CHAPTER 7

Latin Urbanisms: Resisting Gentrification, Reclaiming Urban Spaces

Using the experience of working with Latin American retailers in London and many years of researching London’s Latin American spaces in the capital, the current chapter seeks to explore whether claims to the global city become stronger, or diluted, within the context of intense urban regeneration and greater political and economic uncertainty. We are interested in exploring how asserting a form of migrant urbanism, in this instance, Latin urbanism (Rojas 1991), acts as a strategic tool for reshaping, claiming and resisting gentrification in London’s inner-city neighbourhoods, and we reflect upon the identity politics embedded in such strategic positioning. We argue that the visible presence of Latin Americans in London is under threat due to global corporate real estate developments. Regeneration is taking place in some of London’s most deprived and ethnically diverse boroughs. Thus, economically disadvantaged and migrant and ethnic groups are disproportionately affected by it. It is against this backdrop that Latin Americans are feeling the brunt of regeneration more than ever and are developing strategies to resist gentrification.

Latin urbanisms in London are marked by claims to identity as much as by transnational practices and the right to the city. Whilst early manifestations of Latin urbanism in London could be seen as material practices for reshaping London’s urban landscape, current manifestations act as a form of resistance and a tool for opposing gentrification. In previous work,
Román-Velázquez (1999, 2009, 2014a, b) identifies two key moments in the trajectory of Latin urbanism in London. The first instance, which can be traced back to the early 1990s and registered as the making of Latin London (Román-Velázquez 1999), captures the early stages of a particular form of Latin urbanism that relied on practices, visual representations and narratives based on national symbols, colours, sounds and food. By the late 1990s, a second wave of Latin urbanisms became evident, one that asserted a British Latin identity (Román-Velázquez 2009, 2014b). This second moment captures a transition and a conscious attempt at asserting fluid, yet rooted, identity practices and narratives—ones that fluctuated between the desire to connect with country of origin, and addressing the needs of a growing local population. The third and current moment, and the focus of this chapter, emerges as a response to intense regeneration processes that are affecting distinctive Latin neighbourhoods in the capital, and whereby assertions of identity markers such as music, food and colours are used as a form of resistance. The current moment sees a community that has made London its home and asserts its right to the city.

Expressions of Latin urbanisms are explored here through narratives and urban practices in two of London’s largest Latin American business clusters at Elephant and Castle (EC) and Seven Sisters, two deprived areas of London that are undergoing ambitious programmes of urban redevelopment. Both sites are under threat due to regeneration projects that unravel a process of gentrification that deem Latin American and other migrant and ethnic groups, at risk of displacement and fragmentation. Discourses and practices of Latin urbanism are embedded in a narrative that not only considers the context under which such discourses and practices take place, but the identity politics of such trajectories.

Processes of regeneration and gentrification are not unique to London, and here we draw from theoretical reflections and urban design practices on Latin urbanism emerging from the United States. In London, trajectories of Latin urbanism are rooted in markers of identity in commercial

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1 This chapter draws on long-term ethnographic research in both sites. It covers several periods of intense participation, interviews, surveys and mapping by Román-Velázquez during 2006, 2009, and between September 2011 and August 2012. Subsequently this work has been nurtured and sustained through direct engagement with Latin Elephant (Charity No. 1158554), a charity set up by Román-Velázquez in 2014 to increase participation, engagement and inclusion of migrant and ethnic groups in processes of urban change in London.
spaces, and even though design practices are beginning to emerge, theoretical reflections around the concept are non-existent. This chapter attempts to draw from these debates and to open a dialogue across diasporic urban practices by taking Latin urbanism as a starting point.

7.1 Latin Urbanisms Under Review

Revitalisation plans for an area can recreate a place in ways in which local communities feel alienated. It is in this context that community-led initiatives address the aspirations and needs of local populations who are otherwise excluded by such processes, most of whom are of lower income and of a migrant and ethnic background. This is in sharp contrast to private-public sector-led consultations that seek to address the aspirations of a professional and highly skilled population. This subsequently leads to a process of gentrification whereby distinctive forms of cultural and migrant urbanisms are erased, celebrated or neutralised—in as long as it can be marketable (Londoño 2010).

This tension leads to different manifestations of urban culture, whereby the urban environment of the barrios results in visual narratives and practices of spatial resistance, or as an affirmative and gentrified visual representation of urban culture (Londoño 2010). The shift in urban infrastructure development, including the transfer of public land and assets from local government authorities to private investment, has provoked further marginalisation of the urban poor and migrant urbanism in core inner-city areas.

This has been the case in the United States, where lower income Latin urban areas undergoing revitalisation are met with fierce and creative forms of local opposition (González et al. 2012; González 2017). Resistance to the gentrification of these neighbourhoods has manifested itself in different expressions of Latin urbanism.

In the United States, Latin urbanism refers to the process whereby Latinas/os appropriate and revitalise urban spaces to suit their needs and cultural preferences and thus, become rooted in the history of migration and the changing character of places. Subsequently, Latin urbanism developed as both a practical planning design tool for community-led development that responded to Latina/o lifestyles, and a theoretical approach that seeks to understand transformations in the nature and function of cities with large Latina/o populations (Diaz and Torres 2012; Lara 2015; Rojas 1991). Thus, the concept of Latin urbanism captures community practice, urban design techniques and theoretical approaches.
The organic development of urban areas into distinct Latin neighbourhoods, and the enactment of particular identities in public and private spaces as described by Rojas (1991) in the residential and commercial streets of downtown Los Angeles, later became a tool to contest plans devised by municipal authorities. The city vision developed by municipal authorities in conjunction with private developers excluded the aspirations and expressions of distinct cultural urban environments deployed by the existing Latin community.

Local residents and grassroots organisations in Los Angeles have for years contested local authorities and private developers in their quest to save distinct Latin neighbourhoods (e.g. Save Boyle Heights campaign and Downtown Santa Ana Development). It is in this context that Latin urbanisms emerged as both a tool to contest plans devised by local authorities and developers, and as a form of resistance to gentrification of poor Latin neighbourhoods in Los Angeles, United States (Rojas 1991; González 2017).

Latin urbanism emerged as a design tool to resist revitalisation and the subsequent gentrification of distinct Latin neighbourhoods in Los Angeles. As González’s (2017) research demonstrates, urban planning (as in the case of Santa Ana, California) shifted from a perspective that completely erased and minimised the distinctive cultural working-class character of Mexican neighbourhoods in the 1960s, to one which embraced Mexican culture as an urban design concept, but which erased the local Mexican community from its vision in the 1980s, to one that recognised an economically differentiated Latina/o population with diverse consumer needs and redevelopment aspirations to those of the poor working-class immigrant Latinas/os.

The shift to a differentiated approach to Latina/o population in urban planning is triggered by a process whereby reduction in public funding has resulted in the partnering of local governments and private developers, subsequently leading to a private sector-led community consultation that neglects the needs and aspirations of the urban poor and working-class migrant communities.

