Title:

Micro-community engagement and area-based regeneration in east London: The case of Chrisp Street Market.

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Abstract:

This paper critically engages with how the notion of community is used in local economic development in England. Its primary concern is how current understandings of the concept of 'community' in regeneration, as well as how it is instrumentalised through ineffective community engagement, depicts them as linear and homogeneous constructs. This paper addresses how this is a result of a tension between historic neoliberal urban policy and communitarian approaches to local engagement which can often result in tokenistic community engagement practices. This in turn can have serious and at times adverse effects on localities as local area-based regeneration projects materialise. This paper argues that an approach based on understanding communities as made up of a number of micro-communities might be more useful in a regeneration context. It examines an initiative called the Chrisp Street Exchange led by a local regeneration team called Accents tasked to be at the frontline. The paper outlines Accents' strategies of delivering community engagement as an example of a micro-communities approach. It then suggests that while Accents might not be able to stem the tide of market forces, they can at least deliver engagement approaches that might be able to prepare micro-communities, in this case a local small business micro-community, for the impending change that has landed in this part of east London.

Introduction:

In the UK current area-based regeneration policy needs to deliver place-based economic regeneration usually in the form of either land remediation projects, wholesale redevelopment, and / or piecemeal regeneration projects. At the same time there is an emphasis on the importance of involving communities as a way to foster liveable and sustainable neighbourhoods. This essentially places those tasked with delivering area-based regeneration in a position of tension. This is because on one hand there are strong market forces represented by large property developers and driven by decades of neoliberal urban policy; and on the other are communitarian approaches designed to engage with local communities in the hopes of sustaining and reinvigorating civic society. Ideally both are negotiated with and needs addressed.

At the heart of enabling this process lies what Leary and McCarthy (2013) describes as a 'participation discourse' between local authorities, third sector organisations, developers, and local communities including businesses, charities and other local organisations. This comprises a language of 'community involvement, engagement, empowerment, social capital, and locally driven exit strategies' (Leary and McCarthy, 2013, p. 395). However, according to Cornwall (2008), ensuring effective participation at the community level can vary enormously. They can also pose a whole host of challenges (Bailey, 2010; Coaffee and Deas, 2008; Cornwall, 2008; Dillon and Fanning, 2015; Jarvis et al., 2012; Leary and McCarthy, 2013). As is well documented in the literature, one of these challenges involves specifically delivering effective 'community engagement' (Bailey, 2010; Jarvis et al., 2012; Lawless and Pearson, 2012). According to Jarvis et al. (2012, p. 02), 'failure to engage the community makes sustainable regeneration both difficult to deliver and less likely to produce favourable outcomes'. There are numerous examples of this that will be touched upon later in the paper.

Coming from the regeneration literature, Bailey (2010, p. 412) defines community engagement as 'a variety of strategies designed to increase the involvement of residents, as well as voluntary and community organizations, in the planning and delivery of local regeneration strategies and projects'. There are two overlapping challenges which determine the success of community engagement processes. The first has to do with the methods of engagement; and the second has to do with how the concept of 'community' has been understood in order to justify different approaches to regeneration. This paper is primarily about the latter, as well as how it infuses and dictates the former. Specifically it seeks to address the treatment of community, and subsequently community engagement, in current regeneration policy by espousing a micro-community perspective. It argues that a perspective which treats localities as made up of a mixture of micro-communities in areas earmarked for regeneration could ameliorate the problems associated with the instrumentalisation of community and thus improve the dislocation between territory and community.

By examining a local initiative called the Chrisp Street Exchange in London's East End it outlines the strategies associated with delivering community engagement through a focus on micro-communities and in the midst of overwhelming local change. It then suggests that while housing associations might not be able to stem the tide of market forces, they can at least deliver community engagement approaches that might be able to prepare local micro-communities, in this case the small business micro- community, for the impending change that has landed in this part of east London.

Instrumentalising 'community':

Wallace (2010, p. 805) suggests '"community" has been used to territorialise the social into governable, spatially bounded sites which can function as "partners" in networks of contingent relationships that constitute and implement public policy'. This can be problematic since, as Wallace argues, 'community' as a framework for policy might lead to a misinterpretation of 'the unstable, negotiated and dynamic nature of local spaces' (p. 805). Moreover this is akin to the instrumentalisation of community and exacerbated if the right type of local consultation is not achieved as we will see in the next section.

