Urban regeneration and tenure mix: Exploring the dynamics of neighbour interactions

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Abstract

This paper draws on in-depth research on the nature and intensity of neighbour relations in an area in Peckham, London, which underwent urban regeneration aimed at improving the urban environment and increasing the area's tenure mix. Drawing on the literature on neighbouring, the paper explores residents' perceptions and attitudes towards their neighbours and the dynamics of their routine interactions. Despite findings pointing towards a general atmosphere of cordiality and solidarity, interactions were casual, coexisted with prejudiced views towards certain groups and areas, and were viewed by residents as part of their everyday social practices of community. As a result, very little else was exchanged between tenures, putting into question some policy assumptions that the increased physical proximity between housing tenures can potentially lead to instrumental interaction that can benefit low-income households in social housing. Reflecting on these findings, the paper discusses some implications that have relevance for policy and research.

Keywords: housing tenure, urban regeneration, social mix, neighbours, social practices

Introduction

For the last two decades, urban regeneration projects in many countries in the Global North have been characterised by physical restructuring approaches, especially in deprived areas where social housing is the predominant tenure. Such approaches often culminate in the partial or total demolition of social housing estates and their subsequent redevelopment, planned to provide a greater mix of housing typologies and tenures with a view to attracting more affluent households and increase an area's social mix. Alongside improvements to the local economy — due to the presence of households with higher purchasing power —, reductions in area stigma, and the financing of urban regeneration through partnerships with the private sector, the promotion of urban regeneration through interventions in housing tenure has its roots in notions of social mix, which refers to the creation of 'socially balanced' neighbourhoods (Sarkissian, 1976). Although not new, the concept of social mix has gained attention in policy circles and has been repeatedly promoted through tenure diversification strategies. This is because tenure is

often used as a proxy for income (Bailey & Manzi, 2008).

In the UK, national policies have required the creation of 'liveable communities' through tenure mix, emphasising the importance of encouraging social interaction across difference to improving social cohesion by building social capital in neighbourhoods (Cantle, 2000, DETR 2000; DTLGR & CABE, 2001; ODPM, 2003). Such policies are also shaped by the idea that interaction across difference can potentially open up possibilities for upward social mobility by enabling access to new information and opportunities, thus directly benefiting those on lower incomes.

Area-based interventions of this kind, as a solution to spatial inequalities, have become so common in countries of the Global North that Kearns *et al.* (2013), referring to the United Kingdom and several other Western European countries, argued that 'the promotion and development of mixed-tenure communities have constituted an orthodoxy within housing, urban, and planning policies during the past two decades' (p. 48). Yet, a number of authors have argued, in various national contexts, that the theoretical benefits of such strategies lack empirical evidence, especially with regard to social interaction between different groups of residents. This paper contributes to this body of scholarship by providing an in-depth examination of interpersonal interactions in a mixed tenure neighbourhood, focusing on residents' interactions with their next-door and near neighbours. It aims to capture their subtleties and develop more informed expectations of cross-tenure interactions and their effects. It does so by borrowing the analytical framework provided by the literature on 'neighbouring' and 'neighbourliness' (Mann, 1954; Abrams & Bulmer, 1986), and by viewing such interactions as forms of 'social practice' and performance of community (Kusenbach, 2006; Blokland-Potters, 2017).

The paper starts with an overview of policies and strategies that have promoted tenure mix in the UK, followed by a discussion of the empirical findings from several studies on social interaction in mixed tenure neighbourhoods. It then reviews some of the key concepts and arguments developed in the literature on neighbouring and neighbourliness, reflecting on the performative character of neighbour relations. This is followed by an overview of the case study area and the methods employed in the research. In-depth evidence drawn from interviews and questionnaires conducted with residents from a diverse range of backgrounds and housing tenures on their interactions with neighbours is then discussed. Interactions range from fleeting encounters to more intimate relationships that resemble friendship. Different from many studies in mixed tenure neighbourhoods, there was widespread evidence of positive interactions between neighbours, with friendliness and assistance being strongly embedded in people's routine interactions. These, however, are argued to be a consequence of residents performing 'community' and, thus, relationships tended to be weak and conceal stereotypical views towards

certain groups. Evidence of more meaningful interaction with exchange of varied information resembling friendship was also plentiful, but these occurred mostly *within* tenure groups and were particularly found among social housing tenants. Although such findings point towards a less problematic environment — or, in other words, one with lower levels of anti-social behaviour — they raise important questions regarding the appropriateness of tenure diversification as a policy strategy to reduce socio-spatial segregation and improve the life chances of low-income households.