As a theoretical approach, Latin urbanism seeks to address the existing economic and ethnic gap in urban planning studies in the United States. It developed as a way of bringing to the forefront those excluded from urban planning policy and development—the urban working class and the immigrant (Irazábal and Farhat 2008), and more recently as a means of understanding current economic and demographic changes in Latin neighbourhoods.
The trajectories of Latin urbanism as a theoretical approach seek to understand the underlying racial, ethnic, generational and economic dimensions to urban redevelopment in inner-city areas that have long been home to Latina/o populations. In this respect, it aligns with calls for a diverse approach to architecture and urban design (Day 2003). It draws on the principles of new urbanism in that it supports diversity by providing compact urban form through a range of house prices and types, and a lifestyle based on access to public transport, pedestrianised areas, and sustainability and recycling, in the belief that it will bring together diverse groups of people—whether it be defined by age, race or income. In practice, however, it involves attracting middle-income professionals to stigmatised, marginalised poor communities (Day 2003; Lara 2015).

Invoking a form of Latin urbanism is fraught with tension and conflict—not only due to the underlying differences emerging from changing demographics and aspirations of the Latina/o population, but because of the dangers of promoting a particular type of urbanism when such a definition is difficult to pose. Understanding the connection between Latin culture and urban form, as proposed by Latin urbanism, bares the question as to what constitutes Latina/o preferences when there is no pan-ethnic Latin identity (Talen 2012). Whilst asserting a form of Latin urbanism helps Latin communities to gain legitimacy and political voice, Talen (2012) argues that designing for a particular group might also weaken wider collective goals.

By tracing the trajectories of Latin urbanism in London, our aim is to bring to the fore not just issues of representation which are discussed at length elsewhere (Román-Velázquez 1999, 2014b), but the politics of resisting gentrification and displacement. In doing this our aim is to reflect upon the risks associated with invoking a racialised and cultural urban form and practice in struggles against gentrification. How can a claim to migrant and ethnic urbanisms, in this instance Latin urbanism, act as a form of resistance without resorting to stereotypes? Can Latin urbanism, that is, the connection between Latin culture and urban form, act as a form of resisting gentrification in London?
7.2 Latin London: The Making of London’s Latin Barrios

‘Latin London’ is used and appropriated rather freely these days in particular with reference to urban manifestations. For example, London’s Latin Quarter, Latin Elephant, Latin Village and Latin Brixton. This is also evident in festival names like Plaza Latina, Carnaval Latino and in the name of international chains such as Barrio Latino. This is a clear acknowledgement of the recognition gained by Latin Americans in London over the last three decades, and of the prominent link between Latin culture and urban form—in particular how specific forms of Latin culture are invoked to promote Latin urbanisms in London.

The term ‘Latin London’ was first coined in the title of the book The Making of Latin London: Salsa Music, Place & Identity (Román-Velázquez 1999). The book captured Latin American cultural and commercial practices at a time when Latin Americans were largely an invisible community.² The research for The Making of Latin London was carried out at the beginning of the 1990s and Román-Velázquez (1996, 1999) argued that the legal status of Latin Americans had an impact on their mobility and visible presence in London and, subsequently, on the identity of places or what was called Latin London. Manifestations of Latin urbanisms relied on national identity markers based on sounds, smells and colours. The book offered a partial account, but nevertheless the first to narrate and register those early stages of a community that was starting to become visible in London’s urban fabric.

Twelve years later, the title of the report No longer invisible (McIlwaine et al. 2011) which, for the first time, produced a statistical estimate and profile of the Latin American community is yet another testament to the recognition and visibility gained by Latin Americans in the subsequent decade. The research was updated to include the onward migration of Latin Americans from Europe, and the title of the report acknowledges the path Towards Visibility (McIlwaine and Bunge 2016). The report concludes that Latin Americans are the eighth largest non-UK born population in the capital and is the second fastest-growing migrant population from outside of the EU (McIlwaine and Bunge 2016).

²‘Invisible’ is charged with power, it is only so for those who don’t, can’t, or who do not wish to recognise our presence (whether institutionally or socially).
These migration patterns led to the development of particular manifestations of Latin urbanisms in London, particularly in the form of clustered commercial spaces in shopping centres, markets and shopping parades. The largest Latin American business clusters in London are currently under threat due to a process of retail gentrification that sees traditional markets such as that of Seven Sisters’ Pueblito Paisa and the Elephant and Castle shopping centre traders in Southwark, fighting for their right to remain in place and become sustainable in the longer term (González and Dawson 2015, 2018; Román-Velázquez and Hill 2016; King et al. 2018).

Elephant and Castle in the London Borough of Southwark is home to the largest Latin American business cluster in London, followed by Seven Sisters and Brent (Román-Velázquez and Hill 2016). These predominantly Latin American business clusters share the space with other migrant and ethnic businesses. London’s Latin locations contribute to the diversity of multicultural neighbourhoods in the capital and are very much engrained in the urban fabric of the capital.

Southwark is the borough with the second highest number of Latin Americans in London, representing 8.9% of the total population, and surpassed by the London Borough of Lambeth (McIlwaine and Bunge 2016). Latin American retailers started setting up businesses in the Elephant and Castle at the beginning of the 1990s and over the years have transformed the area and, in the process, contributed to a distinctive ‘Latin Quarter’ (Román-Velázquez 1999). The Latin American presence in the Elephant and Castle core area comprises of four clearly identified zones: Elephant and Castle shopping centre, the arches in Elephant Road, the arches in Maldonado Walk (inaugurated on 10 Feb 2018, previously known as Eagle’s Yard) and Tiendas del Sur in Newington Butts. A manual survey by Román-Velázquez in 2016 and 2017 revealed a total of 96 and 94 shops (respectively) in the immediate area around the underground station and shopping centre, and if taking into account the shops in Old Kent Road (extending from the southern roundabout), the number increased to 110 shops (see Maps 7.1, 7.2, and 7.3). This represents a sharp increase from the number of shops registered at the

3 Available at: https://latinelephant.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Latin-Quarter-London-Map-2016-WEB.pdf.
beginning of the 1990s (approximately 22 shops), and 61 and 70, respectively, in 2012. Latin American retailers in Elephant and Castle are mainly from Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia.

The redevelopment plans for Elephant and Castle, which can be traced back to 1999, were received with scepticism by Latin American local retailers who, despite welcoming some of the changes, feared for their sustainability and future presence in the area. It is within this context that Latin Elephant,\(^4\) a charity working with migrant and ethnic groups and in particular Latin Americans in processes of urban change in London, carried out a series of workshops with traders in Elephant and Castle to support, register and amplify their vision for the area. "The Case for London's Latin Quarter: Retention, Growth, Sustainability" (Román-Velázquez and Hill 2016) proposed a series of public realm initiatives for Elephant and Castle under a project named ‘London’s Latin Quarter’, in

\(^4\)This was part of the work with Latin Elephant, the Charity founded by Román-Velázquez after leaving her academic post in 2013. Latin Elephant, CIO (Charity No. 1158554) was officially registered with the Charities Commission in September 2014.
Latin American Businesses in Elephant and Castle

Cluster A - Shopping Centre
1. Inara Money Transfers (Unit 241)
2. Lucy’s Hairdressing Salon (Unit 209)
3. Medellín y su moda (Unit 204-205)
4. La Bodeguita Cafe (Unit 202-207)
5. La Bodeguita Restaurant (Unit 222-223)
6. La Tienda (Unit 259)
7. Alteraciones Nicole’s (Unit 253)
8. Ana Castro (Unit 250)
9. Lonnie’s Hairdressers (Unit 212-219)
10. Castle Brasserie (Unit 203)
11. Viajes (Unit 257a)