This instrumentalisation of 'community' in regeneration has a history and is connected to the growing strength of neoliberal structures that have underpinned and driven the broader economy since the 1980s. Peck and Tickell's (1994) seminal paper identifies a global – local disorder as manifest by neoliberal urban policy's ability to politically disable localities rendering them economically dysfunctional (Wilson, 2012). According to the authors this is achieved through inter-locality competition where localities accept a 'mania of new, harsh global times and non-reflexively jump into the inter-locality competitive game' (Wilson, 2012 p: 254). Inter local competitiveness can be articulated in a number of ways however in the context of regeneration in England, it is essentially the introduction of competitive bidding (Oatley, 1995). This perpetuated the instrumentalisation of 'community' as strategic partnerships and especially area based initiatives (ABIs) realised that community engagement was earmarked as a policy priority in the wake of property developer – led regeneration in the 1980s (Wilson 2012). Thus the term 'community' became instrumentalised in a host of ways in order to garner funding for regeneration projects.

It was soon discovered that speaking of community involvement and engagement in a bid did not translate to effective change on the ground. The flagship area based initiative City Challenge, launched in 1991, is a case in point. It was hailed as the most ambitious inner city regeneration scheme of its day (Tallon, 2013). £82.5 Million per annum for five years was specified for the programme by the UK government. The programme was open for bids from 15 local authorities, 11 of which were successful (see Bonshek, 1992 for a comprehensive review of the City Challenge bids). The programme had a number of successes but was also beset by problems related to governance

and community involvement, which often amounted to issues relating to consultation (Bell 1993; Taylor 2003). According to Tallon (2013, p: 69):

> Although City Challenge broadened access to local political power through new voices, it tended to perpetuate certain existing inequalities. This is because the bidding timetable was too tight at just six weeks for local authorities to consult effectively with communities and other groups, and to build new partnerships with them. Essentially the way in which the programme was set up meant that local authorities could not engage the community through lack of time and money.

City Challenge and subsequent other ABIs was supposed to engage properly with communities in localities instead of being merely led by property developers as was done in the 1980s. However critics of early ABIs state that the impact of those programmes was limited partly because '[r]egeneration was done "to" rather than "with" local people' (Lawless, 2004 in Lawless and Pearson, 2012, p: 512). Engagement was thus championed even more as a result of these earlier ABIs as it was believed that engagement 'brings real benefits to the individual as well as supporting more cohesive and integrated communities' (Bailey, 2010, pp. 322 – 323).

When New labour won the election in 1997 they quickly implemented a political paradigm shift called the 'Third Way' (Rose, 2000). In 1998 Tony Blair wrote:

> Our mission, is to promote and reconcile the four values which are essential to a just society which maximizes the freedom and potential of all our people—equal worth, opportunity for all, responsibility and community (p:3).

The Third Way suffused urban policy and it was evident from the evaluation of earlier large ABIs such as City Challenge and the Single Regeneration Budget (another flagship ABI, see Lawless and Pearson 2012), that there needed to be an increased emphasis on citizen and community involvement in local partnerships (Lawless and Pearson, 2012). This helped in part usher in new focus on 'localism' and the subsequent creation of the Localism Act in 2011. This however did not deal with the problems surrounding community engagement as we shall see in the next section.

Thus while New Labour brought in a stronger emphasis on communities in UK regeneration policy through their Third Way political shift with what they termed the 'New Urban Renewal' it seemed like the same old policy model quickly crept back into use (Jarvis et al. 2011). Davies (2009) describes this as a result of when 'substantial funding, its single minded focus on defined and quantified

outcomes, its network of partners all working towards the same ends', ends up being 'counterproductive to the recovery of a self-generating and diverse local economy' primarily because of its linear structure and approach (p. 339 in Jarvis et al. 2011 p. 235).

Community engagement:

In England the concept of 'localism' and the subsequent creation of the Localism Act 2011 happened in order to provide a new way for communities to engage with regeneration policy. Specifically, the Localism Act provides: the right to challenge, the right to buy, and the right to build (Regeneration Wales, 2014). This allows for a way to participate and engage with planning policy at a much deeper level than previously. However, the Localism Act ensures that local authorities and other regeneration partners provide mechanisms for the community to engage with. In other words the onus is on the community to be actively involved in every step of the planning process of a planned regeneration project. This begins to skirt the fine line between consultation and engagement where local engagement depends heavily on community capacity. While regeneration partnerships must consult with local communities about impending change, there is no requirement to engage with communities. Thus while increasing community involvement is recognised as an important part of the regeneration process it has been happening unevenly. In fact research since the 1990s around community involvement in partnerships shows a lack of delivery (Colenutt and Cutten 1994; Mayo 1997; Cebulla et al. 2000; Tallon, 2013). According to Tallon (2013) this is because:

> Many communities still feel marginalised and unable to influence the decisions that affect their areas or the services they use in the realisation that past involvement has not delivered (p. 148).

Interestingly most local authorities will provide useful information on what they perceive community engagement to entail. These usually come in the form of sections of local authority websites detailing planned or impending regeneration projects. On these sites tenants, freeholders and leaseholders are provided with 'commitments' such as a commitment to the right to stay in a certain neighbourhood, or to have moving costs compensated, or to cover legal fees; however there is rarely a provision to challenge these plans and effectively stop them from happening. This brings to light serious concerns about the mechanisms available for local communities, but also in some

circumstances local authorities and housing associations, to halt regeneration projects before they happen.

