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Displacement and estate demolition: multi-scalar place attachment among relocated social housing residents in London

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ABSTRACT

The forced relocation—displacement—of social housing residents resulting from estate regeneration involving demolition has been the subject of considerable academic and policy debate. While some scholars and policy makers regard such displacement as having harmful outcomes in relation to loss of homes and community relations, others argue that residents benefit from relocation as they move to ‘better places’. This paper contributes to this debate, and to the wider ‘post-displacement’ research agenda, by providing an experiential perspective on residential relocation with reference to in-depth interviews with social housing residents in London who returned to new-build flats at the redeveloped mixed-tenure estates. The paper employs a multi-scalar approach to place attachment which is illustrated and analysed at three spatial scales: domestic (home/dwelling), intermediate (block of flats) and neighbourhood (estate). The home scale is the most positive albeit not unequivocal aspect of residents’ post-displacement experiences, whereas place attachments at the block and neighbourhood scales are characterized by extensive and intensive disruptions and losses.

KEYWORDS

Displacement; gentrification; home; neighbourhood; place attachment; regeneration; social housing estates

Introduction

Displacement refers to forced residential relocation — ‘what happens when forces outside the household make living there impossible, hazardous or unaffordable’ (Hartman, 1982, cited in Slater, 2009, pp. 294–295). Displacement increased across the global North following the 2008 crash but, as Sassen (2014) argues, is a major and worsening issue across both the global North and South and occurs due to a wide gamut of social, economic and political factors such as evictions, rent increases, slum clearance, gentrification, demolitions, mega-projects, ‘natural’ disasters, etc. In a recent paper on China, Wang (2020, p. 703) argues that the causes and processes of displacement are widely studied, but that ‘there is comparatively much less known about the life of residents after displacement’, and he sets out a ‘post-displacement’ research agenda. This paper contributes towards this agenda with reference to the controversial topic of estate demolition which occurs via social housing regeneration (see *inter alia* Goetz, 2013; Hodkinson, 2019; Kleinhans & Kearns, 2013; Slater, 2013). This paper enhances the existing literature by providing an experiential perspective on displaced social housing residents in London with reference to both their prephysical displacement and post-displacement place attachments.

Place is a ‘meaningful location’, while a working definition of place attachment is ‘the bonding of people to places’ (Low & Altman, 1992, cited in Manzo & DevineWright, 2014, p. 1), a bonding which has cognitive, affective and behavioural components which indicate a sense of belonging. As Lewicka (2011, p. 211) notes, ‘one of the definitional features of place is its concentric character: smaller places are incorporated within larger ones’. Hence residential place attachment is not unidimensional but instead operates at a variety of spatial scales. This paper explicitly operationalizes a multi-scalar approach to place attachment: at the domestic scale of the home/dwelling, at the neighbourhood level (which is treated as coterminous with the housing estate), and at the intermediate scale of the block of flats.

In the place attachment literature, home is usually ‘equated with the basic dwelling unit (apartment or house)’ (Lewicka, 2011, p. 212). According to Easthope (2014, p. 581), home is ‘a particularly significant type of place’, one which encapsulates the material space of the domestic dwelling, but which is also intimately connected to notions of identity, well-being and belonging. These are captured by Giddens’ concept of ‘ontological security’: ‘For a dwelling to feel like a home and not merely a shelter and to inspire ontological security, requires a sense of stability and continuity as well as the ability to make changes contributing to a sense of control and a comfortable home environment’ (Morris, 2019, pp. 69–70). If home is bound up with ontological security, the removal of the latter via displacement processes—both threatened and enacted—results in ‘un-homing’, defined as ‘the precarious process by which material and/or imaginary components of home are unintentionally or deliberately, temporarily or permanently, divested, damaged or even destroyed’ (Baxter & Brickell, 2014, p. 134). Such un-homing can occur due to landlord disinvestment and neglect,

as Huq and Harwood (2019) argue in their study of gentrification and ‘making homes unhomely’ in Chicago.

Despite globalization, the residential neighbourhood has proved to have enduring place attachment and belonging significance (Lewicka, 2011; Savage et al., 2005). Such attachment can occur via middle-class aesthetic appreciation of the physical aspects of a residential area, as Savage et al. (2005) highlight via the notion of ‘elective belonging’, but also encompasses social characteristics such as neighbourliness, mutual support, shared use of local facilities, etc. (Morris, 2019). The intermediate scale comprises a block of flats (the building within which each flat is located), and/ or row of houses in a street. In a fine-grained analysis of local resident interaction, Kusenbach (2008) has identified how this intermediate scale forms an important space of positive neighbourly relations rather than the larger neighbourhood scale.

The multi-scalar nature of place and displacement has featured in previous regeneration studies (see inter alia Allen, 2008; Lawson et al., 2015; Morris, 2019; Watt, 2013), albeit with insufficient explicit focus. The inclusion of the intermediate/block scale here is a significant advance on existing displacement studies which tend to sublimate this within the neighbourhood scale. This multi-scalar approach also critiques mass media and official regeneration stigmatizing portrayals of social housing estates—that these places lack any kind of attachment and belonging—portrayals that are drawn upon to justify their erasure via demolition (Slater, 2013; Watt, 2013, 2017). High-rise social housing blocks have been particularly stigmatized even though, as Hodkinson (2019) forcefully argues, the problematic issue is neither high-rise buildings nor social housing per se but rather neoliberal outsourcing and governance failures, as in the fateful case of the 2017 Grenfell fire disaster in London.

The next section reviews the literature on social housing regeneration and displacement. This is followed by a discussion of the research methods and context. The paper focuses on in-depth interviews with 33 relocated residents at five London council-built estates which have been subject to regeneration involving full or partial demolition, and rebuilding via large injections of private finance resulting in high proportions of market homes and limited social rental replacement, as is typical in 21st century London (LAHC, 2015; g15, 2016). The remainder of the paper summarizes the empirical findings on residents’ displacement experiences in relation to the three spatial scales—home/dwelling, intermediate/block and neighbourhood/estate.

Social housing estate regeneration/demolition

Disruptive displacement or benign relocation?

Since the 1970s, social housing estates have been subject to ‘new urban renewal’ programmes involving their demolition and replacement with mixed-tenure developments

that promote ‘social mixing’ between the remaining low-income social tenants and incoming affluent homeowners (Watt & Smets, 2017). Such new urban renewal — often termed ‘estate regeneration’ — has become the policy orthodoxy across European, North American and Australian cities (Darcy, 2013). Social tenants are physically moved out of their homes, but can either be dispersed away from the neighbourhood or remain in (or return to) the same neighbourhood in the revamped mixed-tenure developments (Darcy, 2013; Morris, 2019; Watt, 2017). Remaining-in/ returning-to the redeveloped neighbourhood might not therefore involve physical displacement of tenants at the neighbourhood scale, although indirect forms of displacement — ‘displacement pressure’ (Marcuse, 1986) — can occur in situ as a recent Swedish study argues: ‘material and symbolic changes in place might so radically alter the everyday lives of occupants that they feel themselves displaced even when staying put’ (Pull & Richard, 2019, p. 5, original emphasis).