Cluster B - Eagle’s Yard
12. Los Arrieros (Arch 141)
13. Punto Latino (Arch 143)
14. La Calenita
15. Salud y Vida
16. Videomania
17. Tienda Lucky Shop
18. Sterling Jewellers
19. Nativo Services
20. Peluquería
21. Corporacion Ponce (Arch 144)
22. Arko 146 (Arch 146)
23. El Costenito
24. Heladeria Oasis
25. Servisell Travel
26. Peluquería
27. Amanda’s Hair and Beauty
28. San Andrecito (Arch 147)
29. Geomil Express UK Ltd
30. Antojitos Coffee Shop
31. Lara Express International Services
32. Alteraciones Erika Alexandra
33. Peluquería
34. Diego CDs
35. Cocorna
36. Delicias Lucy

Cluster C - Draper House
37. Sabor Peruano
38. Colombian Fashions (16A Draper House)
39. Cafe do Babado (16A Draper House)
40. Andre & Adam (16A Draper House)
41. Servisell (16A Draper House)
42. Tiendas del Sur (91-95 Newington Butts)
43. Unit 1, Latin Touch Hairdressers
44. Unit 2, Soliman Travel (since 1979)
45. Unit 3, H&S Legal LLP
46. Unit 4, Casa en Casa
47. Unit 5, LEA
48. Unit 6, A Silva Dental Studio
49. Unit 7, CJ Multicentre Boutique
50. Unit 8, Ku-Yoruba - Santeria
51. Unit 9, Oro Facil Shop
52. Unit 10-11, Aroma de Café
53. Unit 12, Money To
54. Unit 13, La Chatica (Surtihogar)

Cluster D - Elephant Road
55. La vida loca (Unit 1 Farrell Ct)
56. Costa Donnola Ltd
57. Luis Rey’s Nails
58. Video
59. Money Transfers
60. Hairdressers
61. Beauty
62. La Chatica Cafe (Unit 2 Farrell Ct)
63. Ator del Centro (Unit 3 Farrell Ct)
64. Ator del Centro (Unit 4 Farrell Ct)
65. Ator del Centro (Unit 5 Farrell Ct)
66. Ator del Centro (Unit 6 Farrell Ct)
67. Ator del Centro (Unit 7 Farrell Ct)
68. Ator del Centro (Unit 8 Farrell Ct)
69. Ator del Centro (Unit 9 Farrell Ct)
70. Ator del Centro (Unit 10 Farrell Ct)
71. Tienda de Dulces
72. Planet Services

Clubs
73. Elephant Mall (Unit 7 Farrell Ct)
74. Abroadcar UK
75. Mediprose
76. Zih Agencia
77. Beest International Ltd
78. Seda Salones Elephant
79. J & M Beutique
80. CAR Flavours
81. J Cuts styles and Herbal life
82. J Ibarra Beauty
83. La Fama (105 Elephant Rd)
84. Elephant Coffee (109 Elephant Rd)
85. Bulid (113 Elephant Rd)
86. GE Services (113 Elephant Rd)
87. Lines y Carbon (113 Elephant Rd)
88. Alteraciones Paticia (113 Elephant Rd)
89. Exhibits (113 Elephant Rd)
90. Informatico (113 Elephant Rd)
91. Chisano Batter (The Americas)
92. La Chatica (Surtihogar)
93. Complax UK (The Americas)
94. La Chatica Cafe (The Americas)

Map 7.2 Latin American businesses in Elephant and Castle, October 2017
Map 7.3  Latin American businesses in Southwark, October 2017
recognition of London’s largest Latin American business cluster. In addition, the report highlighted a number of recommendations for working with migrant and ethnic economies in the context of urban regeneration in London. Recently, the report *Socio-economic Value at the Elephant and Castle* (King et al. 2018) calls for the protection of the 130 independent, largely BAME traders who are currently within the red line designation for development. The report highlights the need for a wider recognition of the importance of protecting affordable workspace in the context of current regeneration and displacement processes in London.

The presence of Latin American shops in Seven Sisters Market, also known as *Pueblito Paisa*, dates back to the beginning of the 2000s and has also contributed to the development of a distinctive Latin place in London. The battle to save *Pueblito Paisa* against private developers and the council has been ongoing since 2003 and despite lengthy legal challenges, their future is also at risk. Seven Sisters, with *Pueblito Paisa* and Tiendas del Norte, holds the second largest concentration of Latin American businesses, and as its name suggests, the retailers are mostly Colombian, though there are also traders from Peru, Dominican Republic and Cuba. Wards Corner—the building that houses *Pueblito Paisa*—is also home to retailers of African, Afro-Caribbean and Indian descent. The Wards Corner building in Seven Sisters accounts for 31 shops of which approximately 23 are owned or leased by traders of Latin American background.\(^5\) The majority of the floor space is occupied by Latin American shops. Additional shops and small commercial centres spill out from the building into the high street. The report *Traditional Markets Under Threat: Why It’s Happening and What Traders and Customers Can Do* (González and Dawson 2015) takes *Pueblito Paisa* as a case study and proposes a series of resilience strategies for market traders operating in markets under threat of regeneration.

The majority of Brazilian-owned businesses are to be found in North West London, Central London and recently, more are setting up in South London. It is also in these areas where the largest population of Brazilians can be found (Evans et al. 2007; Sheringham 2010). Despite the difficulty in establishing the precise numbers of Brazilians in London, the latest estimates reveal that in 2008 there were around 56,000 Brazilian-born people in the UK (Kubal et al. 2011). A survey conducted by the Brazilian

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\(^5\) Refer to map: https://savelatinvillage.org.uk/map-of-businesses/, and list of businesses: https://savelatinvillage.org.uk/our-shops/.
Migration to the UK Research Group (GEB) suggests that the population is dispersed across London, though the largest concentration can be found in the Boroughs of Brent; Bayswater, Central London and Stockwell, South London (Evans et al. 2007, 2011). As part of Latin Elephant’s research, Román-Velázquez conducted a survey in 2015 of Brazilian-owned shops in London, using a variety of online business directories and local Brazilian magazines. The business survey displayed similar trends to the population survey, confirming that Brazilian shops are dispersed across London, though the largest concentration of Brazilian-owned shops and businesses appear to be in and around Willesden and Harlesden in the Borough of Brent, also in Bayswater and Stockwell. The door-to-door survey of Willesden and Harlesden conducted by Román-Velázquez in 2015 (see Map 7.4) revealed a total of 34 Brazilian-owned shops in an area densely shared with other migrant and ethnic businesses. This area is undergoing an intense regeneration drive under the Old Oak and Park Royal development, which compares to that of the Olympic Park in East London. This is yet another area of London where migrant and ethnic economies are under threat of displacement.

Map 7.4  Brazilian London: Brent, October 2015
The growth of Latin American retailers in these locations has led to the development of distinctive Latin areas in London with distinctive Latin identities—an organic place-making initiative at play. However, regeneration and ways of re-positioning against the imperatives of global capitalism and regeneration could lead to what we call a new form of Latin urbanism that does not quite erase all traces of difference and culture, but that exploits it to fulfil market demands. And as a result, we could end up with a Latin Quarter or Latin Village without any Latin Americans in sight.