Tenure Mixing Policies their Theoretical Benefits and the Empirical Evidence

Initiatives promoting tenure mix in local authority estates were introduced in the UK at the end of the 1980s by the then Conservative Government. These formed part of an already existing and wider policy agenda to promote housing privatisation through the promotion of homeownership and the residualisation of social housing (Pinto, 1993; Tunstall, 2003; Malpass, 2004) — a process initiated by the Housing Act 1980, which promoted the sale of social housing at substantial discounts to tenants through the 'Right to Buy', as well as severe cuts to the housing budget and restrictions on local authority borrowing for new social housing developments (Malpass, 1992; Malpass & Murie, 1999). From 1997 onwards, under New Labour, tenure mixing became more widely advocated, albeit underpinned by a different discourse. This was about addressing social exclusion by breaking up concentrations of deprived and ethnic minority households in social housing. The aim was to promote 'liveable communities' by creating mixed-tenure neighbourhoods and developing the conditions for increased social interaction between different groups. This became particularly prominent after civil disturbances in the cities of Bradford, Burnley and Oldham in 2001, which led central government to urge housing agencies to come up with 'ambitious and creative strategies […] to provide more mixed housing areas' (Cantle, 2001, p. 51) and 'assess [housing] allocation systems and development programmes with a view to ensuring more contact between different communities and to reducing tension' (ibid). Between 1997 and 2010, tenure mix underpinned several urban policies and initiatives such as the New Deal for Communities and the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal (SEU, 1998, 2001) and, more explicitly, the Mixed Communities Initiative in 2005 (MCEPT, 2010).

As noted by Cole and Goodchild (2000), urban policies in the context of area-based interventions in the UK are based on the assumption 'that a more diverse mix will both deepen

and widen social interaction in a positive way' (p. 355). The underlying idea is that propinquity can increase opportunities for encounters across difference and contribute to the formation of diverse local social networks which are assumed to result in stronger levels of social cohesion. Social cohesion is a nebulous concept. It has to do with the ability of a society to 'hang together' and contribute positively to collective goals with minimal disruption (Forrest & Kearns, 2001). According to Kearns and Forrest (2000), it encompasses shared values and civic culture, social order and control, social networks, solidarity, reduced wealth disparities, and a strong sense of belonging and local identity. For households on low incomes, many of the benefits are supposed to arise from socialising with an increased mix of residents. Through networking with people different to them, they are supposed to access information that would potentially allow them to improve their life chances rather than only getting frequent solidaristic support from those in similar circumstances (Kearns & Mason, 2007; Arthurson, 2010a). Thus, such policies aim to foster 'bridging social capital', or extensive and outward-looking social networks based on non-frequent relationships with people from different backgrounds, occupation and lifestyles (see Bourdieu, 1989; Putnam, 1995 and Granovetter, 1973 for definitions of social capital and weak and strong ties).

Research has also shown that policymakers widely assume thatdisadvantaged households will benefit from the demands from the home-owning middle classes for the improvement of local services, public spaces and schools (Briggs, 1997; Atkinson, 2005, Arthurson, 2010; Chaskin and Joseph, 2011), with homeowners being expected to maintain social control by dealing with anti-social behaviour, and function as 'role models'. This is because homeownership is generally associated with stability, self-reliance and more participation in the neighbourhood due to the economic investment committed to buying a property (Helderman *et al.*, 2004; van Ham & Clark, 2009). Such association has been magnified in policy discourses, in the notion of 'sustainable communities' promoted by the New Labour government (1997-2010), whereby the 'owner' status appears to command a superior position in the neighbourhood, as in '[o]wning a home gives people a bigger stake in their community, as well as promoting self-reliance' (ODPM, 2003, p. 37).

Notwithstanding, a large body of academic literature has been produced questioning the goals and the envisaged outcomes of such policies. As Atkinson explains, proponents of social mix have 'relied on an intuitive rather than explicit evidence-base' (2005, p. 27). Researchers in many countries have questioned the assumption that tenure mix results in social mix (Musterd & Andersson, 2005), have highlighted that such strategies might, in fact, generate detrimental economic effects to households on low income and minority ethnic groups (Cheshire, 2007,

2009), and have argued that some of the envisaged benefits regarding social cohesion and social mobility lack evidence (Priemus & van Kempen, 1999; van Kempen & Bolt, 2009; Kearns & Mason, 2007; Darcy, 2010; Bolt & Van Kempen, 2011; Rose *et al.*, 2012). Moreover, several studies have shown either no or very limited interaction across tenures. Whilst some have shown that changes to tenure mix have made areas more desirable, interactions of longer duration were found to be very rare (Allen et al., 2005; Chaskin & Joseph, 2011; Levy *et al.*, 2013). For example, Kleit and Carnegie (2011), who studied changes in the social networks of Vietnamese and English-speaking social housing tenants living a mixed income HOPE VI public housing redevelopment site in Seattle, found that demographic and linguistic characteristics were more important than physical proximity in facilitating interaction between neighbours. Chaskin and Joseph (2011) found that interpersonal interactions in two mixed income developments were extremely casual, and 'largely contingent on social (class) proximity' (p. 232). Some studies found tensions between tenure groups. This was the case in a study of two mixed tenure neighbourhoods by Wood and Vamplew (1999), who found that newcomers were often perceived as outsiders by long-standing residents in social housing. Beekman *et al.* (2001) also found tensions between tenures and reported that social tenants were blamed for vandalism and other forms of anti-social behaviour.

