

The Right to Stay Put: Contesting Displacement in Urban Regeneration / Development schemes

Royal Geographical Society / Institute of British Geographers Annual International Conference, 26-29 August 2009, Manchester

Sponsored by the Participatory Geographies Working Group

Friday 28 and Saturday 29 August 2009

@Ida Kinsey Village Centre, 17 Guide Post Road, Grove Village, Manchester M13 9HP

Session Organisers:

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Description:

It is now 25 years since Chester Hartman first advanced the notion of the 'right to stay put' for lower income group struggles against gentrification. Since then, gentrification and related processes of privatisation and marketisation have become integral to neoliberal urban strategies across the world. In Britain, 'state-led gentrification' (Davidson 2007) now impels urban regeneration schemes such as Housing Market Renewal (Allen 2008) and even the government's council housing modernisation programme 'Decent Homes'. Despite this proliferation, academics have generally responded poorly to Hartman's call to arms. Rather, as Slater observes (2006, 2008), gentrification research has generally lost its critical edge, and from some quarters gentrification has even been celebrated as beneficial to incumbent low-income groups (Freeman, 2006; Vigdor, 2002). This is not our experience and with this session we seek to restore Hartman's principle to the heart of gentrification research by inviting contributions from activist geographers in the widest sense of the term (academics, teachers, housing professionals, campaigners, trade unionists and ordinary residents) to share and exchange their experiences, insights and methods to better defend people's 'right to stay put'. In the spirit of making geography 'relevant' beyond the policy-academy complex, the session will have a practical orientation and will offer reflections, stories, tactics, lessons and strategies for developing successful urban resistances. The aims are to: (1) share experiences and develop practical knowledges about what works in urban resistance; (2) create an educational space for encounter and dialogue between those involved in similar critical work and activism; and (3) start to develop an action research network and a knowledge/resource base for wider dissemination.

We seek ideas for participation which address some or more of the following themes:

- Grassroots knowledges about gentrification and resistance
- Examples of (un)successful individual or collective resistance
- Developing strategies and tactics of urban resistance
- Power, counter-power, resources, methodological innovations
- The planning system, public inquiries, community planning
- Legal challenges to evictions and Compulsory Purchase Orders
- Human rights issues with respect to land and home
- Using the Freedom of Information Act and other research methods
- Alternatives to gentrification / displacement / privatisation
- Implications of the new Homes and Communities Agency
- Roles, responsibilities and experiences of academics and other educators in resistance
- Alliance building and creating a UK Right to the City movement

How the event will work

First of all, please note that our event is 'free' – there is no admission costs because we have hired our own venue. However, we welcome small solidarity donations to cover food, drink and contribute to the Community Centre's costs.

To clarify – all those who intend to attend other sessions at the RGS-IBG conference – except those organised by the Participatory Geographies Working Group taking place at the Ida Kinsey Village Centre throughout the week which are free and open to the public – will need to register online: www.rgs.org/Ac2009Registration

The Right to Stay Put event will be organised into 4 main sessions:

Session 1 explores gentrification and displacement in action

Sessions 2 and 3 explore resistance in action

Session 4 explores how we can develop local to global strategies, networks and alternatives

Sessions 1-3 will take place on Day 1 - the 28th August. They will each be 1h 45m long and organised in a more traditional paper-giving format. Session 4 will take place on Saturday morning-afternoon and will be split between papers and an open roundtable 'working' discussion. We will then take you on a tour of Manchester's urban development and struggles and hold a social-benefit in the evening with films.

We propose that each paper has 15 minutes, is very focused on speaking to the concrete themes put out in our conference call, leaving plenty of time for interactive discussion in each session.