By approaching this visibility through the concept of Latin urbanism we would like to add another layer to Latin London, one which is rooted in activism and resistance. The current instance of Latin urbanism is very much present, visible and audible in London’s urban fabric through imaginative protests in which cultural symbols (such as music, food and dance) are celebrated and invoked as a form of resistance. The link between urban form and cultural practice is activated in urban protest in some of London’s poorer inner-city streets. The combination of elements contributes to particular practices and manifestations of migrant urbanisms, and in particular, of Latin urbanism: an urban proposal that is very different to the normative ‘developer-led’ urban regeneration. Urban development and the imperatives of the global city are putting small migrant and ethnic retail, as well as public housing communities, at risk. It is against this backdrop that Latin Americans are feeling the brunt of gentrification more than ever.

7.2.1 Reshaping, Claiming and Resisting Urban Spaces

Latin London has revealed a resilient community fighting for its place in the global city alongside other economically disadvantaged and minority ethnic groups in London. With over 30 years in the making, and despite threats over its sustainability due to regeneration projects and processes of gentrification, Latin Americans have left their mark on London’s urban fabric. A resilient community has organised and demonstrated its capacity to renew, renovate and re-invent itself under conditions of duress and risk of eviction from the very places it helped to revitalise. Throughout this process of settlement and struggles over their right to the city, Latin Americans in London have created and developed particular manifestations of Latin urbanisms. This section explores the forms that take place
in asserting claims to the global city within the context of intense urban regeneration and the threat of displacement and uprootedness.

Trajectories of Latin urbanisms and how these are embedded in struggles against gentrification are best exemplified at London’s Latin Quarter in EC and Seven Sisters’ *Pueblito Paisa* (indoor market). These sites are a clear example of what some might call organic manifestations of ‘place-making initiatives’, or of ‘how to turn a place around’. However, these manifestations of Latin urbanism were not framed under the umbrella of ‘place-making’, nor are they part of government or developer-led place-making initiatives. If anything, developer-led regeneration is putting at risk the livelihoods of many residents, traders, families and workers in these sites and in many areas of London. Expressions of Latin urbanisms have been framed by small traders who slowly moved into poorer inner-city neighbourhoods and took advantage of conditions of urban neglect and economic circumstances (and one might say, opportunistic) of the late 1980s and early 1990s in the case of Elephant and Castle, and early 2000s in the case of Seven Sisters. Latin American retailers in Elephant and Castle and *Pueblito Paisa* in Seven Sisters are no longer dependent upon Latin American clientele for their existence and claims to identity. These Latin business clusters are supported by wider community networks that place a value on the multicultural character of these neighbourhoods. Elephant and Castle and Seven Sisters, used here as case studies, are the two largest Latin business clusters in London and both are at the centre of urban regeneration initiatives that will have an impact upon the character of the areas and the continuity of these two distinctive Latin *barrios* in London.

Manifestations of Latin urbanism are explored in this chapter through narratives of regeneration and displacement which have defined Latin American business clusters for over a decade. By focusing on resistance strategies, we are documenting how Latin Americans have made claims over the identity of these places and how they resist gentrification and claim their place in London. We focus on how local traders and the communities they are supported by draw upon common goals and shared strengths to make a point about retail gentrification.
7.2.2 Elephant and Castle

On a cold winter’s evening on 18 January 2018, the *Up the Elephant*\(^6\) campaign took to the streets of Elephant and Castle and marched towards Southwark Council offices, where members of the Planning Committee (all elected council officers) were to decide on Elephant and Castle’s Town Centre Application. Traders, community activists, housing campaigners from across London, and students and staff from the London College of Communication\(^7\) (partners in the development), joined efforts to demand a policy-compliant development and to secure a halt to the planning application.\(^8\)

This was a significant step after years of uncertainty and anti-gentrification struggles at Elephant and Castle. The redevelopment plans for the Elephant and Castle shopping centre can be traced back to 1999 with Southwark Council’s call to developers for proposals to regenerate the area. This led to the establishment of Southwark Land Regeneration (SLR), a public–private partnership which, even though it collapsed in 2002, contributed to the development of the core strategic vision for the area. In addition, the year 2002 marked a new context for urban development in London with the publication of the London Plan.\(^9\)

The designation of Elephant and Castle as an ‘opportunity area’\(^10\) in the London Plan (2002) and, as such listed as a preferred location for commercial growth in Southwark’s core economic strategy (LBS 2010), drew the attention of developers with investment opportunities to the area, whilst the publication in 2004 of *Framework for the development*

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\(^{6}\)Members of the campaign: Southwark Notes; 35% Campaign; Latin Elephant; Elephant and Castle Traders Association; Southwark Defend Council Housing; staff and students at London College of Communication, UAL.

\(^{7}\)Staff and students who opposed the London College of Communication’s (UAL) partnership with Delancey, the developers of EC Town Centre Development.

\(^{8}\)Elephant and Castle Town Centre Planning Application—Southwark Council reference number 16/AP/4458.

\(^{9}\)The London Plan is the document that sets out the vision for urban development in London. It is the guiding document that all London Boroughs should adhere to when developing their local planning documents.

\(^{10}\)The London Plan (2011) defines an *opportunity area* as: ‘...the capital’s major reservoir of brownfield land with significant capacity to accommodate new housing, commercial and other development linked to existing or potential improvements to public transport accessibility. Typically, they can accommodate at least 5000 jobs or 2500 new homes or a combination of the two, along with other supporting facilities and infrastructure’ (60–61).
of EC marked the beginnings of the regeneration of the shopping centre site.\textsuperscript{11} The documents and processes leading to the strategic development and gentrification of the area have been discussed at length by Román-Velázquez (2014a) elsewhere. Here, we would like to concentrate on the planning decisions and protests leading to the approval of the EC Town Centre Application, and how assertions of Latin urbanism act as a strategic tool to resist gentrification.

The plan for the demolition of the shopping centre was officially published in the Development Framework for EC in 2004 and this was a significant announcement and an issue of concern for Latin American and other Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) business owners who saw their future in the area at risk. The demolition of the shopping centre was first due in 2010, with shops leaving the centre (either voluntarily, by not renewing the lease, or by compulsory purchase order) between June 2008 and December 2009.\textsuperscript{12} There have been various forecasts for the demolition of the shopping centre—first for 2010, then 2014—and in 2011\textsuperscript{13} the announcement of its redevelopment, rather than its demolition, was announced by Southwark Council as part of the agreement with St. Modwen and Salhia Real Estate Company (owners of the shopping centre between 2002 and 2013). As with previous predictions, nothing seemed to happen until the 29 November 2013 with the announcement of the sale of the shopping centre to Delancey and APG for £80 million. In a first meeting with Delancey’s asset manager it was envisaged that demolition of the shopping centre would begin in 2016.\textsuperscript{14} However, as of April 2020 the demolition of the centre is still pending due to the lengthy

\textsuperscript{11} The vision for EC is captured in the following documents: London Plan (2002, 2004, 2011), Development Framework for EC (2004a), Supplementary Planning Guidance (2004b), Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (March 2012). The Supplementary Planning Guidance adopted in Southwark Council’s executive meeting held on 19 February 2004 was superseded by the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) adopted in March 2012.

\textsuperscript{12} E&C Regeneration Indicative Program, 27 September 2005, published by Southwark Council and produced by Horngold & Hills Management Consultants. SE1 website: http://www.london-se1.co.uk/news/view/5090. Accessed 18 May 2011. London.