Owner-occupiers and private tenants have also been found to inhabit different social worlds to social tenants as a consequence of their different daily routines, lifestyles and incomes (Jupp, 1999; Atkinson & Kintrea, 2000; Camina & Wood, 2009) with Henning and Lieberg (1996) emphasising the importance of keeping a "class perspective" when examining the importance of the neighbourhood to different residents. Van Beckhoven and van Kempen (2003) found that whilst low-income households — and particularly the elderly — were oriented towards the neighbourhood, households on higher incomes indicated that the neighbourhood was of no or little importance to them, serving mainly as a place of residence. Gwyther (2011) arrived at a similar finding and highlighted that the unequal access to mobile technologies contributes to these differences, as middle class homeowners have more means to develop communities of interest and avoid those who are dissimilar to them in the neighbourhood.

In summary, much of the policy discourse promoting tenure mixing strategies to alleviate spatial concentrations of poverty in the UK has been based on the idea that propinquity will foster social interaction across difference, strengthening social cohesion and promoting social mobility. Despite support from politicians and policy-makers, these policies have been shown to lack empirical evidence. For this reason, the next section now turns to the literature on neighbouring and neighbourliness, highlighting some important characteristics of neighbour

relations, which can provide helpful insights to the analysis of social interaction in mixed-tenure neighbourhoods.

Social Interaction in Neighbourhoods: Are Neighbours Still Important?

Several studies have shown that people tend to establish social ties with similar others (Hipp, 2009; Louch, 2000; Mollenhorst *et al.*, 2008). Some have shown that race and ethnicity play an important role in social network formation (McPherson *et al.*, 2001), followed by characteristics such as gender, religion, education and political ideology (DiPrete *et al.*, 2011). This raises questions about the extent to which people's interactions with those who live near them are important, particularly in large and diverse cities and at a time when technology easily overcomes distance. Are these important at all? Wellman (1996), in his analysis of data collected from Toronto residents, argued that if one considers the frequency of face-to-face contacts, neighbours and co-workers become more important in people's everyday interactions than their more distant ties. This is because propinquity increases the possibilities of chance, but regular, encounters.

Yet, when it comes to neighbours, the unpredictability insofar as feelings towards and relationships with them go is a consequence of the fact that neighbouring is a setting-specific (van Eijk, 2011), rather than a chosen relationship. As explained by Painter (2012, p. 524), '[a]t the outset we do not know if our neighbours are like or unlike us, whether we will be inclined to love or hate them, how they will feel about us, or how far they will be knowable at all'. Indeed, this led Mann (1954) to suggest that when exploring interactions between neighbours, one should imagine it as something that sits on a 'continuum… with [both] positive and negative poles' (164). Mann coined the terms *latent* and *manifest* neighbourliness as broad conceptualisations of patterns of neighbouring. The former is 'characterised by favorable attitudes to neighbors which result in positive action when a need arises, especially in times of crisis or emergency', and the latter, 'by overt forms of social relationships, such as mutual visiting in the home and going out for purposes of pleasure' (p. 164). Both patterns can also be used to understand negative types of interaction, which can vary from little to no social interaction between neighbours, even during an emergency.

The literature shows that relationships with neighbours are much more restricted in comparison to relationships with friends or relatives (Völker & Flap, 2007), and generally end when one of the parties moves home (Abrams & Bulmer, 1986). Willmott (1986) argued that the term 'neighbour' is 'reserved for those living nearby with whom the relationship is different from

— and less than — friendship as that is usually understood' (p. 51). This differentiation has to do with the fact that neighbour relations are laden with norms and expectations.

Indeed, the literature highlights that characteristics such as *friendliness*, *helpfulness* and, particularly, *respect for privacy*, are highly valued and expected from neighbours (Abrams and Bulmer, 1986; Mann, 1954; McGahan, 1972; Willmott, 1986). *Friendliness* is frequently defined as the willingness to acknowledge a neighbour or engage in short conversations or greetings. *Helpfulness* among neighbours has been found to be characterised by the provision of help in case of emergency, assistance originating from the shared use of an area, and the provision of small routine favours such as lending and borrowing household items. Lastly, *respect for privacy* is, by far, deemed the most important characteristic of good neighbouring (Abrams & Bulmer, 1986; McGahan, 1972; Stokoe, 2006; Stokoe & Wallwork, 2003; van Eijk, 2011), mostly because physical proximity facilitates the involuntary transmission and observation of personal information, such as noise, sight and smells that transcend walls and boundaries, or inferences about family set-up, financial situation, etc. (Stokoe, 2006; van Eijk, 2011).

These insights from the classical literature are important as they highlight that neighbouring is, as stated by Kusenbach (2006) 'a normative set of interactive practices' (p. 282) which, according to Blokland-Potters (2017), allow people to enact community. The author highlights that community is not a stable construct; it is, instead, performed and practiced. She defines it as a cultural concept, theorising it as 'a set of repertoires of public practices – or performances – that are above all symbolic' (p. 45). Such a view is consonant to Keller's notion of *the neighbour role*, '[a] good neighbour is not necessarily a friendly or a nice person but one who conform[s] to the standards of the neighbour role common consent acknowledges' (1968, p. 21). Therefore, by understanding neighbour relations as shared practices and as sitting in a gliding scale, it becomes possible not only to capture subtle sociabilities — such as nodding and other types of non-conversational interactions that also constitute community but are rarely grasped by the concept of social capital — but also to include factors such as individual characteristics, volition, need and preferences in the discussion of neighbour relations.

