

# Research with urban youth: exploring representations of Kilburn through action methods

Liza Griffin & Kamna Patel  
Development Planning Unit, UCL

[Liza.griffin@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:Liza.griffin@ucl.ac.uk)

[Kamna.patel@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:Kamna.patel@ucl.ac.uk)

Thursday 3rd September 2015

# Project Overview

- Aims
  - provide young people with means to evaluate representations of Kilburn with a view to providing participants with a sense that they might also be able to shape their urban environments
- Young people as researchers
- Now, we are analysing what they produced & how & what this says about (i) Kilburn (ii) our approach to working with young people

# Methods: building capacity to analyse

- Interviewing
  - Participants interviewed a friend or relative to build historic profile of Kilburn from the interviewee's perspective
- Transect walk
  - Small groups conducted local transect & discussed ways to analyse & represent data
- Image & text analysis
  - Reviewed representations of Kilburn in newspapers, music, fiction & vlogs

# Project outputs & outcomes

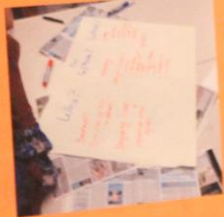
- Outputs
  - Exhibition of participant's work illustrating how they, themselves understand Kilburn & how they would like Kilburn to be represented

### How we did it

Central to this project and the driver behind this exhibition is an aim to help project the voices of young people into academic and public discussions and debates on urban regeneration and development. Mya-Liza Griffin and Katrina Field, through various film-making taking place with youth of colour and a knowledge of research methods enables them to do better understand the place they live in to articulate their views and feelings about a place and to subsequently understand the process in contributing to diverse representations of place.



These were analysed by asking 'who created the representation?' 'for whom?' and 'what did the representation represent?' In subsequent workshops participants were introduced to some of place research in urban geography and development planning to try and design their projects and to help explain why particular representations had been created.



**"We were looking at an advertisement selling houses in Kilburn and noticed in the main picture they photo-shopped out the old and ... We guess it didn't fit their positive message and home buyers' image of Kilburn"**

Oliver Alexander 17 October 2014

### Project Partners



The project partners in a meeting



The project is a part of an ongoing collaboration between ourselves at UCL and two of our 12 students, including Dr. Alexander, who is working in Kilburn. The collaboration was initiated in 2012 and is supported by various other organisations and individuals who have supported the Kilburn project. The project has been funded by the Department of Geography at UCL. The project has been supported by the Department of Geography at UCL. The project has been supported by the Department of Geography at UCL.



Kilburn High Street



### Oral history and interview skills

Our film-makers set out to explore the oral history of Kilburn and to capture the voices of those who have lived in the area. This was done through a series of interviews with local residents and community members.



The project has been supported by the Department of Geography at UCL. The project has been supported by the Department of Geography at UCL. The project has been supported by the Department of Geography at UCL.

### Township mapping

The project has been supported by the Department of Geography at UCL. The project has been supported by the Department of Geography at UCL. The project has been supported by the Department of Geography at UCL.



• How we did it •



**“What do you think about the Evening Standard pull out on property in Kilburn?”**

**“It looks nice. Like a good place to live”**

**“Why do you say that?”**

**“I don’t know....people are having fun. Chatting”**

**“What else do you notice?”**

**“The people in the photographs look wealthy”**

**“How do you know?”**

**“I don’t know. Their clothes. They are drinking cappuccinos”**

**“What else?”**

**“Oh my god... it’s so white! Everyone’s white!”**

**“Is that your experience of Kilburn?”**

**“Errr. No. That’s not Kilburn. Not at all”**



**“What strikes you about the advert for the new flats?”**

**“They look gorgeous. I’d love to live there”**

**“Why?”**

**“They look modern. Clean”**

**“Do you think you will?”**

**“No. How much are they?”**

**“£600,000 I think.”**

**“[laughs]. No”**

**“Wait... They’ve airbrushed out our school!”**

**“What?!”**

**“The view from the flats in the advert. You can’t see St Augustin’s!”**

**“[They laugh]. We’ve been erased!”**

**“Why do you think they did that?”**



"What strikes you about the advert for the new flats?"

"They look gorgeous. I'd love to live there"

"Why?"

"They look modern. Clean"

"Do you think you will?"

"No. How much are they?"

"£600,000 I think."

"[laughs]. No"

"Wait... They've airbrushed out our school!"

"What?!"

"The view from the flats in the advert. You can't see St Augustin's!"

"[They laugh]. We've been erased!"

"Why do you think they did that?"

"We don't fit with their image of the area I suppose"

An image is never just an image – it conveys meaning. Places can be given meaning through being represented

Photographs are no more 'real' than paintings. They too can be carefully composed or edited

A representation is as an image, likeness or reproduction but they are always partial depictions. They bring some things to light, while hiding others. And they are always produced from a particular standpoint.

An essential part of representation lies in attempting to convince others about the validity of a particular point of views

Interpreting representations can tell us about the values of those who designed them and the meanings that places & landscapes hold.



"TO RATHER WALK DOWN  
KILBURN HIGH ROAD THAN  
THE KING'S ROAD – THAN  
ANY ROAD IN LONDON.  
THERE'S SO MUCH MORE  
TO SEE, AND HEAR."  
ZANE SMITH







# Project outputs & outcomes

- Outputs
  - Exhibition of participant's work illustrating how they, themselves understand Kilburn & how they would like Kilburn to be represented
- Outcomes
  - New ways of 'seeing' Kilburn
  - Contributions to engendering diverse perspectives on a place
  - did project affect how participants understand their own power to contribute to placemaking?

# Dilemmas in Youth Research

- Questions of ‘authentic’ youth voices
  - Parroting acceptable discourses e.g. on virtues of ‘multiculturalism’ & ‘diversity’ in a school environment
- Incentives to participate
  - ‘Fun’ research projects where students explore their ideas of place can look like homework & thus be treated like homework (e.g. assessment-led learning & the production of an exhibition piece)