Friday 28 August

10.00 Tea/Coffee – Welcome
11.00 Session 1
13.40 Lunch
14.40 Session 2
16.20 Break
16.50 Session 3
18.30 Ends

Saturday 29 August

10.00 Tea/Coffee
10.30 Session 4
12.30 Lunch
13.15 Session 4 cont...
15.00 Tour
19.00 Social

Accommodation and Food

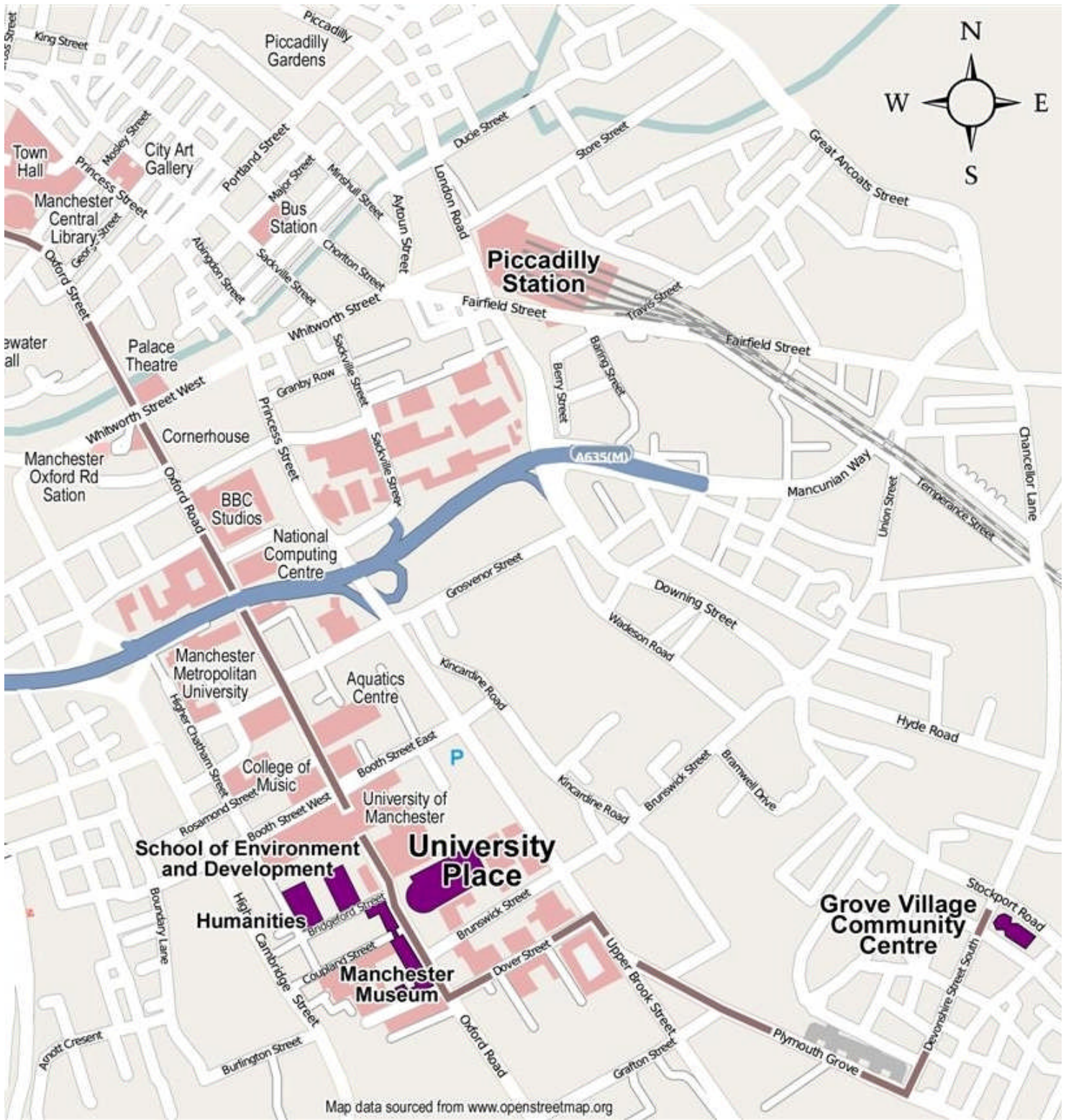
If you haven't already booked / organised your accommodation, then this is very critical. Those who can afford to will need to book their own accommodation and if you have not done this already we really urge you to do it NOW because hotels are booking up very fast. See suggestions on the website (www.rgs.org/Ac2009Accommodation). A limited number of rooms are available in student accommodation (Victoria Hall) and this can be booked via Marketing Manchester booking reservations (www.conferencebookings.co.uk/delegate/MNCRGSAC2009).