Studying Interactions Between Neighbours in Peckham, South London

The research took place in an area previously occupied by five social housing estates that underwent redevelopment between 1994 and 2008. Located in Peckham, in the London Borough of Southwark (figure 1), and known initially as the "Five Estates" — and later on as 'Peckham Partnership' until 2002 —, redevelopment resulted in the partial or total demolition of

the North Peckham, Gloucester Grove, Willowbrook, Sumner and Camden estates, built between the 1950s and 1970s.

Initially hailed as an example of modernist design and vision, the area rapidly fell into disrepute. As early as 1976, the North Peckham and Gloucester Grove estates were already categorised as being 'difficult to let' (Carter, 2008, p. 174; Goss, 1986, p. 162). Part of the blame was attributed to the building design and elevated walkways separating pedestrians from vehicles. By the mid-1980s the area became regularly depicted by the national media as a no-go area. As the estates housed large numbers of households from Black and Ethnic Minority (BME) groups, depictions often assumed an overtly racialised tone. Muggings of elderly residents by black youngsters were reported by the Times in 1982 whilst reports from 1988 voiced fears of unrest and violence between Afro-Caribbeans and whites (Smart, 1988).

Regeneration officially started after Southwark Council successfully secured £60 million of Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) funding in 1994. The bid document highlighted that the five estates needed a 'radical transformation' (Peckham Partnership, 1994, p. 3). Regeneration was planned to be all-encompassing and cover, employment, education, safety, improved access to services, and most importantly, housing redevelopment. This was because not only did social housing account for 99% of the housing stock in the area and the design of the buildings was deemed conducive to anti-social behaviour (see Alice Coleman (1984), who described the area as 'a warren of 75 blocks all linked together by walkways… [and] the scene of many rapes and muggings, and […] unpoliceable' (p.353)), but also because the SRB required partnerships to improve housing through physical regeneration, focusing on enabling greater choice through tenure diversification (DOE, 1994). The Partnership bid (Peckham Partnership, 1994) justified tenure diversification on the basis that it would create 'a successful residential community where people want to live whether they are renting or buying a home' and a more socially mixed environment 'in which a strong and stable community can develop' (p. 3). These objectives were more clearly reaffirmed in annex A of the bid, which not only stated that the Partnership aimed to create a 'local physical and social environment which builds hope and confidence within the local communities' (p.11) but also included plans to foster neighbour interaction and facilitate the settling of new residents through a mediation programme to resolve neighbor disputes, and community induction, destined to 'cover all residents regardless of tenure' (p. 39-40)

Physical redevelopment allowed for street level tenure mixing in many areas but social housing still makes up most of the stock in the refurbished North Peckham, Gloucester and Willowbrook estates, despite some intake of the Right to Buy over the years. Figures from the 2011 Census show that social housing accounts for 61.4 per cent of the housing stock, followed

by 17.8 per cent owner-occupation, 17 per cent private rent and 2.7 per cent shared-ownership (ONS, 2011).

This paper draws primarily from 17 semi-structured interviews with residents and 126 self-completion questionnaires distributed in Peckham during extensive fieldwork which also entailed participant observation in Tenants and Residents Associations (TRAs) meetings and several other events. The study was conducted as part of a doctoral research project that explored the everyday experiences of residents of neighbourhoods in London and in Amsterdam that underwent extensive demolition to create a greater mix of housing typologies and tenures to increase their social mix. It explored residents' interactions with neighbours and people living in the neighbourhood — defined as the area within 15 to 20 minutes walking distance from their homes. Housing tenure was defined according to a resident's status as an owner or renter of a dwelling. Those owning with or without a mortgage were grouped in the owner-occupier category while the latter were divided into two subcategories: those renting privately were grouped in the private tenant category and those renting from the council or a housing association were grouped in the social tenant category.

The semi-structured interviews followed a script which was structured around four themes but this paper focuses specifically on participants' perceptions of and interactions with their neighbours. Interviewees were approached and selected through recommendation from gatekeepers, by stopping passers-by in public spaces, and through contacts with parents in two local nurseries. Interviews lasted between 35 minutes to one hour, during which detailed socio-demographic characteristics of interviewees were collected (table 1). Conversations were either audio-recorded or annotated and the material was analysed using the qualitative data analysis software NVivo.

The questionnaires were designed around the same themes and pilot-tested with nine people from a variety of ages, ethnic backgrounds and levels of education. They largely contained closed questions, but a few open questions were used to elicit details on certain topics, such as on the type of assistance exchanged between neighbours. The material used here relates to information collected on residents' frequency and extent of interactions with neighbours. Unanswered questions or those that had a high number of 'other' / 'prefer not to say' responses were removed — this included a question on household income, which was then added to the interview script. A total of 126 valid questionnaires (see table 2) were collected from 500 distributed (25% response rate).