Estate regeneration has been the subject of extensive research and policy debate. While acknowledging that displacement processes and outcomes are complex and multi-faceted, several U.S. studies have emphasized the negative and harmful impacts of forced residential relocation (Goetz, 2013; Manzo, 2014; Manzo et al., 2008). Existing place attachments and social networks are disrupted, and this disruption is gendered since it is especially significant for low-income female-headed households (Reid, 2013). In a recent in-depth study of public housing displacement in Sydney Morris (2019) has highlighted how displaced elderly tenants lost their previous longterm accrued ontological security and sense of community.

Similar largely negative impacts have also been identified across regeneration schemes in London (Belotti, 2014; Glucksberg, 2017; Hodkinson, 2019) and other areas of England (Allen, 2008; Gosling, 2008; Pain, 2019; Wallace, 2015). These studies identify considerable pre-regeneration place attachment—at variance to the estates’ external stigmatized reputations — including neighbourliness and a sense of community which are pronounced among long-term and female residents who tend to rely on locally-based support networks which are subsequently dissipated by displacement. These harmful displacement effects are emphasized by critical urbanists who have equated estate demolition and mixed-tenure policies with neoliberal restructuring involving state-led gentrification (Lees & Ferreri, 2016; Slater, 2013; Watt, 2013). According to the state-led gentrification thesis, working-class tenants are displaced as urban space is systematically rearranged for the primary benefit of property developers and incoming affluent gentrifiers. Slater (2013) has returned to earlier works on post-war urban renewal, such as Fried (1966), to argue that contemporary displacement is socially and psychologically debilitating since it destroys working-class support networks and generates grieving for lost homes and communities. Indeed, according to Pain (2019) and Elliott-Cooper, Hubbard, and Lees (2020), contemporary displacement contains a distinct element of violence.

Despite some criticism from policy bodies regarding estate demolition (LAHC, 2015), the dominant official policy discourse is that new urban renewal offers residents - most of whom are social tenants - a benign relocation away from rundown housing and 'sink estates' to better homes and neighbourhoods (Adonis & Davies, 2015; Urban Design London, 2015; Watt, 2017). This notion of displacement as benign relocation is supported by academic research conducted in the Netherlands, France and Scotland which has argued that residents are not as scarred by forced relocation as the above critical studies suggest (see inter alia Egan et al., 2015; Kearns & Mason, 2013; Lawson et al., 2015; Posthumus et al., 2014; Posthumus & Lelevrier, 2013). These studies also suggest that the concept of displacement is ideologically loaded since it a priori assumes that relocation is always negative for residents; hence the preferred term is 'residential relocation'.

Kearns and Mason (2013, p. 197) emphasize how 'context is fundamentally important'. It therefore may well be that the exceptionally poor quality of the housing stock and 'weak prior sense of community' (Lawson et al., 2015, p. 942), alongside the ever-present threat of violence identified in the Glasgow displacement study (Egan et al., 2015) are important factors in differentiating their findings from the London and England studies above. The latter suggest that poverty and deprivation co-exist with relatively well-developed patterns of neighbourliness and senses of locally-based community centred upon long-term residency and mutual-aid support networks (Glucksberg, 2017; Gosling, 2008; Watt, 2013). As in the US (Reid, 2013), these networks are prominent among female residents including lone parents, a heavily stigmatized group of working-class tenants who experience social housing estates as convivial, non-judgemental places to live (Gosling, 2008; McKenzie, 2015).

Estate regeneration/demolition in London

The demolition of social housing estates in London has occurred via a raft of regeneration programmes since the 1980s (Kintrea, 2007). During the 1980s–1990s, this regeneration was largely publicly funded by a combination of central government programmes, such as Estate Action and Single Regeneration Budget (SRB), with local government funding, while private investment formed a relatively minor part of total budgets (Jacobs, 1999; Kintrea, 2007; Watt, 2021). Consequently, the redevelopment tenure mix contained a majority of social rental housing, as for example at the Comprehensive Estates Initiative in Hackney (Jacobs, 1999).

Such late twentieth century London estate regeneration/demolition schemes are quite distinct from their 21st century equivalents including those under consideration here (Watt, 2021). The inter-related funding and tenure balances have shifted dramatically following New Labour's twin-track policy emphases on promoting social/tenure mixing and leveraging in large-scale private finance for redevelopment (Adonis & Davies, 2015; Hodgkinson, 2019; LAHC, 2015). Hence recent estate regeneration/ demolition in London has incorporated much lower proportions of social renting coupled with a predominance of private market housing for sale. This tenure transformation, alongside the linked spatial displacement of social tenants and

leaseholders, is epitomized by the Heygate estate in the London borough of Southwark where 92 per cent of social rental homes were lost resulting in a mere 82 households (out of 1,023 original council tenants) who could realistically exercise the 'right to return' to the redeveloped estate as social tenants (35percent, 2018; Flynn, 2016). Unsurprisingly, the Heygate example has come to symbolize estate regeneration as state-led gentrification in London (Lees & Ferreri, 2016; Watt, 2021).

The context for the research is the London housing crisis which is extreme by national standards and which sharply impacts upon working-class Londoners, both BAME (black, Asian and minority ethnic) and white, in terms of overcrowding, evictions, displacement and homelessness (Gillespie et al., 2018; Minton, 2017; Watt, 2018; Watt & Minton, 2016). This crisis has two inter-locking causal dimensions — the neoliberalization of the welfare state including its ratcheting up via post-crash austerity cuts, and the globalization of the London property market. Neoliberalization has led to the shrinkage of social rental provision, from housing 35 per cent of all London households in 1981 down to 24 per cent by 2011, mainly due to Right-to-Buy sales coupled with the lack of new building, but also resulting from estate demolition (LAHC, 2015; Watt & Minton, 2016). The LAHC report (2015, p. 14) has calculated that there was a London-wide gross loss of 30,431 social housing units and net loss of 8,296 social rental homes at 50 demolished council-built estates for the 2004–2014 period.

If less social renting is available for working-class Londoners in need, the second dimension of the city's housing crisis is that not only has London gentrified over several decades (Hamnett, 2003), but it has more recently become the preferred location for a 'super-rich' global elite whose property investments are radically changing the urban skyline via proliferating luxury tower blocks (Atkinson, 2020; Atkinson et al., 2017; Minton, 2017) — i.e. of the sort that form the private sector driver in many London estate regeneration schemes. London therefore represents a residential property market which bears little comparison to other UK areas, for example parts of the north of England where gentrification and super-rich housing pressures are minimal (Pain, 2019; Wallace, 2015). London thus provides a distinct socio-spatial context for estate regeneration, one that most closely aligns with state-led gentrification arguments (Hodkinson, 2019; Lees & Ferreri, 2016).

Research methods

Despite the high-profile nature of estate regeneration in London, there's been relatively little published in-depth research on the experiential aspects of demolition and displacement (although see Glucksberg, 2017; Hodkinson, 2019; Lees & Ferreri, 2016; Nelson & Lewis, 2019; Watt, 2018), and this paper attempts to address this gap. It follows on from the plea made by Goetz (2013) that qualitative research is essential to understand the complex, emotionally-charged nature of displacement.