If you are unable to afford private accommodation then please inform STUART HODKINSON immediately. We will try to find beds among friends but you must tell us as soon as possible so we can organise this. We are confident that this can happen but we just need time!

For food, we will provide a small buffet lunch on the Friday and Saturday with plenty of vegetarian food – small donations welcome. On the Friday evening, we intend to go for a famous curry in nearby Rusholme and on Saturday evening we will probably order some pizzas!

Getting to the Venue

Our event will take place in the Ida Kinsey Village Centre, about 10 minutes walk from the University of Manchester, or 20 minutes walk from Piccadilly Train Station (see map overleaf). If you are travelling from Manchester Airport, then take a train to Manchester Piccadilly and either get a taxi, walk or get the no. 192 bus from outside the Spar shop in Piccadilly Gardens, which is a very short walk from the train station. You need to get off the bus the first stop after you have passed McDonalds on Devonshire Street.



Day 1 - Friday 28 August 2009

10am Welcome, tea and coffee

11.00-13.40, Session 1, Gentrification, Privatisation and Displacement in Action

Paper 1 The conceptualisation of displacement and its political implications

Matthias Bernt (IRS) and Andrej Holm, berntm@irs-net.de

Displacement has been at the centre of heated analytical and political debates over gentrification and urban change for almost 40 years. Nevertheless, the definition of what displacement exactly is has often remained unclear. It is in this context that Peter Marcuse's fourfold definition of displacement (1986) is particularly valuable, as it defines different forms of displacement that reach from direct physical and economic displacement (i.e. harassment by the landlord, or pricing out) to "exclusionary displacement" (i.e. inability to move into a property which has been subsequently gentrified). The article builds on Marcuse's definition and uses Berlin's urban renewal policy as an example to show how different definitions of displacement support different policy alternatives. The conceptualisation of displacement is thus not a merely academic exercise, but it has enormous political implications. We show how theoretical differences on the definition of displacement were actively taken up by policy makers and used as a justification for the withdrawal from "welfarist" politics of market intervention which has been replaced by advisory services to individual tenants. We argue that social sciences are partly responsible for this change and call for more critical intervention of scientists into public debates and a clearer specification of policy alternatives.

Paper 2 The mechanics of gentrification in Zurich

Vesna Tomse, reclaiming-spaces.org, urban.lab, v.tomse@gmail.com

Under the neo-liberal model of urban development, processes of gentrification, segregation, privatisation and marketisation are consciously planned and implemented by city governments with the aim of attracting business investment and wealthier, middle-class residents. In the name of "urban renaissance" or "renewal", state-led gentrification purges inner city working class areas of their original population. But the measures taken by city administrations are not always as obvious as the tearing down of whole city areas; smartly adopted market mechanisms of "upgrading" do the same job. Thus, mega-projects, tertiarisation of employment and the construction of upscale housing invariably lead to higher rents in an area, driving out the working class population and making the area more attractive to the middle class. This paper will examine city administration-led gentrifying mechanisms in Zurich and will present some of the mega-projects changing the traditional working class districts 4 and 5. In these districts, the construction of two new stadiums, new office space, traffic infrastructure and education facilities planned and/or built by the city administration are quickly changing the composition of the local population, while rising rents are displacing the original population to newly forming ghettos at the edges of Zurich. Attention will also be given to local resistance against such projects and their efficiency, exploring the chances for another model of urban development.

Paper 3 Global gentrification in a world class city? Skyscrapers, slums and pro-market policy in Mumbai, India

Matthew Birkinshaw and Victoria Harris, Save Houses, Build Houses
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We are writers and researchers interested in neoliberalism, urban development and the right to the city. We graduated from a human rights masters course at the University of London in 2007. Victoria has since been teaching social studies to foundation students. Matt spent three months in 2008 with a shack dwellers movement in South Africa researching the effects of fires in informal settlements. We have been in India since October 2008 working with NGOs and people's movements active on land and housing in Mumbai and also with the Narmada Bachao Andolan (Save the Narmada Movement) in Madhya Pradesh. We are now in Mumbai looking at the implementation and effects of neoliberal frameworks for urban restructuring and the effects of post-subprime US/UK corporate investment in land and property development. We are working on this with Ghar Bachao Ghar Banao Andolan (Save Houses, Build Houses), a grassroots movement of people living without legal tenure against demolition and relocation. We would be happy to give a presentation (using PowerPoint if a projector is available) on the way in which the concept of a 'World Class City' is being used in Mumbai to exclude the 'poor' from the city, the policies being used to shift the spatial and political development of Mumbai, and a consideration of the effects of their implementation on the ground. We would hope that this might spark some comparisons with the emerging frameworks in the UK, as a further developed post-industrial economy, and London as an international financial centre.