Both interview scripts and questionnaires were prepared after an extensive review of the existing literature on neighbouring and neighbourliness, social capital, and social interaction in

diverse urban environments (Mann, 1954; Abrams & Bulmer, 1986; Putnam, 1995; Onyx & Bullen, 2000; Chaskin & Joseph, 2011). Despite all efforts, the participation of private tenants was lower than expected. The findings capture the experiences of both long-established and newer residents, from a wide variety of backgrounds and ethnicities.

The nature and intensity of neighbour relations

> *The neighbours here, I don't see them often. But if I was to see them, I know who they are and I would say good morning. I don't see them all the time, I don't know them like that.*
> (female, 25-30, mixed white & black Caribbean, social tenant)

The excerpt above, from a woman who had been living for two years in a one-bedroom flat on a street with a substantial number of properties that had been built for sale, encapsulates much of what was found in the study: that interaction between neighbours tends to be casual, rely on visual recognition and frequency, and is generally accompanied by a desire for privacy. The interviewee knows who her neighbours are and knows where to find them, something that, according to Henning and Lieberg (1996, p.22), contributes to feelings of security, belonging ('feeling at home') and familiarity. This initial description of her interactions with neighbours, however, did not stop her from describing her relationship with one neighbour, also a social tenant, as being similar to *"a mother and daughter relationship"*, as she puts it,

> *I live in a flat, A4, and the people that live in B, I know them quite well. They are really lovely. We've grown to sort of, I don't know, mother and daughter relationship (laughter), I don't know. She's really lovely. [...] she is an elderly lady. She has older sons and daughters that come to visit her sometimes. I met all her family... yeah, they are quite nice as well.*
>
> *I: Do you know the family as well?*
>
> *Oh yeah, yeah, I know the family. ... Christmas cards, yes, of course! Christmas cards, birthday cards! [...] When I need something so silly, like, I've run of tissue, they are really nice. I recently got a cat and, I didn't like the cat after three days and they have two cats upstairs and I didn't know how to handle my cat so I asked her if she could come downstairs and help me with my cat and then she came. Her son came [...] and they took it to the shelter. So they're really helpful, like, everything I need, they're pretty much there for me.*

This suggests that interactions with neighbours may vary from one being merely able to facially recognise and acknowledge someone who lives nearby to having more overt relationships that include confiding personal issues and exchanging manifestations of personal support. The nature of such relationships 'can be understood only as fragments of the complex systems of networks in which all concerned participate' (Abrams & Bulmer, 1986, p. 21) and are contingent

on factors such as individual characteristics, the neighbourhood as a setting, and on the importance of the individual's wider social networks. The next three subsections will now turn to discussing these interactions in more detail.

Greetings and Assistance as Signs of Latent Neighbourliness

The research uncovered numerous examples of positive signs of acknowledgement towards and of support being exchanged between neighbours, which are highly indicative of positive *latent neighbourliness*. All interviewees stated that they were able and found it important to, at least, visually recognise their immediate neighbours. Encounters were largely unplanned and often took place in communal spaces such as hallways in blocks of flats, or on the street, at the immediacy of respondents' homes and the visual recognition of someone as being a neighbour generally resulted in cordial greetings as an automatic response.

Overall, interviewees from all tenure groups reported being satisfied with the fleeting and casual interactions they had with their neighbours. Most mentioned doing *"the usual chit-chat"* for a few minutes. Many expressed unpretentious expectations towards having more intimate relationships with neighbours and emphasised that their conversations generally centred around the weather, children or neighbourhood-related issues, including occasional incidents or public events. Many explained that they purposely spoke about trivial matters so that they could keep some degree of privacy while maintaining *"a good atmosphere"* with neighbours, as noted by an owner-occupier: *"the woman next door. I can't say I know her personally but I know her name and I know to say hello, but I can't say, you know, I invite people around for tea and things"*. By *acting* cordially, interviewees felt that they fulfilled general behavioural expectations and maintained an amicable atmosphere in their streets/developments. These reports parallel Chaskin and Joseph's (2011) findings in two mixed tenure developments which found that most residents in a mixed income development were comfortable with the limited and unproblematic degree of interaction they had with neighbours.

The exchange of assistance was also found to be commonplace and an important element of neighbourliness. The general response was that it was *"the right thing to do"*, as one interviewee put it. Exchanges varied from small favours, such as receiving a parcel on behalf of a neighbour (table 3), mutual assistance during emergencies, such as *"a neighbour was robbed during the night a few months back and came to us and we also found out that we had been robbed as well so we helped each other with that"*, to, in some cases, assistance that required entering the neighbour's home to look after a pet or water plants — found to occur between neighbours who also visited one another

in the home. An important finding was that the exchanges of small favours, due to their instrumental character, overrode age, lifestyles, tenure and ethnic differences. However, they did not necessarily result in neighbours developing stronger bonds or accessing information to opportunities that could improve their life chances. This was well illustrated by a private renter who had been house-sharing the same property for over five years. Describing himself as "the typical 28-year-old student, ex-student, who doesn't really get involved", he gave an overview of his interactions with his next-door neighbour, whom he described as having two daughters, being an owner-occupier, and sounding "a bit Scottish",

