just men!

Interventions have had to be made to make certain spaces more accessible for women. Murat (30, British Yemeni, M), the owner of the main café on the street, spoke about how the café is run by women and encloses a private space of a corner building, giving women the chance to sit and socialize.

There also seem to be racialized tensions over perceived changing power dynamics on the lane. Similar to Tegan, some of the other participants spoke about how the area has become ‘too Muslim’. According to Valentin, a Russian who runs the internet center, Lodge Lane is visited by many migrants, but a lot of them now choose to live elsewhere, in Kensington instead ‘because that’s where all the churches are’. Jawa (35, British Somalian, F) spoke about feeling close to the area, but said she would not be paid to live in the streets close to Lodge Lane because of the domination of some ethnic groups.

Some white residents also displayed Islamophobic attitudes in response to Muslim influence along the street (Aytaar & Rath, 2012), with one alluding to ‘the extinct pack of bacon’ as a

symbolic and material divide. Chris (22, White British, M) reported a sense of discomfort due to the direct intimacy these venues generate ‘because people [ethnic minority shopkeepers] think you are not going to respect their culture’. His narrative further underlines how social encounters and understandings in the EMEs are impacted by the physical design of the buildings:

Me and my friend once went into this take away place and the guy said ‘oh, there is a family room downstairs if you want to go and sit downstairs?’ We were like ‘Oh no, it’s ok we will wait here for our food and then we are going in a minute’. We didn’t realise that that is where the men sat and we were being quite rude actually by not respecting that there was a men’s area ...

There was also discussion about the politicized role of the lane as a rising epicenter for diversity, and the succession of minority community representation offices stationed along it. Many communities have offices there, including Merseyside Sudanese Community, Somali Women’s Group, Merseyside Yemeni Community Association. Clara (34, white British and community activist, F) was positive about this representation, although saw less positive implications for local social interaction (Barabantseva, 2016). ‘But it’s a weird one’ she contemplated, ‘you go “oh, that’s great, it’s a Sudanese community centre where loads of people can go and feel comfortable”, but actually, in some ways, I don’t know, is that a really great thing or is that divisive?’

If there were clear gendered and raced differences in how people related to the space of the lane, class came through in different ways too. Stevan (39, Slovakian, M) noted the rapid gentrification of Lodge Lane, expecting prices in the amenities to increase soon as the lane ‘... is appealing to more middle class people, because it’s got these nice cafés’. For other participants, Lodge Lane appears to be acting more as a social startup for recently arrived migrants (Hall et al., 2017), not necessarily appealing to more affluent minorities in the city.

The legacies of decline, austerity and various regeneration plans have also affected the social and material life of the lane. Different interventions in the material and physical environment have exposed the detachment of official regeneration agendas from the everydayness of Lodge Lane (Hall et al., 2017). The recent state-sponsored Tiber Square (Figure 5), originally planned



Figure 5. Tiber Square: a planned mixing space.

as a market square, stands unoccupied, as an “aesthetic form [in]capable of modulating contact among residents” (Simone, 2015, p. 152) whilst the corners of shops, verandas of enterprises and the pavements in front of them are buzzing.

Similarly to other contexts in Europe (see Rath et al., 2018) policy makers have tended to prioritize enterprise in the form of ethnic commodity economy (Dwyer & Crang, 2002), often at odds with the affect and vision of the local residents. Michael (40, mixed heritage British, M) was revolted by the way they [officials] take credit for the area and ‘... kind of play upon it’, whereas Murat (30, British Yemeni, M) noted:

I’ve heard they’ve spent millions on Lodge Lane. Because they’ve got this image that they want to make it into the curry mile! But where is it? Where is the curry mile or whatever?

At the same time, some state-funded programmes and long-standing organizations that used to impact social life in the area are not running anymore or are about to close down due to cuts in funding. Joe (45, mixed heritage British, M) singled out the Unity Boys Club ‘... because they’re the places that people have come through over years and they’re still trying to do it.’ The shifting services and amenities have disrupted certain convivialities by changing the social infrastructure. Even though this is linked to pre-existing public disinvestment in the area (Wacquant, 2008), it still leads to a feeling of loss of belonging (Pinkster, 2016), and a relative sense of powerlessness in the face of local government funding decisions. According to Sam (58, Black British, M):

We lost Lodge Lane library and it is sitting there empty and it is getting worse. The libraries are not just places of reading; if you look on Lodge Lane and areas and how the demographics of the community have changed, like most pubs have closed down, for example, and people lament the loss of pubs in certain ways, if you know what I mean, as you have to remember what a pub was; it wasn’t somewhere that you just went to have a drink.