Paper 4 Mixed use development & the gentrification of London's East End

Glyn Robbins (London Metropolitan University), glynrobbins@aol.com

'Mixed Use' property developments have become a mantra for planners, property developers and politicians, who portray them as an urban policy panacea, claiming to cure a wide range of social ills, including environmental damage, social isolation and crime.? Such developments have been the corner stone of the 'urban renaissance' promoted by many cities in the UK and overseas, but does the reality match the rhetoric? Are Mixed Use developments the signature tune of the vibrant, Compact City, or have they become part of the landscape of the Divided City? I will be examining these issues with reference to the campaign to oppose a 'mixed use' scheme in Bethnal Green, East London.

13.40-14.40 Lunch

14.40-16.20, Session 2: Resistance in Action

Paper 1 **Fighting Against Displacement: The Case of Istanbul**

Bahar Sakizlioglu (Utrecht University), elmam30@yahoo.com

In contemporary neoliberal policy context of urban restructuring, displacement emerges as a hidden cost of state-led gentrification processes, which result from urban policy implementations to restructure disadvantaged neighbourhoods (Newman and Wyly, 2006; Slater et al. 2008). Despite this acknowledged link between urban renewal policy and displacement, our knowledge on what happens to the displaced, how they experience, deal with the process and impacts of displacement is very limited. As Hartman underlined years ago, there emerge some new comparative questions that are not yet addressed by researchers: How do patterns and experiences of displacement differ from one country to another? What produces differences/similarities in patterns and experiences of displacement observed in different cities? Trying to fill these gaps in our knowledge, I started my comparative PhD research, which aims to provide qualitative insights into low-income households' displacement experiences in different cities –Amsterdam and Istanbul. I specifically focus on the role of urban renewal policy and regulatory frameworks in the shaping of different displacement experiences. Based on initial inquiries of this research and my previous involvements in neighbourhood resistances, I want to make a presentation about the characteristics, dynamics of grassroots mobilizations against displacement. Discussing some un/successful cases from Istanbul, I will elaborate on the role of urban experts and strategies of jumping scale from local to international (EU and UNESCO) in moving towards a participatory, bottom-up urban transformation. Dealing with internal conflicts, weaknesses of resistances, I also aim to brainstorm about how to develop more successful mobilization strategies to mitigate displacement.

Paper 2 **Critical conversation: Experiments in creating spaces for dialogue on Toronto's gentrification**

Katie Mazer and Katherine Rankin (University of Toronto), mazerk@geog.utoronto.ca,
k.rankin@utoronto.ca

We are two planning academics (grad student and faculty) thinking about issues of displacement in downtown Toronto neighbourhoods. With its primary focus on housing, we have found the gentrification literature limited as a resource for understanding the problem of gentrification and developing resistance strategies. We want to think about gentrification in relation to broader notions of 'accessibility' and 'social space' that encompass not only housing, but also access to commercial services, social services, and spaces of encounter. This session will draw on two initiatives. One is Katie's Masters thesis – supervised by Katharine – which explores the significance of components of social space – amenities, services, institutions, public space – for preserving low-income access to a gentrifying Toronto neighbourhood. Through conversations with those at risk of displacement, this project takes a broad approach to understanding the economic, cultural, social, and emotional barriers to participating in community life both physically and socially. We want to explore the limits and possibilities of this attempt to generate and expose 'grassroots knowledges about gentrification'. The other is a workshop course developed by Katharine for which Katie participated in a group project to develop a 'revitalization plan' for two Business Improvement Areas in one of downtown Toronto's last non-gentrified neighbourhoods. This project provided an opportunity to play with the contradictory logic of 'revitalization without displacement' and to divert a conventional economic planning project toward anti-gentrification ends. By claiming ambiguities in the language used by local groups ('diversity', 'inclusivity', etc.) for progressive ends and by combining these ambiguities with a focus on process-based recommendations—which explicitly put the concerns of the neighbourhood's marginalized groups on the table—the group aimed to spark a local critical conversation about the direction of development and highlight openings for intervention. We want to explore this project in relation to the 'roles and responsibilities of academics in resistance'.