The research reported here — based on 33 relocated residents (from 31 households) at five London council-built estates — forms part of a much larger multi-method project on public/social housing and regeneration in London involving in-depth interviews with residents and officials, fieldwork, a survey, photographic data, etc. (Watt, 2021). Of the 178 estate residents who were interviewed for the overall project, a total of 51 were physically relocated due to regeneration. However, this paper deliberately excludes the minority of interviewed residents who relocated away from their estate. Instead it focuses on 33 interviewees who were physically displaced from their original homes and blocks — because these were demolished or scheduled to be demolished — but who were subsequently rehoused either on or near the footprint of the original estate. As such, they represent the oft-touted ‘winners’ of estate regeneration in so far as they have not been spatially dispersed away from the neighbourhood, as happened to the majority of Heygate residents (Flynn, 2016), but have instead exercised the ‘right to return’ to their estates, a right that council tenants have struggled to obtain in parts of London (Glucksberg, 2017).

The five local authority built estates, their London boroughs and original number of dwellings are as follows: Woodberry Down (1,980 dwellings) in Hackney, West Hendon (649) in Barnet, Clapham Park (1,997) in Lambeth, Ocean (1,565) in Tower Hamlets, and the Carpenters estate (705) in Newham. These estates largely consist(ed) of low-medium-rise blocks of flats, alongside small rows of terraced houses, although Carpenters has three high-rise tower blocks and West Hendon had one. Although the estates had deteriorated due to lack of investment, none of them suffered from ubiquitous structural problems while many properties were physically sound (CCHPR, 2007; LBB, 2014; Watt, 2009, 2013). Each regeneration scheme has been ongoing for at least 15 years, but will take several more years to complete (with the exception of the Ocean). All the existing redeveloped housing is in the form of blocks of flats.

The Woodberry Down and West Hendon regeneration schemes involve total demolition and rebuilding and these two are the main focus of this article. Regeneration will result in an estimated net loss of social rental properties upon completion — 15 per cent at Woodberry Down and 45 per cent at West Hendon—while densities will increase by 2.8 and 3.4 times respectively (g15, 2016; LBB, 2017; Watt, 2021). Such density increases will involve most new homes being for private sale and hence social tenants will be in a distinct minority; my estimate for the eventual final social rental/market percentage split is 20/60 at Woodberry Down and 12/72 at West Hendon. These figures demonstrate a very substantial tenure transformation and are indicative of state-led gentrification processes and outcomes, even if less extreme compared to the Heygate worst-case estate regeneration scenario (Watt, 2021). By contrast to the latter’s minimal social rental re-provision, 530 decanted secure council tenants returned to new housing association flats at Woodberry Down by early 2019, representing 29 per cent of newly-built properties (Social Life, 2020, p. 25). Of the original 478 council rental homes at West Hendon, 193 had been demolished by September 2019 and

all but one of these secure tenants moved into a new-build flat on the redeveloped estate, according to LBB (2019). Despite such relatively high levels of return for secure tenants, leaseholders were far less likely to return to new-build properties (typically on a shared-equity basis) — only three at Woodberry Down by 2018 and 21 at West Hendon by 2019 (Watt, 2021). Woodberry Down and West Hendon estates also respectively contained 437 (2019) and 212 (2013) non-secure, temporary tenants with zero rehousing rights to the new properties and who are geographically displaced away from the redeveloped neighbourhoods (Watt, 2018, 2021).

The Ocean and Clapham Park regeneration schemes involve a mixture of demolition and rebuilding plus refurbishment of remaining properties (Watt, 2009). Unlike the other four schemes, the long-running and effectively stalled Carpenters' regeneration in Newham has experienced zero demolition and rebuilding, and has had no redevelopment partner since 2013 (Watt, 2013, 2021). Despite this lack of substantive progress, several hundred council tenants have been decanted since 2005 rendering the estate over half empty and a potent symbol of London's housing crisis (Gillespie et al., 2018).

Interviews were conducted with 34 residents at Woodberry Down and 30 at West Hendon. Of these, the focus in this paper is on the 16 and 12 interviewees who respectively relocated to newly-built flats at Woodberry Down and West Hendon. Eighteen residents were interviewed at Clapham Park, 10 at the Ocean and 15 at the Carpenters estate. Of these, the focus here is on two tenants who were each re-housed at Clapham Park and the Ocean, plus one Carpenters' tenant who moved to a housing association property near the estate. All the 28 social renting households remained as social tenants, although previous local authority tenants transferred to a housing association landlord at Woodberry Down, Carpenters and Ocean estates, while the two Clapham Park interviewees remained as housing association tenants due to an earlier stock transfer (Table 1; Watt, 2009). By contrast, the ten council tenants at West Hendon remained as such, although their repairs were conducted by the partner housing association which became their de facto, if not de jure, landlord. Three leaseholder interviewees (two at West Hendon and one at Woodberry Down) became shared-equity part-owners of their flats. As Table 1 shows, over half the interviewees were female. The sample was disproportionately elderly and retired, and importantly the interviewees were largely long-term residents; before relocation, 78 per cent had lived at their estate for 20 years or more (Table 1). The sample represents the kind of multi-ethnic makeup that is typical of London's social housing estates, with only 45 per cent white British. Most were working class in the sense of having manual or routine non-manual occupations, either currently or when last employed. At the time of the interviews, the relocated interviewees had been living in their new flats for periods ranging from a few months up to seven years.

Table 1. Profile of relocated households and interviewees

	N	%
Sex		
Female	19	58
Male	14	42
Total	33	100
Age in years		
20-39	2	6
40-49	5	15
50-59	5	15
60-69	12	36
70+	9	27
Total	33	100
Ethnicity		
White British	15	45
White Irish	4	12
White European	2	6
Mixed	1	3
Black / Black British	6	18
Asian / Asian British	4	12
Other	1	3
Total	33	100
Housing tenure before relocation		
Local authority tenant	26	84
Housing association tenant	2	6
Leaseholder	3	10
Total	31	100
Housing tenure after relocation		
Local authority tenant	10	32
Housing association tenant	18	58
Shared equity	3	10
Total	31	100
Years living at estate before relocation		
3-4	1	3
5-9	1	3
10-19	5	16
20-29	7	23
30-39	9	29
40+	8	26
Total	31	100

Of the 33 relocated interviewees, 26 were interviewed once (after they had moved into their new properties), while seven were interviewed more than once over periods ranging from 2–5 years which therefore entails a longitudinal element. Around half the interviews took place in residents' homes; this was extremely useful since they could show me what they liked or didn't like about their flats. Other interviews were conducted in public spaces, for example community centres, cafes and pubs; one interview was conducted via telephone. The total length of time spent with each interviewee ranged from 30 minutes to over five hours with an average of over 90 minutes. These lengthy interviews facilitated an in-depth exploration of interviewees' housing histories, attitudes towards regeneration, place attachments, and displacement experiences.