> *I remember the day when we were moving in […]. There was Matt (changed name), our next-door neighbour, and I just said 'Hi, we're moving in'. And then after that, when we passed, 'Hi'. Nothing else. But then, I think, they were going on holiday one time and he wanted to know if I minded just taking the bins and putting them at the edge of the property. I said 'that is fine'. Then we had a little chat. Then they've made an extension at the back of their garden, which he can only clean the windows from our garden. So he came round once and cleaned the windows. We were chatting and he said: 'do you wanna see the inside of the house?' […] . I went in there. So it is sort of… I've spoken to him… I know you better than my neighbour, but, I now know him… sort of!... [chuckles]. And they invited us to their, 'come and see the house and have a drink'. […] that would have been the first time we were socialising with them, but, I knocked on the door and said 'we're going out tonight, really sorry, but thanks for the invite'.*

Cordiality despite Stigmatised Views towards Neighbours

Conversations with long-term residents in social housing during tenants and residents' association (TRA) meetings unveiled that muggings, burglaries and drug dealing became commonplace in the 1980s. Many of the problems were attributed to the estates' high density and design — resulting in a high number of vacant units, empty and unsurveilled spaces, as well as no clear demarcation between public and private spaces — and the high turnover rates of residents with complex problems. Many residents reported having been victims of burglaries more than once before regeneration, as this resident puts it:

> *Robbery, you know, house-breaking, so many. In fact, I was a victim […] on one occasion, three times within a year, you know. I think about four times I experienced it. January, March and June of the same year.*

Thus, the overall view among long-term residents in social housing and those who knew the area before regeneration was that security had substantially improved due to physical restructuring and that interventions in housing tenure had contributed to reducing stigma and increasing the diversity of residents, making the area more attractive and more similar to other parts of London.

Nonetheless, in line with other research in diverse and mixed income environments (Valentine, 2008; Wessendorf, 2014; Wise, 2009), the positive feeling towards the area and positive encounters with neighbours can also hide stigmatised or stereotypical views towards certain areas and groups. The three refurbished housing estates and their surroundings still stood as reminders of the area's past to some residents who reported avoiding them when walking in the neighbourhood. Also, two interviewees who lived in the refurbished estates (females, late 30's and early 40's, Nigerian, social housing tenants) reported being dissatisfied with their housing situation purely because of where they lived. Despite having never had antagonistic encounters with neighbours, they described the estates as having *"too much social housing"* and, therefore, they purposely avoided interactions with neighbours beyond the cordial greeting, with one of them explaining that she was afraid of *"neighbours from hell"*.

Similar to studies by Arthurson (2010) and Markovich (2015), behavioural differences between long-term and new social housing tenants were also found to negatively impact neighbour interactions with some interviewees describing new tenants as having more complex needs and being less concerned with the upkeep of their environment. This was the case of a social tenant in her mid-thirties who had been living in the area since childhood and who spoke about preferring to *"keep to [her]self"* when it came to interacting with some of her new neighbours, also in social housing, as she puts it:

> *[…] we don't communicate. I recognise them by face. One neighbour on our left side is much more familiar to us… we greet each other, but in terms of the other side, it is different, dare I say. It is a much younger family. There're issues about noise and the way they dispose of their rubbish and all that. They are not as close.*

Some owner-occupiers and social tenants noted that the expansion of the private rented sector in the area — due to an increase in buy-to-lets —, was also having negative impacts on social relations. In England, fixed-term agreements of six months to one year are the standard, landlords can repossess the property without a cause once the term expires, and rents are set at market value for both new and sitting tenants, generating high tenant turnover in the sector (see DCLG, 2015). Not only did interviewees report having difficulty recognising neighbours due to increased resident turnover in the area, but private tenants were also generally perceived to be uninterested in local issues and, if young, were described as causing nuisance and being careless with the physical environment, a finding that bears resemblance to studies in places where the private rented sector is similarly structured (Cheshire *et al.*, 2010; Rollwagen, 2015). The findings echo the study of Kearns et al. (2013) in three mixed-tenure estates which found that the expansion of private renting 'was seen to cause problems of antisocial behavior, lack of commitment to the area, and unfamiliarity with one's neighbors, resulting in local frustration' (p.

58). This is illustrated by an owner-occupier who blamed private tenants for problems related to parking and rubbish disposal near his property:

> *I am not prepared to label completely. I think it is sometimes people who have been [privately] renting. […] people who are renting, they tend to be often younger, and if they are students and […] when you're student you do things. From my experience it hasn't been terrible because I can think of far worse things that happen but things do happen and it can be extremely irritating.*

As a result, although interviewees reported talking to neighbours whom they knew were renting privately, they tended to be less welcoming of them.