\textsuperscript{13} http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-13427253. Accessed 18 May 2011. Also, in Elephant & Castle Shopping Centre Could Be Here To Stay: https://www.london-se1.co.uk/news/view/5090. Accessed 8 February 2011.

\textsuperscript{14} Personal meeting between Delancey representatives and P. Román-Velázquez on 14 February 2014.
planning process and subsequent appeals, but closure has been announced for July 2020. Immediately after the sale, a consultation process ensued, culminating in the submission of the Elephant and Castle Town Centre and LCC Campus Planning Application (ref: 16/AP/4458) in December 2016.

Throughout this period of consultation, Latin Elephant, a charity working to increase inclusion and participation of BAME groups in processes of urban change in London, played a key role in gaining trust and increasing the participation of Latin American and other BAME traders in the consultation process. During this period and up to February 2016, Latin Elephant engaged in a series of participatory workshops and initiatives to register traders’ vision for the area and to raise awareness of the social value of Elephant and Castle for Latin Americans and other BAME groups in London. The organisation was set up and run by Román-Velázquez and, as such, it had a strong research and policy component with participatory workshops using video and photography, urban design and mapping techniques. The organisation worked with partners from across London, including academics with planning and geography expertise, as well as architects, photographers and media practitioners, to present a vision for the area. The product of these was registered in a series of interim publications. These participatory approaches were complemented with surveys and interviews with traders, and by February 2016, the organisation produced the report *London’s Latin Quarter: Retention, Growth, Sustainability* (Román-Velázquez and Hill 2016). All of the consultation documents were later presented as evidence to support our arguments against the planning application.

The concept and denomination of the area as a Latin Quarter by traders in a workshop held in November 2014 can be seen as a first attempt to bring urban design practices, which already identified the area, into a designated space that will create markers of distinction and identity. It was a way of asserting the identity of the area—Elephant and Castle is home to London’s largest Latin American business cluster and,

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15Latin Elephant was formed in September 2013 as a continuation of the group of traders created by Román-Velázquez in 2012. The group was first set up as a way of sharing research information with traders. Latin Elephant emerged as a conversation to increase media visibility and share information across social media platforms. The name soon gained popularity and it was later used to develop a programme of activities with traders and local groups. Latin Elephant, CIO became a registered Charity on 15 September 2014.
as such, it should be recognised as a Latin Quarter. The idea was that the development would be in keeping with the identity of Elephant and Castle as a distinctive (though not exclusively) Latin place in London. The vision for the Latin Quarter included a Latin Boulevard, thematic festivals, art installations and community spaces. Other events and activities throughout that period included a photographic exercise called London’s Latin Quarter and its people; a 10 session participatory video and photography workshop under the title My Latin Elephant, resulting in a public exhibition titled ‘Being Latin in Elephant’; an urban design workshop with UCL students to explore relocation alternatives with traders; a series of design workshops with the title ‘Recorriendo Elephant’/‘Walking the Elephant’. The emphasis of these consultation exercises was to draw attention to what was until then a largely hidden cluster of Latin American businesses, and to highlight the positive contribution that Latin Americans brought to the area. It was not only about claiming the place as London’s Latin Quarter, but was also asserting a sense of belongingness to the area.

Latin Elephant’s consultation initiatives were significant because it was the first time it asked traders and other community groups what their aspirations for the area were. This consultation exercise was carried out to draw the attention of local needs and the value of the area for local groups, in the hope that it would somehow be considered by the developer. To their dismay, the planning application was submitted by Delancey in December 2016 and not only were the visions emerging from the consultation with traders ignored, but the application was not policy-compliant. Opposition to the plans were soon made. Leading the opposition were 35% campaign on housing matters, and Latin Elephant on migrant and ethnic businesses and equality issues. The objection was led by the Charity Latin Elephant and the 35% campaign group, as early as

16 My Latin Elephant: participatory film and photography workshops in partnership with Insight Share and Fotosynthesis; Urban design practices for relocation strategies at EC by UCL Bartlett M.A. students; Recorriendo Elephant, participatory urban design practices by Louise Vormitag. All available at Latin Elephant’s website: www.latinelephant.org.

17 Neighbour Consultation Replies 35% campaign: http://planbuild.southwark.gov.uk/documents/?casereference=16%2fAP%2f4458&system=DC.

18 First objection submitted by Latin Elephant in February 2017: https://latinelephant.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/LE-Objection-to-Planning-Application-16_AP_4458.pdf.
January 2017. From the very beginning, the demands were for the application to be policy-compliant since it did not fulfil the basic 35% social housing policy and the 10% affordable retail space requirements for new developments.

Local group, 35% campaign, claimed that the application did not comply with Southwark’s affordable housing policy which states that half of the 35% affordable housing should be social rented. The development will include 979 new homes, but when first published the application only allowed for 33 of these units to be the social rent equivalent.

Throughout 2017 and up to its final approval on 3 July 2018, the social housing component went up from 33 units to 74 and was finally approved with 116 units. This still falls below the social housing policy threshold. As stated by 35% campaign:

Delancey has been granted permission to build 979 new homes totalling 106,471sqm of residential floorspace and while 35% will be ‘affordable’ only 9,141sqm (8.6% - 116 homes) will be social rent. None of this is in line with the Elephant’s current affordable housing policy, which requires half of the minimum 35% affordable housing to be social rented. Delancey should be providing 1,863sqm - nearly twice as much social rented housing. Half of the social rented element has been substituted for London Living Rent equivalent’, £205 - £308pw, and affordable rent at up to 80% market rent, depending on income. 60% of the overall affordable housing will be for households with incomes over £60,000 pa and up to £90,000pa.

Latin Elephant concurrently advocated for 10% affordable retail space as per policy; a relocation strategy and fund for existing traders; a traders panel; enough relocation sites to accommodate existing traders wishing to relocate; increasing the affordable qualifying period of 5 years; a robust Equalities Impact Assessment for Latin Americans and other BAME groups who are the main users and customers of the shopping centre; certainty over the fate of arches six and seven in Elephant Road; awareness of the clustering of specialist goods and services; and, considerations to the diverse character of the area as a migrant and ethnic business

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19 Refer to: www.southwark.gov.uk/assets/attach/1817/1.0.5Elephant%26CastleSPDOAPF.pdf. Accessed 12 February 2019.
20 Refer to: http://35percent.org/shopping-centre/. Accessed 12 February 2019.
centre. The following concessions were made throughout the consultation period\textsuperscript{21} up to final approval of the application on 3 July 2018: 10\% affordable retail space; a relocation package raised to £634,000; business support; first refusal option to existing traders; an Equalities Impact Assessment for the bingo hall users, most of whom are of protected characteristics; an accessible database of commercial sites in the area; a traders panel; additional temporary retail space to relocate existing traders; design concessions to accommodate windows and lift on temporary sites; and rent cap for temporary retail space. The Mayor’s final approval made an additional concession of a 15-year affordable rent period for the new development units.