Domestic scale—home/dwelling

Better properties, un-homing and liberatory rehousing

Given how the relocated tenants and leaseholders (with just one exception) moved into newly-built properties, it's perhaps unsurprising that the domestic home scale was the most positive aspect of relocation, rather than the block or neighbourhood scales. Over one-third of interviewees considered their new flats to be 'much better' than their previous flats/maisonettes which they described as old, rundown and in some cases overcrowded. A few of these positive domestic relocations were experienced as liberatory since they afforded tenants a welcome relief from unsatisfactory and even intolerable housing conditions. Another quarter of interviewees was largely negative about their new homes, while the remainder was ambivalent.

Landlord neglect, involving financial disinvestment and lack of proper maintenance of their previous council flats, was a common tenant complaint; such issues are longstanding at London social housing estates (Baxter & Lees, 2009; Watt, 2021). Such neglect was a major factor in tenants becoming un-homed in their old properties. Gerry's (65, white Irish) rehousing experience at Woodberry Down was unambiguously positive: 'the flat was crap, there was water running down the walls, I mean they were awful bloody places quite frankly'. Tipp (62, white Irish) was similarly 'delighted' with his relocation at Woodberry Down because he had gained 'superior accommodation' compared to his old, rundown flat. Tenants like Gerry and Tipp were un-homed in their old properties over years of landlord neglect which contributed towards their relative positive appreciation of their new flats. In other cases, neglect and un-homing was acute since tenants were forced out of homes they had otherwise become attached to. Jack (63, white British) was far less positive about his new housing association flat at Woodberry Down than either Gerry or Tipp, but he had an inadequately-treated incursion of damp at his old flat which prompted him to move.

There was black all over the walls and I got my clothes out of the wardrobe and they was all wet, my bed was wet. He [council worker] was testing the walls and he said, 'it's quite bad, but you've got to wash it off, you could get soap and water, sugar soap, and wash it off'. I just couldn't believe what he was saying to me and I said, 'I just don't want to live here now'. But he weren't to blame, the people I blame is Hackney Council.

In fact, the five study estates were either fully or partially removed from the national Decent Homes dwelling improvement programme over many years because they were undergoing regeneration (Belotti, 2014; Watt, 2013, 2021). Hence, internal property conditions de facto deteriorated as residents waited to be rehoused.

If un-homing processes were largely linked to landlord under-investment and neglect, a secondary factor was over-crowding as families described struggling for years in tight domestic spaces, an all too common problem for London social tenants. Lorraine (43, black mixed), for example, was a lone parent who much preferred her new spacious flat at West Hendon because it enabled her two children to have separate bedrooms, and she had even opted to move earlier than scheduled. Those who were previously overcrowded or who otherwise had poor housing conditions had the most positive home/dwelling experiences. However, despite being pleased with their new homes, many tenants (including Lorraine) were far less enamoured with both the block and neighbourhood scales, as discussed below.

Attachments to old homes: ontological security

Only a minority of interviewees was entirely negative about their previous flats. Instead, around two-thirds (including several who preferred their new homes) expressed attachment to their old homes — due to their design, their own home-making activities, and residential longevity — an attachment which facilitated ontological security, as now discussed.

One facet of domestic place attachment related to the physical design of the old council-built flats and blocks, as tenants remarked: 'it was structurally quite sound, very solid' (Sam, 49, Indian, West Hendon); 'it was a very solid building not like now, they don't build them solid anymore' (Geraldine, 74, black Caribbean, Carpenters). Several interviewees appreciated both their old and new flats, albeit for different reasons, with the former typically winning out in terms of solidity. Deirdre's (78, white British, Woodberry Down) old flat had 'solid walls', unlike her new flat, but she also felt 'lucky' to have the latter: 'this is much better, I mean, I don't think it would survive someone letting a bomb off on it, we would all be on the ground underneath it [laughs]'. Maureen and Andrew (white British), a married couple in their sixties, liked their new housing association flat at Woodberry Down for its generous size and location overlooking the reservoir; 'I mean the view is absolutely stunning, and it was our first-choice property, so yes we were very, very fortunate' (Maureen). Despite this, they also loved their old council flat which possessed qualities that their new one lacked; 'it was built

well, you needed a tungsten drill to put a picture up, that's how solid it was' (Andrew). Had it not been for regeneration, Andrew and Maureen would have been happy to remain in their old flat.

A second aspect of domestic place attachment was how interviewees had actively made their old flats into homes over the many years that they had lived in them. These home-making activities comprise what Pahl (1984, p. 98) refers to as 'domestic self-provisioning' whereby householders use their own labour to maintain and improve their domestic living standards. Many displaced tenants, as well as leaseholders, had undertaken DIY and also financially invested in their previous flats in order to make them into homes. As Deirdre proudly mentioned, 'I did all the kitchen, the bathroom and the hall, I used to do all the decorating'. If DIY was beyond household members, because of cost or their own physical incapacity, they sought the assistance of family or friends, as Brian (90, white British) remarked: 'one of my boys used to do it, one's a chippy and they've all got different trades'. Such active home-making challenges stereotypical notions that social tenants do not value their homes because they are 'merely' renting and not homeowners, as Easthope (2014) argues.

As noted above, although the old dwellings were inherently solid, they had all too often been allowed to decay by the actions and inactions of local authority landlords. Self-provisioning was therefore partly a response to the council's tardiness in undertaking internal works: 'the trouble is, you ask the council for anything, you're waiting unbelievably long, you might as well do it yourself' (Brian). Interviewees' home-making efforts counter-balanced landlord neglect and un-homing in-activities. Such home-making is gendered as women emphasized their efforts in creating a home and counteracting landlord neglect. Tina (53, north African) cherished her previous 'lovely' and 'solid' Woodberry Down council flat which she had made into a home — despite the damp — over the nearly three decades that she'd lived there with her children. By comparison she disliked her new flat including the kitchen-diner arrangement, a frequent source of complaint among middle-aged and elderly female interviewees.

It was a lovely flat and I had done it up the way that I wanted it. It had a big balcony, a sitting room and a separate kitchen away from the dining room. But this place, all of the furniture smells of cooking. They call these 'luxury flats', but what's luxury about them I don't know [laughs]. They said they would knock them down in five years, but they're still there five years later. I just want to get my stuff and go back there [to previous council flat].

A third aspect of domestic belonging was longevity and associated memories, a key aspect of developing ontological security among elderly tenants (Morris, 2019). Geraldine said that her old flat 'felt like home because I'd lived there for so long. Now where I am, my heart isn't in it'. Unlike Geraldine, who disliked her new housing association flat because it was cold,

infested with insects and had smaller rooms, Marion (61, white British) felt 'very comfortable' in her new flat, but even then 'it still does not feel like home'. Marion had lived at Woodberry Down all her life and she was sad and angry about leaving her council flat which inexplicably remained standing.

I want to go back to my old flat, by looking at it, I want to be there. Both my mother's died in the flat, my biological and my step-mother, so the memories of those two women were so important. I thought I would be there forever, I had no intention of leaving, moving away. And that's how I feel about [old block], I'm taken away from my security, my home that I'd lived in for 51 years.

Marion's previous ontological security, based on the long-term association of home and familial memories, had been profoundly disrupted by her relocation, even though it was physically only across the road. Attachments to old homes were far more significant than is recognized in the official regeneration discourse — which merely describes the dwellings as 'old', 'sub-standard' and of 'poor quality' (LBB, 2017; LBH, 2014).