Paper 3 Can Social Activists set the Media Agenda to be followed by the elite?

Mimi Doran (University College Dublin), mimi.doran@ucdconnect.ie

This talk will look closely at the Participatory Research Action case study of St Michael's Estate, Regeneration Team, Dublin, Ireland. It tells the story of a working class community's journey to become media literate with the aim of getting the communities perspective on regeneration heard in the public domain. It documents their attempt to use the media as a communications tool to get their voice heard and their story of being 'regenerated on' listened to. It charts their journey from being a relatively unknown community group to becoming recognised nationally as expert sources of information on regeneration. The talk outlines the media literacy programme the group followed and highlights the impact media coverage had on how the regeneration story of St Michael's unfolds. St Michael's Estate been involved in the regeneration of their housing estate for 10 years. The PPP Regeneration project collapsed in May 2008 (along with many more) and residents have been left living in the most appalling conditions with little hope for the future. However this community has a long history of grass roots activism and have mobilised to get their community socially and physically regenerated. They are using mainstream and new media to tell their story, raise public awareness, instigate debate, influence policy and legislation.

Paper 4 Contested Chicago: Pilsen and gentrification

Winifred Curran (DePaul University), WCURRAN@depaul.edu

I (along with my colleague Euan Hague) have partnered with a grassroots organization, the Pilsen Alliance, in a community-based service learning class in urban geography designed to fight the displacement of working-class Mexican-Americans from the Pilsen neighbourhood of Chicago, a historic port-of-entry community. Students have gathered data on building conditions, land use and zoning, property values, property taxes, and property sales to present the way in which gentrification is happening on the ground so that community organizers may develop strategies to fight it. Resistance in Pilsen has taken the form of organized protests, street art, and ballot referendums. The work to be presented here is from an art exhibit of the Pilsen building inventory project conducted by our students, begun in autumn 2004 and continuing to this day. It combines explanations and implications of public policies around real estate development in Pilsen with pictures of the effects of these policies on the ground and details the ways in which community members have resisted the attempts to silence and displace them. We illustrate the ways in which developers and city policymakers have tried to co-opt the meaning of community and erase the history of struggle in this immigrant community. This work contests the dominant narrative of the inevitability and desirability of gentrification and demonstrates the extent and the creativity of the resistance to it. I will need a laptop and projector for a powerpoint presentation.

Paper 5 Displacement and the 2012 London Olympics

Martin Slavin, meslavin@yahoo.co.uk

I am a member of a group 'GamesMonitor' which is "a network of people raising awareness about issues within the London Olympic development processes. We want to highlight the local, London and international implications of the Olympic industry. We seek to deconstruct the 'fantastic' hype of Olympic boosterism and the eager complicity of the 'urban elites' in politics, business, the media, sport, academia and local institutional 'community stakeholders'. Our network operates with an open, dynamic principle, and functions as a discussion forum, research body, press and political lobby. Our website and online group (<http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/gamesmonitor/>) provide hubs for publication, information exchange and solidarity networking." I shall give an account of my involvement, with the dense learning task about neoliberal urban 'regeneration' politics, and local engagement with other activists struggling to build local, regional and international resistance to the spectacular circus of the Olympics game. I will highlight the displacement crises suffered by the most poorly housed in London and other Olympic cities.