These demands were adopted by a concerted campaign, under the name \textit{Up the Elephant}, led by a diversity of local groups, organisations, councillors and individuals whose main objectives are to strive for a development that brings benefits to local residents, consumers and users of the Elephant and Castle. This marked a shift in Latin Elephant’s work which, since mid-2017, has been working to incorporate all migrant and ethnic traders within the development site. The emphasis on the development of a Latin Quarter subsided in favour of a more inclusive practice through which local traders and groups were the protagonists of the struggles and demands for a development that brought benefits to the local people. The shift here is from that of a vision that intended to be participants of a consultation process, to asserting a series of demands and requests from traders, BAME and economically disadvantaged groups who felt alienated by the consultation process and the proposal of a development that did not take into account their needs and aspirations to remain in Elephant and Castle. There was strong recognition of the contribution of Latin Americans to Elephant and Castle, and an acknowledgement of the role of traders for the campaign. Identity markers were used strategically as part of a wider campaign that recognised the diversity of interests embraced within a multicultural context.

Local opposition gathered momentum, and by the end of 2017, the \textit{Up the Elephant} coalition was formally set up. \textit{Up the Elephant} is a coalition of grassroots groups and organisations working towards a better deal for the communities of Elephant and Castle. The campaign brought together the demands of local residents and traders in a concerted effort

\textsuperscript{21}Throughout this period, a series of meetings took place between Latin Elephant, traders, 35\% Campaign, Southwark Council and Delancey.
to resist gentrification. The group members of the coalition played to each
other’s strengths to build a social movement. This included formal oppo-
sition at Planning Committee Meetings; meetings with local councillors;
meetings with planning and regeneration teams at Southwark Council and
the Mayor’s office; a strong social media campaign; meetings with local
groups and traders; petitions; stalls set up in front of the Elephant and
Castle shopping centre; the occupation of a London College of Commu-
nication building by students opposed to the University’s partnership in
the development; and, street protests on days when the application was
heard at Planning Committee Meetings. The social media presence of
the campaign was organised around three key demands, each with a set
of requests. These were amplified by all the member organisations and
sympathisers of the campaign. It also gained the attention of internationa,
regional, local and ethnic media, with live tweets of the planning sessions
being aired by the local SE1 media platform. The media campaign was
complemented by research and opposition to the planning application
from local councillors, residents and organisations such as 35% Campaign,
Southwark Notes, Walworth Society and Latin Elephant, amongst others.
This was a concerted effort with a unified and consistent message—to
ensure that this development was policy compliant and brought benefits
to the local population. This was a multifaceted campaign that gained
support from a diversity of groups and campaigns across London.

The planning application was heard on 18 January 2018 at the
Planning Committee Meeting of Southwark Council. On that evening
protesters took to the streets with banners displaying messages of support:
‘We love the Elephant’, ‘homes for people not for profit’, ‘protect our
barrios’, ‘stop the displacement of migrant and ethnic traders’. Whilst
the proceedings unfolded within the council offices, protesters joined
the symbolic salsa dance lesson and anti-gentrification bingo game. The
protestors used markers of Elephant and Castle’s identity as a tool to resist
gentrification.

On that evening and after seven hours of deliberation that lasted long
into the early hours, the planning application was rejected. The rejection
and deferral of the planning application at this meeting was claimed as a
great achievement for local groups—in particular, for Latin Elephant and
35% campaign who were leading the planning proceedings and opposition
to the development. This allowed for further negotiations and conces-
sions to housing and traders: an increase in housing units to 116 and a
temporary relocation site to compensate for the lack of available spaces
to relocate those traders who were located within close proximity to the shopping centre.

The first Planning Committee Meeting that voted against the development was held on 18 January 2018, and after seven hours of deliberation, the committee voted against the planning official’s recommendation to approve the development. Motions to present reasons for rejection were presented at a 30th January meeting, but failed to gain support from other Planning Committee members. A motion to defer application was then presented and approved by members of the Committee. This was a great win for the community and local groups, and in particular for Latin Elephant who consistently claimed traders were not opposed to development, but to this development because it did not benefit the local community and because of its negative impact on older people and BAME groups. After years of campaigning and through collective action, the organisations that were part of the Up the Elephant campaign managed to defer the Elephant and Castle Town Centre Application. Additional consultation and negotiations took place up to 3 July 2018 when the application was approved by the Planning Committee on the condition that amendments were incorporated to the S106 agreement22 and full planning consent was given by the Mayor of London. The application was finally approved by the Mayor of London on 10th of December 2018, with subsequent conditions for a relocation site approved on 7 January 2019. The decision, however, was appealed by Jerry Flynn a local resident and member of 35% Campaign.23 A crowd justice fund-raising campaign was set up to cover the legal costs of the Judicial Review (JR). The hearing took place over two days in September 2019. News of the rejection of the JR was received on 20 December 2019.24 As we write in April 2020, the campaign group was in favour of appealing this decision and is seeking further advice as to how to proceed, but the Coronavirus pandemic has

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22 S106 agreements set planning obligations for a given development. ‘Planning obligations assist in mitigating the impact of unacceptable development to make it acceptable in planning terms’: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/planning-obligations. Planning obligations are used to prescribe the nature of a development, compensate for the loss or damage that is created by the development, or mitigate the negative impact of a development.

23 https://www.crowdjustice.com/case/stop-the-elephant-shopping-centre-destruction/.

24 Details and judgement available at: https://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/Admin/2019/3575.html.
Elephant and Castle Summary

The EC Town Centre Application was heard at Planning Committee on 18 January 2018 over a seven-hour deliberation (from 19:00 to 02:00 hrs) which culminated in the application being rejected and discussions over the reasons for rejections postponed to a later meeting on 30 January 2018. The application was deferred, and the developer embarked on a new round of consultation exercises. The application was finally approved by Southwark Council on 3 July 2018 and sent for approval to the Mayor of London’s office in late November 2018. Approval from the Mayor’s office came through on 10 December 2018. All conditions were met by the end of January 2019 and so the relocation process and countdown for the demolition of the centre began. The eviction of traders was announced for end of July 2020.

The cultural markers of Elephant and Castle—home to London’s largest Latin American business cluster and a bingo hall and bowling alley that catered for disadvantaged, older and young BAME groups in the area—were taken out onto the streets of Southwark to claim for a development that brings benefits to the diverse population of Elephant and Castle. This is a clear example of how cultural practices not only shape a neighbourhood’s identity, but how they are used as a tool to resist gentrification. However, it is important to highlight here that this was a multifaceted campaign strategy in which all local groups shared knowledge, skills and strengths. Campaigners, supported by the planning officer’s report, argued that the development will have a disproportionately negative impact for BAME groups and for Latin Americans in particular. This campaign is a clear example of how equalities matters were taken onto the streets in a symbolic performance that translated into a statement for equality, fairness and anti-gentrification.
Elephant and Castle Town Centre Application Timeline