New flats and landlords

Most interviewees could find something positive to say about their new flats, while several reported having no repairs' problems which had necessitated them contacting their housing association landlord/repairs' teams. Nevertheless, two factors qualified interviewees' domestic place attachment which, for those worst affected, signalled that their new flats were not their home as associated with ontological security — in other words, post-displacement un-homing.

First, the new-build flats were routinely described in physically insubstantial terms such as 'flimsy', 'thin', etc. and as such were in sharp contrast to their old 'solid' council-built flats. Such descriptions symbolized and confirmed the new flats' unreliability — as dwellings, but not homes. In describing her new housing association flat at Clapham Park as 'awful', Linda (75, white British) highlighted the thin walls which she contrasted to her previous solid flat: 'looks gorgeous from the outside, but inside it's all plasterboard—I've got a big flat TV but can't have it on the wall, it'll rip half the wall down'. Pat (51, black British, West Hendon) had cried watching her old council block being demolished and had not recovered from the trauma of being forcibly relocated from her previous beloved flat into what she described as a flat made of 'balsa wood' where she could hear her neighbours talking and even having sex.

It hurt me, broke me, I've gotta say I cried. Devastated, still crying now. Because for what I've got now—I'm gonna speak candidly and tell the truth—I've now been in this flat just under two years and it's broken my heart. The old flat that I came out of was concrete and flint, sturdy, strong building. Here I've got cracks in the wall.

The second factor that qualified attachment to the new flats related to post-displacement governance issues — poor housing association repairs and maintenance services, for example inadequate heating and water supply, leaks, lift breakdowns, insect infestation, etc., as Linda angrily recounted.

In the winter I was five weeks with no heating. I'm on second floor flat, I'm disabled and nine days with no lifts and I had 36 hours no running water. And I said 'look, I've got no lift I can't get down, I need things', and they [housing association] said 'we'll make sure the local housing officer will come to sort you out'. Not even a phone call.

Repairs and maintenance problems emerged at each redeveloped estate, and I also observed these being significant at Woodberry Down and West Hendon regeneration meetings. Although Shirley (70, black Caribbean, Woodberry Down) generally preferred her new flat, she also had multiple repair and maintenance issues which qualified her domestic place attachment, issues which other tenants also experienced: 'here there is always complaints about something, and [the housing association] are very slow to act'. Jack had waited two years to have his broken balcony door fixed: 'they did start fixing it, but they never came back'. Several interviewees even favoured the council over their current landlord: 'They [housing association] are shocking and to be quite honest we criticized Hackney [Council], but had we known then what we know now about [the housing association], even though we've got a beautiful property, I don't think we would have moved in' (Maureen). Ahmed (32, Bangladeshi) had struggled without running water due to a malfunctioning 'cheap pump' at one of the new housing association blocks at the Ocean estate. This necessitated his wife and child temporarily moving out and staying with his in-laws — un-homing and post-rehousing displacement: 'It was just such a stressful time and this went on for three weeks'.

Intermediate scale—block of flats

Place attachment at the intermediate scale of the block of flats reflects three factors which are discussed in turn: neighbouring, safety and security, and spatial location.

Neighbouring

Place attachment in the block of flats (or in a very few cases, row of houses) was prominent during the pre-regeneration period as interviewees generally commented favourably on having positive neighbouring relations. Such neighbourliness was predicated on mutual residential longevity, physical design, and reciprocal support especially among mothers vis-a-vis childcare. Most interviewees had lived in low/medium-rise blocks in which the flats were typically arranged along externally facing open balconies which looked out on to public courtyards, gardens and green space. This traditional council housing design meant that

seeing and bumping into neighbours at the old blocks was routine (Baxter & Lees, 2009; Watt, 2021), as Lorraine described at West Hendon.

The way the buildings were designed, you could see your neighbours every day. That was great about the old buildings, because it was like you had your neighbours come out on the corridors and talk to people, so you could see if everyone was okay.

A few interviewees had maintained their previous relations with those neighbours who had moved into the same new block of flats as themselves, while others, such as Sam, formed new relationships: 'very good neighbours, so that's a real big positive'. However, a far more typical refrain (from around two-thirds of interviewees) was a loss of neighbourliness and accompanying greater anonymity and isolation in the new blocks. Prior to her relocation, Geraldine had made friends with the other female tenants on her landing over the four decades that she had lived in her high-rise tower block at the Carpenters estate. By contrast, she felt isolated in her new block: 'you don't see anybody, once you close your front door that's it'. Tipp knew most of his neighbours along his old row of houses (some converted to flats) at Woodberry Down — 'you'd meet them on the street or you're walking around' — but 'where I live [now] I don't even know my neighbours'. Flats in all of the new-build blocks are located along windowless internal corridors that reduce residents' capacity to see and socially interact with neighbours. Although Lorraine was 'over the moon' with her new flat (as above), she missed the everyday neighbourliness at her old councilbuilt block.

The new buildings are not the same, they don't have that balcony where you can see who's there. Whereas now everyone's kind of isolated, so you can't really get to know anyone as such, unless you're knocking on their doors trying to find out and making more of an effort.

Lorraine expressed a commonplace interviewee analogy between living in the newly-built blocks and living in a hotel: 'If you ever go to a hotel, you know you're going straight into your room and you lock the door, and you come out to go downstairs to the foyer and you meet in reception'. Unlike the previous neighbourly conviviality of his old Woodberry Down block, Jack didn't know who lived in his new hotel-like block with its standardized and anonymous 'non-place' (Auge, 1995) features.

When you walk in the door and you come up the lift and you go along the corridor, its door, door, door, door, door, carpet, but you don't see anyone. I've never met anyone on that landing for about five years.

Gordon (60, white Irish) thought the redeveloped homes and neighbourhood were generally an improvement, but he contrasted the hotel-like soullessness of the new housing association blocks at Woodberry Down unfavourably with his old block's neighbourliness.

... the design of these flats is a different feel now, whereas in the old flats across the road, you could have come out on the balcony, you could sit there and have an old natter with someone next door. Here the first thing my son said to me, 'this is like a flipping hotel', because you go in the lift, and when you come out above it's a corridor, carpeted, and you just go in your own door. Now over there, you know you had more of a chance of meeting your next-door neighbour.

This hotel-like anonymity and resulting isolation was especially felt by elderly and disabled residents. Vicky (65, white British) joked about how she was waiting for the maid to come and make her bed: 'this is like a hotel, it's not a home, I cannot settle. My home is over there [in the old block at West Hendon], I'd just like to go back there'.

Safety and security

Unlike neighbouring, opinions on safety and security vis-a-vis block place attachment were more mixed. Some interviewees appreciated living in a more securitized space with the prominent presence of gates and security doors. As Jane (80, white British) remarked, her new block at Woodberry Down was less prone to overt anti-social behaviour: 'You was on the ground floor over there [old block] and you always had people on the grass outside, drinking and all that sort of thing'. Others, however, did not feel more secure because their sense of safety in their old blocks had been predicated on knowing and trusting their neighbours over many years' co-residence, as Danni (46, black African, West Hendon) stated.