16.50-18.30, Session 3 Resistance in Action

Paper 1 What happens to (mildly successful) cultures of resistance to gentrification

Kate Shaw (University of Melbourne), kates@unimelb.edu.au

When low-income tenants are able to stay put in a gentrifying place, it is usually due to community resistance and/or progressive policy responses to gentrification, and a bunch of other factors to do with the nature of the built environment and the incumbent communities. An important body of work on progressive inner-city cultures came out of Canada in the 1990s (Rose 1996; Ley 1996; Caulfield 1994; Ley and Mills 1993) but Slater (2006) is right that this topic now generates less critical analysis. The relationship between policy and the broad bunch of other factors has more recently been the focus of attention (Walks and August 2008; Ley and Dobson 2008; Shaw 2008; Shaw 2005). I'm interested in the relations between these three categories, and in particular, the impact of the latter two on the character of continuing resistance. I would base a presentation on Cummins and Shaw's (2009) photo-essay on Gertrude Street Fitzroy – an inner-city neighbourhood in Melbourne which was one of the first in that city to gentrify in the late 1960s. For a complex set of reasons involving all the above factors, Fitzroy's gentrification appears to have slowed, if not reverted, and the area has been overtaken in property prices by places more recently gentrified. Drug and alcohol services have increased in Gertrude Street in the last decade, the area maintains a remarkably persistent stock of rooming houses, and supports an important Aboriginal housing program. Who are the activists now? How effective are they, and crucially, how deep does the legacy of resistance go? The questions are theoretical but will be answered by very real research via interviews and photographs, among other methods, in a newly-funded, three year project.

Paper 2 Defending Council Housing Successfully: An Anti-Stock Transfer Campaign in South East England

Paul Watt (Birkbeck University of London), p.watt@bbk.ac.uk

I would like to give a talk based upon the High Wycombe anti-stock transfer campaign in order to draw out potential 'lessons' in relation to both academia and housing activism. I have written an academic article on the representational aspects of the campaign that employs critical discourse analysis (in a recent issue of *Critical Discourse Studies*). I would like to draw upon aspects of this material, but I also want to provide an overview of the campaign including a discussion of my own involvement in relation to both activism and academia. If possible, I would like to try and bring along one of my fellow activists in order for him to give his take on what happened in the High Wycombe campaign, what went right and what went wrong. I have been involved in the national Defend Council Housing campaign for ten years. I was also a member of a successful local campaign that mobilized in opposition to a proposed stock transfer of council housing in High Wycombe in Buckinghamshire in 1999-2000. Although DCH campaigns are not always centrally concerned with gentrification *per se*, they nevertheless form part an important part of the effort to prevent the marketisation of housing – the latter would clearly weaken defences against gentrification.

Paper 3 Resisting gentrification in South Africa: the work of the shack dwellers' movement, Abahlali baseMjondolo

Zodwa Nsibande and Mnikelo Ndabankulu, Abahlali baseMjondolo, abahlalibasemjondolo@telkomsa.net

We are a democratic shack dweller's movement in South Africa with ten thousand paid up members. Our website is at: <http://www.abahlali.org>. The kind of gentrification that we are forced to confront is when whole settlements are destroyed and the poor are driven out of the cities to rural human dumping grounds. Our talk will explain how South African cities are being

gentrified and how this is being resisted.

**Paper 4 Resisting the gentrification of Brixton Market: Friends of Brixton Market:
Carrying on after the campaign**

Ben Tunstall and Ana Lopez (Friends of Brixton Market), ben@friendsofbrixtonmarket.org

Brixton market in South London is comprised of outdoor stall areas, managed by the local council, and three privately-owned covered arcades dating from the 1930s. In the summer 2008, the Friends of Brixton Market (FBM) formed to try to address a range of issues confronting the market. Then in December 2008, the owner of the two main arcades publicized its intention to submit a planning application to demolish one of the arcades and rebuild it with a large housing development and private park on top. The plans were developed without community consultation and FBM then campaigned to stop the development. In March 2009, the owners informed the council they no longer intended to go ahead with the development plans. Since then, FBM has continued to work on developing alternative architectural projects and facilitating the creation of a trader federation. Our presentation will cover the foundation, vision and projects of FBM. We intend to engage in a dialogue around the idea that the best way to stay put and counter market-led propositions is to 'counterattack', that is, to organise and present alternatives. Our attempts to do so have raised interesting issues around representation and representativity.

Day 2, Saturday 29th August

10am Tea/Coffee

10.30-12.30, Session 4: From Localised Resistance to Global Movement Building?

Paper 1 Resistance in Möllevången – why is it failing?

Carl Axling (Lund University), axling7@hotmail.com

In Sweden, gentrification is not a commonly known term (however common the process) and resistance to it is not common. There are, however, some exceptions. Building on my thesis which compares Möllevången with four American cases of relatively successful resistance, asking what forms these examples of resistance take and what the activists resist against, my paper will emphasise the importance of establishing an alternative regime instead of just saying no, and the role of civil society in urban planning.