1999—Southwark Council call to developers for regeneration proposals for EC
2004—EC Dev Framework and SPG—First announcement of demolition
2010—Due date for demolition
2014—Due date for demolition
2013—EC shopping centre sold to developers Delancey & APG (29th November)
2014—Consultation for EC Town Centre begins
2016—Planning Application submitted—December (ref: 16/AP/4458)
2018—EC application rejected (18th January)
2018—EC application deferred (30th January)
2018—EC application approved by Southwark Council (3rd July)
2018—EC application approved by Mayor of London (10th December)
2018—Temporary relocation site deferred to clarify rent levels (12th December)
2019—Temporary relocation site is approved (7th January)
2018—Set up of Traders Panel (November)
2019—S106 agreement signed and application fully approved (January)
2019—Judicial Review (JR) to overturn planning decision (22nd–23rd October)
2019—JR decision made. Campaigners lost the JR (20th December)
2020—Decision to appeal JR outcome by Up the Elephant (7th January)
2020—Notification of shopping centre closure for July 2020 (January)
2020—CPO powers approved by Southwark Council (7th April)
On an unusually sunny, bright and warm afternoon on 8 April 2017, the streets around Seven Sisters indoor market were awash with the sounds of salsa and samba—the colourful traditional dance costumes and dancers from Colombia, Bolivia and Peru—the smells of empanadas and asados, and raffle prizes and a colourful anti-gentrification piñata for children to bash in return for some sweets. This last activity was a strong symbolic gesture that captured the sentiment around anti-gentrification struggles in London. This was no ordinary afternoon, but a salsa and samba shutdown to save the Latin Village and Wards Corner building and to ‘protect Latin American community, culture and heritage’ (poster). This was another strategy in the long struggle to save London’s Pueblito Paisa, or, Latin Village as it was reclaimed by the new campaign group in their aspiration to connect with wider audiences.

The legal battle to save Pueblito Paisa can be traced back to 2003 when Haringey Council announced their plans to redevelop Wards Corner and chose private developer, Grainger, to fulfil such plans. This was part of the Labour Government’s (under Tony Blair) New Deals for Communities initiative that resolved to regenerate some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the country. This marked the beginning of a long process for Latin American retailers (mostly Colombians) in Seven Sisters who felt at risk of displacement from Wards Corner, the building in which they had set roots since the beginning of the 2000s. Not much seemed to happen initially, until August 2007 when plans for the area were presented to the public for the first time and a development agreement was reached between Haringey Council and Grainger (the developer). The proposal included the demolition of Wards Corner to pave the way for new retail space, a leisure centre and new homes. The scheme was opposed by a number of local organisations, including Latin American traders—the main occupiers of the building. These organisations joined forces and formed Wards Corner Coalition (WCC), ‘a grassroots organisation working to stop the demolition of the homes, businesses and the indoor market above Seven Sisters tube station and fighting the attempts of Grainger PLC to force out the local community’. 25 The WCC was formed at the end of 2007 and has since been involved in a long and

25 http://wardscorner.wikispaces.com/. Accessed 20 September 2012.
costly legal battle, challenging planning applications submitted by the developers.

The campaign to save Wards Corner gained momentum in 2008 when Boris Johnson, then Mayor of London, made the following public statement to Haringey Council in support of the Wards Corner building and the traders:

The proposed re-development of Ward’s Corner would pull down the market and only offer space to a handful of people, which is unacceptable. I want the Council to urgently review this proposal and put the livelihood of the traders and the thousands of locals who rely on this market at the core of their decision.26

It again made headline news in July 2010 by setting precedent for planning regulations on the grounds of race relations. In what was regarded as a landmark case, WCC won the appeal against Grainger’s planning application. A High Court judgement declared the planning process by the council unlawful because it did not follow Equalities legislation. The decision was based on the failure of the council to assess the impact of the proposed development on equality of opportunity and relations between different racial groups in the area. Despite this victory, the campaign to save Wards Corner continued as the developers submitted a second application that was approved by Haringey Council in May 2012—to which WCC also appealed the Council’s decision. When all seemed lost, WCC joined forces with academic institutions, alternative architects and planning groups, to develop a community-led plan for the Wards Corner building previously known as Wards Department Store. In April 2014, Haringey Council finally granted Wards Corner planning permission to restore the building, however as they neatly expressed it:

The granting of planning permission for the Wards Corner community plan is an important step forward. We now have a better position from which to approach TfL [Transport for London], and potential backers in our mission to make the plan a reality. … However, Grainger PLC still have planning permission for their plan and the threat of displacement and demolition still remains. Haringey Council have an agreement with Grainger PLC to use compulsory purchase orders to force local businesses and homes out of

26 http://www.london.gov.uk/view_press_release.jsp?releaseid=17959. Accessed 10 June 2009.
Wards Corner. We need to continue to work alongside the people directly affected by the Grainger plan to campaign against the injustices they face and to encourage Grainger, the Council and TfL to work with the local community in creating a plan for Wards Corner that meets the needs of local people.\(^{27}\)

The West Green Road/Seven Sisters Development Trust was set in 2008 by four members of Wards Corner Community Coalition, to provide a vehicle for community and business-led improvements to the West Green Road/Seven Sisters town centre. Its first project is to deliver the community plan for Wards Corner, which received planning permission in April 2014. According to Companies House, filing the Trust has been dormant since its inception, with recent activity in 2016. A small First Steps Locality grant provided initial impetus to organise the work of the trust across four key areas: (1) business plan and funding; (2) feasibility studies; (3) stakeholder engagement and communications; and (4) governance. This resulted in the production of an action plan launched on 25 February 2016. Progress seems to have been truncated by lack of funds and loss of the key people driving the process.

In September 2016, traders of the indoor market were issued with compulsory purchase orders (CPO)—the last resort to remove traders from the site and give way to the development. Traders from the indoor market, local activist groups and sympathisers joined forces and soon after launched the ‘Save Latin Village’ campaign. The battle to save *Pueblito Paisa*, or, in English, Latin Village, poured onto the streets of Seven Sisters in a concerted campaign to raise funds to support the legal challenge against the CPO. Various local groups united for the first (8 April 2017) of many salsa/samba shutdowns which saw different generations dance to the tunes of salsa and drumbeats of samba, whilst savouring *empanadas* and *asados* and chanting ‘Gentrification, no gracias’. Under the colourful banner ‘protect our barrios’ a group of young Latinx claimed to ‘use empanadas and music as a form of resistance to fight gentrification’.\(^{28}\) The campaign continued with a series of events throughout 2017 and a joined-up approach with local groups and supporters, including a public presence at the CPO hearings and a statement from the United Nations declaring the negative impact that

\(^{27}\) WCC, https://wardscornercommunityplan.wordpress.com/. Accessed 2 July 2014.

\(^{28}\) London Latinx, Facebook page post 2017.
closure of the market will have for the Latin American community. This campaign is a clear example of how local Latin groups embraced cultural forms as a way of resisting gentrification, asserting identity and claiming their sense of belonging and their rightful place in the city. Another way of saying ‘we are here to stay’.

The public inquiry to challenge the CPO ran from 11 to 27 July 2017, with a final decision being made in favour of the London Borough of Haringey on 23 January 2019. As we write, the future sustainability of the market and its traders remains uncertain: Haringey Council is undertaking a Public Scrutiny Review, whilst campaigners have launched another crowdfunding campaign to proceed with a legal challenge and appeal the Secretary of State’s decision to allow the CPO to take place.

The manifestations of Latin urbanisms in *Pueblito Paisa* are very much defined by this lengthy legal battle to remain in the space, but most importantly because it joined forces with Wards Corner Coalition. The campaign to save *Pueblito Paisa* is significant because, despite the internal conflicts that might arise amongst retailers, it reinforced a strong sense of self-definition and heightened their determination to claim their rights to stay in place. The sense of belongingness and the right to set roots have been challenged by the threats to vacate the building at various stages throughout the planning process. This became evident straight-away when retailers received their first eviction notices. As Vicky Alvarez, one of the leaders of Latin American retailers at *Pueblito Paisa* narrated, ‘if they thought that they could easily get rid of us they had a great surprise in hand, we were not going to be easily disposed of’ … ‘we are here to stay’.