We had children, they'd be in and out, and standing or playing on the landing. Our doors were open a lot more, we felt a lot safer, we knew who our neighbour is you know. It was the type of feel that you get, we knew each other, we trusted one another.

Location

Some tenants at Woodberry Down (such as Maureen and Andrew above) had gained waterside views due to their relocation which enhanced their place attachment to the block. Although Tipp didn't know any of his neighbours in his new block, he was thrilled with the view from his flat: 'I have a window looking over the reservoir, it's fantastic'. However, two social housing blocks at Woodberry Down and one at West Hendon were located on/near the main road. This meant that while tenants – such as Tipp, Andrew and Maureen – benefitted from their waterside relocation, others had lost those self-same views and also suffered from worse noise due to traffic. At Woodberry Down, Marion contrasted her new blocks' roadside location unfavourably with her previous waterside location.

Every room you had the whole view and it was a panoramic view, which was just gorgeous, absolutely gorgeous and I did not want to move. Because I'm on the busy

main road here and it's very noisy, you've got cars and things and you've got sirens going all day long.

The roadside location of social housing blocks at Woodberry Down and West Hendon reflects how the waterside positions function as premier selling points for the private tower block flats. West Hendon estate was in fact rebranded as 'Hendon Waterside' for marketing purposes. Thus social tenants' worsening spatial location is symbiotically linked to the waterside siting of the private towers and this illustrates their concerns regarding how the estate neighbourhood was radically changing via class-based displacement in situ (Pull & Richard, 2019), as now discussed.

Neighbourhood scale—estate

Three aspects of place attachment are examined at the neighbourhood/estate scale: neighbourhood facilities, displacement pressure, and residents' sense of community.

Facilities

Prior to regeneration, each estate had a range of neighbourhood facilities — shops, cafes, pubs, community centres and green space — located either within it or nearby. Although residents were not hermetically sealed into their estates, these local neighbourhood facilities tended to be well-used, and especially by those residents whose spatial mobility was restricted due to poverty, caring responsibilities, disability or old age. Such frequent use contributed towards residents' place attachment at the neighbourhood scale, and also enhanced estate sociability as people bumped into neighbours similarly going about their daily routines. Many of these facilities were scaled-back or removed entirely as a direct consequence of regeneration, although new, supposedly 'improved' facilities were developed to replace them as part of the regeneration place-shaping agenda.

Long-term residents lamented the erosion or loss of the facilities that they had used for years, if not decades, and this reduced their neighbourhood place belonging. The 'old' Woodberry Down had a parade of shops (which Marion described as 'fabulous') which was demolished under regeneration. Although Jane and Brian (an elderly couple) liked their new housing association flat and also their new block because of its enhanced security features, they were dismayed by the loss of shops which had previously signified how the pre-regeneration council estate had formed a 'proper community'.

It's just I think they've killed the community quite a lot. [...] That's why when the old shops was on that side [of the road], it was a proper community. You went down there, there was the cafe, the fish and chip shop, the barbers, hairdressers, bakers,

everything was there. Now you go in to Sainsbury's [supermarket], [...] it's not the same. (Jane)

Bob (54, white British) had been friends with the newsagent who had been at Woodberry Down for forty years, but who had been forced out of business due to the regeneration-related arrival of a branded supermarket. Bob gave a detailed account of how the closure of the newspaper shop negatively impacted upon the quality of local social relations.

Since they've done it [regeneration] they've killed the community. There's no community up here like there used to be. Cos' my mate's got the paper shop. There was old people there, if they didn't come out in the morning, afternoon, whatever, if I was in the shop he'd say, 'go and see this girl and give her the papers'. So I'd go up, check if the old people had their papers, if they was in and if they was alright. The paper shop used to have their phone numbers so they can phone them up if they needed anything cos they couldn't get out. So we'd go round to the shop, pick up some stuff for them, groceries, and take it up to them. That's all gone now, cos it's not even there, the paper shop.

Several interviewees mentioned the Woodberry Down newsagent by name, indicative of long-established intimate relations. Shirley described how long-term residents, like herself, mourned the loss of the previous shops.

I am not the only one, because other people said the same thing, what we miss, we miss all our old shops. They always talk about it, I meet different neighbours and they always talk about it, all the time because they were comfortable with it and now they don't have it. We have no place where we can go and have a nice cup of tea.

During the research, the main lost facility at West Hendon was the green space which had acted as a fulcrum of pre-regeneration neighbourhood sociability, including providing a safe space for children to play out, as Annie (75, white British) wistfully recalled.

I only had to look out my window and I could see the children. If they got into any sort of difficulties, I could call them, "come in now", and whatever. It was wonderful, absolutely wonderful.

The building works had removed this space: 'we had fantastic green space, but now look at it! It was a typical estate with a big space down back there where they could play, but where are kids meant to play now?' (Charlie, 60, white British). Working-class tenants' place attachment to green space was not merely aesthetic—as emphasized by Savage et al. (2005) via elective belonging—but formed part of their everyday routines. Pat contrasted being

'stuck inside' her present flat with the easy access to green space afforded by her previous West Hendon flat.

In the old block, I could climb out my back window and go and sit on the grass. Because I had the fresh air out there, I had the grass, I had the scenery, a little park. You could do things if you wanted to — sunbathe, play a game, anything. Here there's nothing like that ... once you're in, you're in.

Danni plaintively described how her new block had been built over memories of 'our park': 'we're actually living on top of what was once our park, and we have memories of picnics, people meeting, people walking their dogs, playing ... '.

With the exception of the non-redeveloped Carpenters estate, the research estates had new commercial and non-commercial facilities provided due to regeneration, for example a community centre at Woodberry Down and West Hendon. The redeveloped estates were also subject to community development initiatives by the regeneration partners, including annual fun days and organized leisure activities at the community centres. Such initiatives were prominent at Woodberry Down due to the energetic efforts of the Woodberry Down Community Organisation (WDCO) which included substantial resident representation (Nelson & Lewis, 2019). Some interviewees participated in such formal organized activities and for a few this increased their neighbourhood-based sociability, for example by attending regeneration meetings: 'I think I'm more committed with the neighbourhood when the regeneration started because there was so many meetings' (Alan, 43, Asian, shared-equity). However, although the fun days were popular, many interviewees had either no or limited engagement with other organized leisure activities, while there was also a sense that these were an inadequate substitute for the now-missing informal neighbouring routines that had been built up over the many years of previous co-residence.

Obviously just putting in these coffee mornings once a month or whatever, it's not as before, because before you'd be walking to your property and you'd see people outside their front doors and that was open so that anyone would see us. (Danni)

I do get letters saying 'craft work' or 'workshops' and everything, but you can do that anywhere anyway, you can do that at college, you can do that in the evenings anywhere. But I think they're trying to get that community feel and I don't think it works. (Jack)

Displacement pressure

Rather than social mixing in their redeveloped mixed-tenure neighbourhood — as the estate regeneration rationales emphasize (LBB, 2012; LBH, 2014) — class inequalities became magnified and this negatively affected residents' place belonging. BAME and white working-

class interviewees routinely commented on how regeneration had been done to them, but was not primarily for them (cf. Goetz, 2013; Watt, 2013). Instead, it was primarily for those who Bob cynically referred to at Woodberry Down as ‘a “better sort of people” they’re bringing in’. Marion was ‘very angry’ about having to leave her cherished old flat, an anger that was exacerbated by the likelihood that any new private blocks would be prohibitively expensive ‘for us’.