Manifest Neighbourliness and the Sharing of Similarities and Differences

The analysis also uncovered many examples of *manifest neighbourliness*. The questionnaires revealed that over 52 per cent of respondents had visited or received at least one neighbour in their home in the six-month period prior to taking part in the research (table 4) and many interviewees also reported considering themselves friends with some neighbours (table 5). Many factors impinged on the development of their social ties. For instance, having children of a similar age increased contacts between parents and visiting in the home, a finding that matches several other studies about interaction in mixed tenure neighbourhoods (Atkinson & Kintrea, 2000; Jupp, 1999; Völker & Flap, 2007). All the interviewees who had children — most of them women —, independently of their housing tenure, reported spending more time locally, particularly on weekends. They reported interacting on a frequent basis with at least one neighbour as a result of their children playing together or studying at a local school, as in *"My next-door neighbor…. Her son is in the same class as my daughter. So, that is, we get on really well"* and *"A few times a week, we have tea and cakes and have a catch up whilst the little ones play; this is with 2 of my neighbours"*. Ethnicity also played a role on possibilities for more meaningful interaction. Some interviewees who, by coincidence, shared with their neighbours the same country of origin and language, tended to report frequent and more meaningful interactions with them. This was particularly found among interviewees from Nigeria. Peckham has a sizeable number of Nigerians residents and those interviewed were either in social housing or were privately renting.

The questionnaires also revealed that residents tended to exchange more meaningful interactions with people on the same housing tenure. Questionnaire respondents were asked a series of questions about three people who lived in the neighbourhood and whom they perceived as friends or acquaintances. Although questions about socio-economic characteristics such as age and income were omitted from the questionnaire due to low response during the pilot study, the

cross-tabulation (table 6) between respondents' housing tenure and that of their neighbours suggests that a substantial portion of meaningful interactions occurs within tenure groups. The results also showed that the tenure of over 20 per cent of neighbours was unknown and this was reinforced by the interviews, which suggested that the general view was that knowing someone's housing tenure was not important. Many interviewees reported being unsure about their neighbours' housing tenure, as noted by an owner-occupier, *"I think [my neighbour] is renting, but I don't know for sure. It's only because her sister came around and said she was interested in renting and wanted to have a look at the place inside and see if it's any different"*. It was also common for interviewees to assume that their neighbours shared the same housing tenure status, as in "I think she is renting from the Council too" and "I think they bought their house, just like us". Some also reported feeling that it was an intrusion of privacy to inquire, as noted by another owner-occupier who was a member of a local resident association, *"I think every single one on the [resident association] committee, they are all homeowners. I would never ask but I come to know them quite well, because they've been since the start"*.

Although this finding agrees with Allen *et al.* (2005, p. 31), who argued that housing tenure is often seen as a 'non-issue' by residents of mixed-tenure estates, the questionnaires revealed some important differences in the interaction patterns of owner-occupiers and social tenants. For instance, visiting in the home was substantially high among owner-occupiers (70 per cent against 52 per cent of social tenants) but more social tenants described themselves as being friends with neighbours. Most owner-occupiers and private tenants reported spending most of their time outside the neighbourhood, either at work or socialising elsewhere. Their narratives of owner-occupiers when discussing their interactions with neighbours resembled Janowitz's (1952) concept of 'community of limited liability', which emphasises the 'intentional, voluntary, and especially, the partial and differentiated involvement of residents in their local communities' (Suttles, 1972, p. 47). Many highlighted that their interactions with neighbours were mainly related to campaigns and wider strategies to improve the area — through campaigns for better transport links and for more and better shops in the area —, and related to maintaining their position in the wider London housing market. Hence, their interactions tended to be with owner-occupiers who also shared similar socio-demographic characteristics. Conversely, more social tenants reported spending more time in the neighbourhood and visiting neighbours to socialise (e.g. for cups of tea or coffee, "check how the neighbour is doing") and to talk about personal issues. Most importantly, it was also more common to find residents undergoing financial and health constraints in social housing — a large proportion of social tenants were retired — and these were found to maintain more intimate relationships with at least one

neighbour, also in social housing and who, like them, spent most of their time locally. Their interactions were characterised by the frequent exchange of various forms of support, including the lending and borrowing of money, household and food items, or help with mobility and personal care. Some interviewees considered these relationships to be extremely important to their wellbeing, often overlooking individual differences and comparing the strength of their bonds with neighbours to those with family members. This was made evident in an interview with a social housing tenant from Kosovo who, due to ill-health, was extremely dependent on his neighbour for assistance with food shopping and with going to hospital,

> I: *"And do you know your neighbours? Your immediate neighbours?"*
>
> R10: *"One neighbour, he is my family. Like my family now because I go over there; he comes to my place. He is a black guy, he is from Africa, but I don't care. I love him. He is a very, very good person. And another neighbour downstairs just asks me, 'hello, how are you?' Every day, 'good morning', 'good afternoon'. I'm fine."*
>
> I: *"And this one who is a very good friend, like family. Does he help you when you need? Do you help each other?"*
>
> R10: *"Much. Sometimes we go together to the park, because he works every day and he is just working part-time. I'm very, very happy with that."*
>
> I: *"It is important?"*
>
> R10: *"All the time my wife is cooking for me and helping and we will cook for him. He has one time cooked… he said 'it is not for me, it is for you'. I love him. He is my best, best, best friend."*

In summary, the analysis has shown that some residents do, indeed, establish more meaningful relationships with neighbours, resembling *manifest forms of neighbourliness* and these are based on the sharing of similarities such as having children, or sharing a country of origin and language. Although housing tenure was perceived as unimportant by most interviewees, the findings parallel those from Atkinson and Kintrea (2000) and Arthurson (2010) in that social tenants are more bound to their local area and tend to develop more localised social ties.