These circumstances and the lengthy process are important for understanding expressions of Latin urbanism beyond its representational value. Attempts at self-definition in both cases transcend the symbolic. The identity of these places is defined through its activism, wider community networks and self-determination to remain in place. This is not just a battle to save businesses, but a statement about the function that these business clusters play amongst the wider community networks they

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29 OHCHR, 27 July 2017. London market closure plan threatens “dynamic cultural centre”: https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?LangID=E&NewsID=21911. Accessed 14 January 2020.

30 In interview with Patria Román-Velázquez, 16 July 2012.
support and are a part of. These are highly valued cultural centres for the communities that support them.

### Pueblito Paisa and Wards Corner Building Timeline

- **2003**—Haringey Council announced plans to redevelop Wards Corner Bldg.
- **2003**—Haringey Council chose private developer, Grainger
- **2007**—Plans for the area presented to the public for the first time
- **2007**—Wards Corner Coalition (WCC) formed
- **2008**—Support from Boris Johnson
- **2008**—West Green Rd/Seven Sisters Dev Trust
- **2010**—WCC wins legal battle—Equalities Statement
- **2014**—Community Plan is granted planning application
- **2016**—Latin Corner UK—Campaign
- **2016**—CPO issued to traders
- **2017**—Public Inquiry (11th–17th July)
- **2019**—CPO result against traders (23rd January)
- **2019**—Culmination of Haringey Council’s Scrutiny Review (March)

### 7.2.4 Reflections on Latin Urbanism in London

We use this opportunity to reflect upon the implications of asserting Latin urbanisms through our research, and in particular with the work that Román-Velázquez has been doing with Latin Elephant. Asserting Latin urbanisms in the current context of intense urban regeneration, greater economic uncertainty triggered by Brexit and an increasingly hostile environment towards migrants, takes distinctive manifestations and

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31 Román-Velázquez founded Latin Elephant, CIO (Charity No. 1158554) on leaving her academic post of 14 years in the UK. The information in this chapter builds on her previous research and on work undertaken between 2013 and 2016 whilst at Latin Elephant. The experiences narrated here draw on both her research and active work with the traders at EC.
compels us to think about the implications of such assertions. This is also compounded by the complex negotiations and iterations that occur with other groups who are equally placed in the production of migrant urbanisms. This is a highly complex environment in which to be asserting such identity politics, as one has to take into account, not just the economic and political context under which such claims to the global city are occurring, but also the mechanisms by which different communities embrace, negotiate or reject such claims of belongingness to the city, their right to the city, or such forms of migrant urbanisms.

The questions that guide these reflections are: Is there space for migrant and ethnic economies in a regenerated London? What forms of solidarity and alliances are formed in the process? Or, equally important, what forms of competing discourses are then formed as a result of such assertions? How are manifestations of Latin urbanisms placed and negotiated in wider discourses about migrant and ethnic business clusters and manifestations of migrant urbanisms in London?

Ultimately, what can these two case studies tell us about manifestations and practices of migrant urbanisms and its subsequent significance for urban studies, urban planning and more generally, about gentrification? But most importantly the challenge is how to best achieve the aspirations of the majority of migrant and ethnic traders without the danger of promoting a place-based identity that relies on stereotypes and the commodification of culture, and without neglecting the distinctive multi-ethnic composition of these centres of economic activity.

If, at the beginning, manifestations of Latin urbanism were about transnational practices as strategies for growth and survival, regeneration and the threat of displacement have resulted in a form of political activism that asserts identity as a political right to remain in place, and a strategy for the long-term sustainability against impending gentrification of their neighbourhoods.

Elephant and Castle and Seven Sisters local traders and groups felt alienated from the planning process because their needs were not addressed in the regeneration plans for the area. In this context, expressions and manifestations of Latin urbanism were used as a strategy to address feelings of alienation by local groups who felt excluded from plans to regenerate the areas that they once helped to revitalise. In London, Latin urbanisms capture community design techniques and an attempt by local groups to engage with the planning process given that visions put forward by private developers and municipal authorities excluded the
distinctive cultural urban environment created by existing communities. However, as in the United States, it begs the question as to whether designing for a specific group might weaken wider collective goals. This could be seen in the strategic claim for a case for London’s Latin Quarter by local traders and its subsequent incorporation to wider spatial struggles across London.

The attempts to save both business communities and their incorporation to wider local community groups (Elephant Amenity Network in the case of EC and Wards Corner Coalition in the case of Seven Sisters) attest to the importance placed on businesses as community assets and emotional investments. Small local retailers play a greater social role amongst different communities in London and are engrained in the everyday lives of many in the city. These small local businesses provide a sense of continuity, belongingness and emotional attachment for many Latin Americans and other ethnic groups in London. Thus it is not the economic investment, contribution to the local economy and commercial gain or losses that we aim to highlight here (though these are important issues), but rather how these shops produce and represent cultural identities that somehow invoke and assert a greater sense of ownership and belongingness to London as a place that can also be called home.

The regeneration plans for both areas have made other community networks value the distinctively Latin places on their doorstep. This is also a way of forming wider alliances as a strategy to win greater power for the groups directly affected by regeneration. The claim to remain in place is embraced, not just by Latin American retailers, but by local community organisations alike. It has also made these business communities more visible to the local authorities who would otherwise remain unaware of the role of businesses in the social cement of local groups. In this context Latin urbanisms as a tool to resist gentrification become stronger and part of the wider struggles across the city, and strategically invoked by other groups with similar plights or sympathetic to the case of Latin Americans in London.

In the case of Elephant and Castle, their contribution and visibility has been acknowledged in government planning documents. Despite this acknowledgement, retailers believe that the current regeneration programmes might pose a risk to their sustainability and continuity. The context of urban regeneration under which such recognition has been gained is also evidence of the looming risks that might call into question the sustainability of these two Latin American business clusters in London.
The production of urban spaces under neoliberal times has seen the role of the state in managing public spaces diminished. The loss of public land to developers and private capital results in a form of urbanism that washes up all traces of culture. In the case of intense regeneration programmes in London, we are left with a form of private, corporate and replicable urbanism that erases difference and uniqueness to a place—a place-making initiative that can be replicated across the globe and in its path promote exclusionary practices through urban design.

For example, the inclusion and description of Elephant and Castle as a ‘Latin Quarter’ has also been embraced by the municipal authorities and by developers—though little has been done about it. This discourse over the identity of the area with a distinctive Latin Quarter might transcend the plight of Latin American retailers who might initially perceive it as a threat to their continuity, but who also cling to the notion of a Latin Quarter as a strategy of survival—to claim their place in Elephant and Castle and assert an identity for the area. So, new forms of migrant urbanisms and identity politics based on place-making initiatives led by private developers could end up in the commodification of culture at the expense of the very community that somehow contributed to these distinctive places in the first instance.

The questions or issues to address now or to reflect upon—at academic and practical level—are how can we best achieve aspirations of retailers without the danger of promoting a place-based identity that relies on stereotypes and the commodification of culture, without neglecting the existing inclusiveness and diversity of the area as a multi-ethnic centre, and without falling in the trap of cultural exploitation?

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