Marion: And when it [old block] does get demolished, if it gets demolished, it will be a private block of flats. You know all the tower blocks that have been built, you know that side and the ones further up the road, they are not going to be for us. You can see they’re tower blocks, you can see they’re going to be sold off, they’ll be private.

Paul: When you say ‘us’, you mean?

Marion: Ordinary, everyday tenants, who lived on the estate, ordinary people who in a million years could never afford to buy here. And I think that’s what’s destroyed the community, nobody could afford to live here.

Such attitudes were commonplace — that the neighbourhood was being radically transformed by the limited social housing which ordinary, working-class people ‘like us’ could access compared to the looming presence of 20+ storey private blocks for affluent incomers: ‘You can just see the money’s in the air there [towers], and it’s a shame because it’s not like the old Woodberry Down’ (Jack). Thus, in addition to their own direct displacement experiences — from their homes and blocks — they also felt indirect ‘displacement pressure’ (Marcuse, 1986) as the neighbourhood was gentrifying in a manner which materially and symbolically excluded working-class people ‘like us’. Regeneration resulted in a form of up-scale gentrification predicated on building luxury apartments many of which are sold abroad (Atkinson, 2020); 42 per cent of private homes at Woodberry Down had been sold to overseas’ buyers (Hackney Citizen, 2019). Jack scathingly referred to the presence of an estate agent across the road in the largely private part of Woodberry Down: ‘if you’ve got £1million you can buy one of them flats!’

Such displacement pressure relates to how the new neighbourhood facilities include private gyms which are solely for the use of private residents; they are literally ‘not for us’ — the remaining social tenants. Even the supposedly shared commercial facilities are exclusionary. The new cafes and restaurants at Woodberry Down are prohibitively expensive for low-income social tenants, and these facilities—across the road from the two main social housing blocks — have reinforced, rather than muted, class distinctions, as Shirley described.

So, we don’t have no facilities for us [tenants]. Not this side [of the road], the other side have. They opened a place next to Sainsbury’s [supermarket], it’s Italian and it’s

all pasta, pasta, pasta and pizza. Then one [cafe] across the road, [one] girl [female neighbour] said to me, she went there and bought something Italian and she paid nearly £3 for these two slices of bread with something in it. She said ‘that’s ridiculous’, you know, you cannot afford it. It’s not for the people who live around here really. We [tenants] are used to low prices. I could have gone in there [closed fish and chip shop] and got my little bit of chips and I would have paid 90 pence for a little bit of chips. Yesterday I paid £2.80! (laughs)

Sense of community

Long-term residents routinely expressed having a sense of community at their estates prior to regeneration. This community feeling cut across both ethnic and tenure differences, and was not merely symbolic or rhetorical since interviewees provided detailed accounts of their everyday social interactions, interactions that I also observed during fieldwork. Such everyday sociability was especially prominent among female residents who were the most active community-makers (Gosling, 2008). However, displacement meant that interviewees’ place belonging atrophied, partly due to reduced neighbourliness at the intermediate block scale, but also due to the wider neighbourhood changes mentioned above. Around three quarters of interviewees conveyed a loss of community — the regenerated estate was ‘not the same’ since their previous local social relations — which had been built-up over many years, if not decades — had been disrupted due to both their own and others’ relocation and return to a very different place.

It’s like living in a hotel, you never see people on the landing. Now and again you’ll go in the lift you might see a neighbour or something, but there’s no community spirit at all, it’s gone. Because you spent 32 years with the same neighbours, that’s your community. (Andrew, Woodberry Down)

There was definitely a sense of community before the regeneration because people had been there for a long time. It’s died out now because new people have come in that you don’t know and also because now it’s empty. (Geraldine, Carpenters)

In [previous block] there was a much larger community feel. (Ahmed, Ocean)

It’s like a piece of paper—it’s picked it [community] up and thrown it to the wind—you could never put it back together again. (Theresa, 55, white Irish, West Hendon, shared-equity)

Part of ‘throwing the community to the wind’ relates to how not all their previous neighbours had been able to return to the redeveloped estate, unlike themselves. Widespread sympathy was expressed for the many leaseholders and temporary tenants who had been physically displaced away from the estate due to regeneration. Alan was very pleased with his own

family's rehousing at Woodberry Down, but he also acknowledged the painful dispersal of temporary tenants, including his daughter's friend; 'she disappeared, so yes it was not very fair to them'. At West Hendon, Sam described the forced spatial relocation of temporary tenants in more forthright terms: 'they've been treated like crap'. The displacement of ex-neighbours away from the estate added to the sense of ruptured social relations among the regeneration survivors.

Conclusion

This paper has contributed towards the development of a post-displacement research agenda (Wang, 2020) by operationalizing a multi-scalar notion of place attachment. In so doing, it has illustrated the complex, multi-layered nature of displacement experiences among social housing residents in London. As such, it has demonstrated how individuals' post-displacement place attachments are not necessarily congruent at the three spatial scales. In particular, although interviewees could appreciate certain aspects of their newly-built flats - as newer, bigger, etc. domestic spaces - they simultaneously had problems at the intermediate and/or neighbourhood spatial scales. This analytical emphasis on fine-tuning place attachment via spatial disaggregation not only challenges simplistic official policy rationales about estate demolition creating 'better places' to live (Adonis & Davies, 2015; Watt, 2017 — see below), but it also queries the aggregation approach taken in one recent critical paper on displacement which argues that the concept of un-homing should itself be regarded as multi-scalar and stretched out from the household to the street, neighbourhood and city scales (Elliott-Cooper et al., 2020).

The most positive aspect of forced relocation discussed above is the domestic scale of the home/dwelling. Interviewees often considered their new flats as being an improvement on their previous properties, albeit that this improvement was also in many cases equivocal, not least due to tenants experiencing repairs' and maintenance problems vis-a-vis their new housing association landlords. Domestic improvement was more common at Woodberry Down than West Hendon, probably because the former's old properties were more rundown while the new Woodberry Down flats are a large Parker Morris plus 10% size (as negotiated by WDCO). Those council tenants who had previously been un-homed — due to landlord neglect, poor physical conditions and/or over-crowding — were willing and eager to move, and tended to regard rehousing as benign and even in a few cases as liberatory. As Kleinhans and Kearns (2013) argue, such positive aspects of forced relocation have been under-emphasized in the critical state-led gentrification literature (although see Morris, 2019). Such positive findings require two major qualifications, however. First is that even those who appreciated their new flats were not necessarily damning about their old council-built flats since the latter possessed qualities that the former lack — notably solidity — a finding that is underplayed in the academic and policy literature. Secondly, the loss of old cherished homes

— allied to the new dwellings’ flimsy nature plus landlord deficiencies — has resulted in diminished ontological security for a substantial minority of interviewees. The domestic home findings — both pre-physical displacement and post-displacement — support the notion that landlord actions and/or inactions significantly contribute towards tenants’ un-homing, as Huq and Harwood (2019) argue.