There are also distinct temporal dimensions in the intersecting social and material life of the lane. As discussed, not only are many social encounters fleeting on the lane, but they are also contingent to the commerce happening in daytime. For Alex (38, Danish, M) Lodge Lane epitomizes the day-night difference in convivialities in Toxteth and the significant impact of the physical environment. The shutters of the businesses, esthetically appealing for some, also work to make the lane pretty anonymous at night, a whole world dissolving into the private spaces of the business premises that line both its sides.

The street is thus a fluid space of interaction, beset by multi-scalar, intersectional tensions but also enlivened by potentialities. Lodge Lane has become a prominent component of the urban infrastructure of the area, and the city. By transforming the socio-material urban space, these small scale enterprises have inadvertently impacted on existing public infrastructure, official agendas about the purpose of the lane, as well as reshaping local inhabitants’ sense of affect and belongingness.

Conclusions

The complex role of EMEs as part of urban transformation in this case study shows that enterprises need to be understood much more holistically, because they are doing much more than the commercial, in terms of urban environment and materiality, the transformation of infrastructure and social life. In particular, in this article we have highlighted the wide ranging importance of these amenities as examples of social infrastructure. First, we have shown that there are recognizable temporal dynamics underpinning these sites and spaces: the longevity of the memories and inscriptions of earlier convivialities and displacements from Granby within the area; the impact of more recent regenerations; the shifting nature and direction of local mobilities and migrations; and the more mundane rhythms of day turning into night. Secondly, we have also acknowledged the tensions surrounding these changes, and these sites, as gendered,

classed and racialized. The way participants relate to them appears just as strongly dependent on their different positionalities *vis a vis* the material and discursive aspects of the area, not least because of the complex history of Toxteth.

These two points converge; in Lodge Lane, EMEs are crucial for convivialities and encounters, not least because of the overall lack of public infrastructure and limited intra-city mobilities in Toxteth, due to public disinvestment in the area (Wacquant, 2008). In turn, the ensuing convivialities are important for the area's appeal and *vice versa* (Aytar & Rath, 2012), as well as business revenue. However, while in some accounts these EMEs are working to emplace people in the area, in other accounts they are seen as a force of displacement, replacing older services and pushing people, and their attendant socialites, away.

Underpinning this, thirdly, is our assertion of the material importance of these EMEs. Though the impact on place of these EMEs has been billed as "speculative" (Harvey, 1989, p. 8), our study shows that they have been instrumental in creating new place based social opportunities, with rippling effects on the physical environment of the area and beyond. These enterprises are materially inscribed in the preexisting built environment and act as social infrastructure, impacting on public life by encouraging encounter, civility and trust (Latham & Layton, 2019), as well as mistrust. The non-human elements of ethnic minority businesses are thus key to these convivialities – the commonalities and tensions that they encompass, their transience and stability, and the way they also start having a life of their own as the area's social fabric develops. The power of displacement and emplacement of EMEs is not just related to their impact on migrants' lives (Hall, 2018), but is closely linked to their roles as non-human actors of urban transformation. Future research should investigate EMEs and the areas where they emerge and operate in through longitudinal ethnographic research that integrates materialities and the physical environment, involving migrants and non-migrants.

Notes

1. By Agatha Sibanda, a Zimbabwean refugee, 20y old, in Writing on the Wall, performed at 'Stories are powerful', by 4Wings, 28 July 2017, Liverpool, UK.
2. Neo-Nazi March was planned for mid-August 2015 but was met with local counter-protests <https://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-said-no-neo-nazi-9866502>
3. Italics added.
4. A private company coveted Lodge Lane as the location for its planned investment in a business and leisure centre: <https://www.placenorthwest.co.uk/news/shipping-container-retail-and-leisure-park-planned-for-toxteth/>
5. Africa Oyé takes place annually in Liverpool: <https://www.africaoye.com/about-africa-oye/>

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