Discussion and Conclusion

This paper has drawn on the case study of Peckham, London, to discuss neighbour interactions in a mixed tenure neighbourhood that was created after an extensive housing restructuring programme that aimed to promote social mix. It explored the dynamics of routine interactions, underpinned by the literature on neighbouring and neighbourliness, and by contemplating neighbour relations as part of residents' everyday social practices. The analysis suggests high

levels of *latent neighbourliness*, with residents indicating positive attitudes towards neighbours and exchanging practical assistance and small favours as part of everyday normative practices of neighbouring. These practices are built upon the desire for privacy and, as such, interactions were found to be extremely casual, often taking place as a result of impromptu encounters — a finding that resonates with other similar studies of mixed tenure or mixed income developments or neighbourhoods (Chaskin and Joseph, 2011; Kilburn, 2013). There was also much evidence of *manifest neighbourliness* as approximately one-quarter of all respondents considered themselves friends with neighbours and over half reported exchanging visits in the home. Such relationships, however, tended to happen among individuals who shared the same housing tenure as well as other characteristics such as ethnicity and lifestyles. Whilst owner-occupiers tended to develop more instrumental relationships, social tenants were more likely to be more locally bound and, therefore, develop more intimate ties with neighbours, often based on the frequent exchange of assistance.

The implications have relevance for theory and policy. The use of the concepts of latent and manifest neighbourliness allowed for the collection of fine-grained information about residents' routine encounters with neighbour. These included fleeting and non-conversational interactions which would have been rarely grasped by the concepts of bridging and bonding social capital because the two typologies focus on relationships seen by respondents as positive and somewhat meaningful. Secondly, the understanding that neighbourliness is performed as part of social practice (Kusenbach, 2006; Blokland-Potters, 2017) highlights that, by nature, interactions are generally based on civility and politeness, which in the case study was materialised in the exchange of trivial conversations and small solidarities. These were found to be important for interviewees' wellbeing and sufficient to maintain a certain level of stability in the neighbourhood.

The study raises some important implications for tenure mixing strategies and their appropriateness as a policy response to socio-spatial segregation and deprivation. While the redevelopment of the housing stock and improvements to the built environment have made the case study area safer, and the presence of a more diverse mix of residents has made it more attractive, the promotion of tenure mix has had a relatively small impact on increasing social interaction across difference. There was no evidence that the increased proximity between residents on different housing tenures resulted in stronger social cohesion or in residents exchanging information that could potentially benefit low-income households and increase their prospects of upward social mobility. Instead, much of the evidence points towards residents being satisfied with the modest levels of interaction they have with neighbours and of the most

vulnerable households establishing stronger bonds based on assistance. This finding is important as it adds evidence to Gwyther's (2011) warning about the dangers of tenure mix strategies dismantling the support networks of vulnerable households in social housing, who are more dependent on face-to-face and meaningful interaction. In this sense, if the aim is to address social inequality and alleviate poverty, a more effective solution would be, as suggested by Colomb (2011), to consider their root causes — which might lie outside the neighbourhood — and more appropriate solutions, which might include directly targeting resources and funding to low-income households.

The study also highlights that routine interactions in mixed tenure neighbourhoods can be affected by institutional arrangements that define tenure rights and entitlements. The study found growing tensions between long-term and new social tenants, which can be attributed to the residualisation of the social housing sector and the increase in the proportion of households with complex problems in the sector. This finding bears resemblance to Arthuson's (2010) study of mixed tenure neighbourhoods in Australia and adds weight to the author's view that social mix policies are at odds with social housing access policies. This is because the growing number of households with complex needs in social housing can lead to more tensions and stigma in areas where the mix of housing tenures is more fine-grained. Similarly, negative perceptions towards private tenants and the observed high turnover in the sector can be attributed to the wider institutional arrangements around renting in England which offer private tenants little security of tenure (see Hulse and Milligan, 2014 and Rollwagen, 2015). In a context in which homeownership is prioritised, tenure mixing strategies might actually contribute to stigmatised views being shifted from an area to being more strictly based on housing tenure.

Finally, the use of the literature on neighbouring and neighbourliness and the understanding of interactions among neighbours as part of everyday social practice and performance of community can offer important analytical tools for the research of mixed tenure and neighbourhood renewal. Further research on tenure mix would benefit from focusing on smaller areas (e.g. a single development or a few streets) where details of the spatial distribution of housing tenures is known, and would particularly benefit from an ethnographic approach, which would allow the researcher to delve further into the nuances of neighbouring practices and relationships, and their contexts.

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