The findings reiterate the importance of examining place attachment at the intermediate scale, as Kusenbach (2008) has highlighted. Although interviewees’ attitudes towards the new blocks’ security and location were mixed, their previous informal neighbourly sociability within the old blocks — predicated on residential longevity, familiarity and trust, enhanced by council block design features — was typically diminished due to relocation. Their new blocks were generally experienced as anonymous, hotel-like non-places in Auge’s (1995) terms, and elderly and disabled tenants felt particularly isolated.

Whatever benefits rehousing might bring to previously un-homed households at the domestic scale, neighbourhood place attachment extensively deteriorated, and this was despite the organized community development efforts that were made. Valued local facilities (shops, cafes, green space) either disappeared or had been revamped and interviewees lamented these changes. Such losses are shared — it wasn’t just the interviewees who missed certain facilities since they related how their neighbours were similarly or even worse affected. Displaced residents are thus not isolated monads who are only concerned with their own individualized ‘customer satisfaction’. Diminished place belonging at both the neighbourhood and block scales contributed towards a lost sense of community for many displacees, a loss which differs from the Glasgow study where little sense of pre-regeneration community was evident (Lawson et al., 2015). The London findings here should not, however, be misinterpreted as representing a nostalgic reminiscence about a rose-tinted past. Interviewees were well aware of pre-regeneration social problems at their estates, for example anti-social behaviour. Nevertheless, these problems did not mean the pre-regeneration London council-built estates in question are the British equivalent of Wacquant’s (2008) toxic urban wastelands of advanced marginality, such as the Chicago public housing projects, where place belonging has ostensibly dissolved (see Watt, 2021).

Even though the London interviewees had physically remained within (or returned to) the footprint of their original estate, they were indirectly displaced at the neighbourhood level and experienced displacement pressure due to gentrification (Marcuse, 1986). Such in situ displacement (Pull & Richard, 2019) is heightened when, as in the cases under consideration, estate regeneration results in the ‘increasingly financialised forms of “gentrified gentrification”’ (Atkinson et al., 2017, p. 191) — luxury tower blocks — that characterizes contemporary London residential development. Rather than redeveloped neighbourhoods promoting social mixing, a la regeneration rationales, BAME and white working-class social tenants felt that they no longer belonged in these gentrifying/hyper-gentrifying spaces — ‘it’s

not for us' (Watt, 2013). Such findings support critical accounts of mixed-tenure developments (Davidson, 2008; Watt & Smets, 2017), as well as state-led gentrification arguments more broadly.

Over one quarter of displaced tenants (mainly female) experienced a rupturing of place attachments at all three levels — home, block and neighbourhood. These tenants gave visceral accounts of displacement as they grieved for lost homes and communities in a manner redolent of the bereavement identified in post-war urban renewal (Fried, 1966; Marris, 1986), and which critical urbanists have emphasized in relation to contemporary estate demolition as being socially and psychologically destructive (Glucksberg, 2017; Lees & Ferreri, 2016; Slater, 2013). Their real homes — meaning their old homes — were either in rubble or were inexplicably still standing despite their supposed structural defects, while their block and neighbourhood social relations were ripped apart. There are important gender and age-related effects since these middle-aged and elderly working-class women referred to how their homes and communities had been forcibly removed from them, homes and communities which they had worked at creating over many years (Gosling, 2008). The in-depth interview method revealed the depths of distress that displacement gave rise to for these women, something that survey research cannot adequately grasp — 'it's broken my heart' is not equivalent to being 'very dissatisfied' in a tick-box questionnaire response (see Glucksberg, 2017; Goetz, 2013; Morris, 2019). During interviews, these women cried, got visibly angry or rolled their eyes in desperation as they somatically expressed how regeneration had taken something precious away from them. Those worst affected by displacement had their everyday routines torn apart and this coercive process occurred against their will. It is this group for whom displacement was most experienced as a form of violence (Elliott-Cooper et al., 2020; Pain, 2019). They were coerced into a state of ontological insecurity — the obverse of ontological security — whereby biographical continuity has been disrupted, a feeling that is prompted by anxiety about 'being engulfed, crushed or overwhelmed by externally impinging events' (Giddens, 1991, p. 53). Such ontological insecurity and associated deep levels of psychological distress are undoubtedly detrimental to health and well-being (Morris, 2019). While Marris (1986, p. 44) acknowledged the range of residents' responses to slum clearance rehousing, his comment that 'for some, it may be a profound disturbance from which they never recover' is shockingly all too apposite for the London sample discussed here.

Such emotional scars represent what can be termed 'the hidden injuries of displacement' (after *The Hidden Injuries of Class* by Sennett & Cobb, 1973). These displacement injuries are hidden because they rarely — if ever — appear in the sanitized official accounts of regeneration, demolition and rehousing as provided or sanctioned by the hegemonic policy stakeholders, i.e. local government, housing associations, private developers, consultants, etc. (see inter alia Adonis & Davies, 2015; g15, 2016; LBB, 2017; LBH, 2014; Urban Design London, 2015; Watt, 2017). Instead these official accounts are predicated on stigmatizing

'sink estate' stereotypes—that residents have limited, if any, place attachments prior to regeneration, and hence demolition and rebuilding automatically creates 'better places' to live.

This is a small-scale study and makes no claims regarding statistical representativeness. However, the findings gel with other data from the overall research project as well as other research on the same estates (Belotti, 2014; Nelson & Lewis, 2019; Watt, 2013, 2021). It could, however, be objected that interviewees' laments for lost neighbourliness and community will wane as they get to know their new neighbours over time. This benign future scenario negates the here-and-now lived experiences of this largely elderly group of displacees who developed their pre-regeneration place belonging over decades, something which they are unlikely to ever replicate: 'ageing in place has been found to be critical for intensifying place attachment; [...] autobiographical insideness can rarely be created in a new setting' (Smith, 2009, p. 144; see Morris, 2019).

In conclusion, it's important to reiterate that this sample of relocated social housing residents consists of those who — one could reasonably argue on the basis of both their objective circumstances and the existing literature — should have the least negative and disruptive displacement experiences, either home-wise (by moving from old to new dwellings), geographically (remaining within the same neighbourhood), physically (a single move), or tenure-wise (remaining as social tenants). This sample is therefore weighted towards those who are the supposed winners of estate regeneration - who have exercised the right to return and are living in newly-built properties at the redeveloped estates. Unlike those leaseholders and temporary tenants who are physically displaced away from their neighbourhoods and even the city altogether due to regeneration (Minton, 2017; Watt, 2018), these London displacees should be 'very satisfied' with their relocation (Posthumus & Lelevrier, 2013). Given this, it's all the more striking that all but a few interviewees had either negative or at best ambivalent displacement experiences taking all three spatial scales into account. This — plus the deeply-felt losses a minority experienced — should send a cautionary message to those who promulgate estate demolition as a cost-free, wholly benign urban policy 'solution'. A more humane and genuinely bottom-up regeneration approach would involve emphasizing what place attachments estate residents already have and how these could be enhanced.

Note

1. All quotations are from social tenants unless otherwise indicated; interviewees' age, ethnic identity and estate are included.

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