**Paper 2 District 6 / Salford 7. The Destruction of Memory and the Politics of
Visibility.**

Lawrence Cassidy, lor_cd63@yahoo.com

In the North of England, many former industrial urban communities are undergoing mass housing clearance programmes as a result of market orientated regeneration. Successive waves of demolition over the past forty years have contributed to a loss of collective identity, long term social and spatial segregation and significant adverse health issues. Recent academic research has described the current destruction of these communities as the "violation of a way of being towards housing" (Allen, 2008:198). The wide scale community clearance process in Salford and other areas has also potentially raised related questions, concerning human rights violations, legal challenges to demolitions, the long term methodology of facilitating urban decay, the internal displacement of the urban population, the consistent destruction of the built environment that is directly linked to the cultural heritage of the working class population. The factors at the root of recent housing demolitions are comparable to past land clearances in Scotland, Ireland and Africa. The study utilises oral histories, material artefacts collected from demolished streets, interactive street maps and family snaps to trace

destroyed working class communities and generate spaces of dialogue. These installations (exhibitions) are placed in existing spaces of memory in the city, targeting working class visitors. I researched related international museums that used similar installations as claims to land ownership. The District 6 Museum, Cape Town, recently used family snaps and oral histories in installations within the legal process of land restitution, implemented by the ANC after 1994. This resulted in residents of the area being relocated to their former district, after being cleared under the Group Areas Act of the 1950s. These installations inspired related communities in the Western Cape to claim the right to return. The research asks to what extent can installations be used in a political, legal and social networking context? Can projects of this kind challenge museum curatorial policy, given the absence of effective engagement in city histories? (Kavanagh, 1999; Macdonald, 1999; Bennett, 1995). Can links be established, using comparable material artefacts and family snaps, between cultures? (Hirsch, 2002; Coombes, 2003). Clearly, a methodology has been recently used in South Africa, yet is it applicable in England?

Paper 3 Supporting the building of better international networking

Knut Unger (Reclaiming Spaces Network, Witten Tenants Association / Ruhr Tenants Forum Germany, INURA Ruhr)

This presentation will discuss three aspects of international networking around the concept of the Right to Stay Put. First, the reasons for international networking will be explored through the lens of the private equity buy out cycles in German mass housing between 1999 - 2009, including tenants' reactions and the consequences of the financial crisis. I will set out the case for organizing internationally, namely transnational giant landlords. Second, this case study and others will also be used to explore the real obstacles facing international networking. Finally, I will present a possible way forward for international networking in the production of a quarterly magazine called Reclaiming Spaces "from urban activists for urban activists" built by a network of local "CORRESPONDENTS" who work closely with local groups and organizations but as independent radical journalists. A first group of "correspondents" already is working on the development of the idea, design and planning of the first issues, which will be focused around "housing the crisis: local struggles in a world of crashes" and: "resistance against neo-liberal urban transformations". "Housing the crisis" so far is mainly coordinated from people living in Germany, the next issue will be pushed by comrades from Istanbul.

12.30-13.15 Lunch

13.15-15.00 Roundtable Discussion on Future Collaboration

15.00-18.00 Tour of Manchester Regeneration Story

19.00 Social and film presentations

- ***Last Summer in Berlin Mitte***, Alessandro Busa, Doctoral Fellow at Center for Metropolitan Studies in Berlin and visiting scholar at GSAPP Columbia University, New York

The film tells the recent story of the gentrified district of Mitte in former East-Berlin and unveils the intimate stories of more or less marginalized residents of an old tenement house in the midst of the gentrification boom in the surrounding area. Through the characters of Annika (cabaret artist), Manfred (former GDR resident), Caspar (vaudeville theatre owner) and Benjamin (drop out musician), the film describes the personal stories, feelings and reactions of former residents in face of the extensive urban transformations in post-unification Berlin. Yet, despite their disadvantaged position in face of redevelopment, the film portrays them as a savvy, imaginative, joyful and creative community.

- ***Resisting gentrification in South Africa: the work of the shack dweller's movement, Abahlali baseMjondolo***