Critics of neoliberal urban policy such as Loretta Lees (2013) give stark examples of this in her study of the Aylesbury Estate in South London. The Aylesbury Estate is a large social housing development in South London that has been earmarked for mass redevelopment. Many accuse the local authority of mishandling the community engagement process and thus leaving numerous tenants in various forms of limbo as well as being in danger of forced displacement (Cooper et al., 2020). Lees states that what became known as the 'New Urban Renewal', of which the Aylesbury Estate regeneration project was a part, was effectively tantamount to the state-led gentrification of British council estates, undertaken through the guise of mixed community policy. Lees' criticism boils down to one of ineffective community engagement. In this instance she states that 'tenant support for the regeneration programme was manipulated and misrepresented and [shows] how choices were closed down for them, leaving them ultimately with a "false choice" between a regeneration they did not want or the further decline of their estate' (p: 921).

Mathers et al (2008) is another example where failure to trust in the process of community engagement results in outright avoidance by the local community. In this particular case the local community avoids the 'gaze of the state' because it has grown accustomed to survival strategies borne out of deprivation inflicted by years of neglect. This results in regeneration plans potentially forging ahead as a formal consensus of accepting the plans by the community is based on non-participation. In other words because no one turned up to scrutinise the plans. One can see how examples such as these can lead to unfavourable outcomes and in some cases displacement.

In many of these instances the nature of engagement looks much more like consultation as opposed to real engagement. Virani (2017) points out that in England this translates as a number of approaches and methods that are being adopted as effective 'community engagement' tools which fall under the rubric of community consultations. Community consultations in a local authority context means attaining engagement with a community and allowing the community to engage with concerns in order to facilitate consensus about proposed regeneration interventions (Virani, 2017). Importantly many regeneration schemes in the UK are already agreed upon before the engagement process even begins which re-emphasises the tokenistic critique that is often levelled at community engagement tools. This is true even as guidelines have been in place by the government explicitly asking for this to be avoided since 2013 (Virani, 2017). It must be said that many local authorities have made significant strides in challenging this tokenistic approach. Sadly, proposals are still being

put forth prior to consultation in many cases and consultations are used to back end the projects (Virani, 2017). Methods like public meetings, workshops, focus groups, forums, flyer distribution, and web-based engagement are used to modify components of the already planned intervention; importantly even at proposal stage most planning works go through (Virani, 2017).

However, even when the will is there and when engagement is conducted rigorously it is difficult to deliver strong and effective engagement with local communities (Larson, 2013). This paper argues that this is due to historically thinking of community as a linear and homogenous construct that must be hurdled in order to get on with the business of regeneration. Urban theorist Ash Amin's (2002) contention is that a recognition of 'multiple publics' (which will be discussed in the next section) is vital to understanding community from a policy standpoint. Larsen's (2013, p. 408) contention is similar - that in order for effective and efficient community participation in urban regeneration to happen there is 'a need for an approach that more respectfully acknowledges that local communities exist, before the urban regeneration project comes rolling in with all its processes, resources and publicly paid labour power'. This requires a type of community engagement that engages with existing local voluntary, community-based and market-based actors, but also a recognition of the limits to current engagement practice in England. Thus we must begin by asking whom makes up the community when we speak or think through processes of community engagement in a regeneration context.

Micro-communities:

Since the late 1970s London has been subject to large demographic, socio-cultural, and local economic changes brought about by associated social and economic forces tied to neoliberal globalisation. London is unique in this respect because, as Chris Hamnett (2003) argues, it represents a masterclass in wholesale gentrification. According to Glass (1973, p: 423 in Hamnett 2003, p: 2402):

> The real risk for Inner London is that it might well be gentrified with a vengeance, and be almost exclusively reserved for a selected higher class strata.

Hamnett's argument is that the reason for these shifts and rising gentrification is London's change in economic base from manufacturing to business services, finance and creative industries (see Virani, 2019). London is therefore a continuously changing city with multiple identities that manifest, evolve and shift over time. However, these multiple identities that shift also simultaneously leave behind remarkably resilient cultural resources, artefacts and assets that are central to local and hyperlocal

identities, to local communities. These resources or cultural artefacts are created and influenced by the multiple communities that infuse the ecologies of local areas and thus form an integral part of the identity of that place no matter how transient a city like London has become. Wallace (2010, p. 811) argues, a fundamental flaw in understanding community in regeneration policy is that the 'local can be an unstable site of social, cultural, economic and political exchange'. This means treating communities as linear, static entities risks misunderstanding them.

Writing in the aftermath of racial unrest that erupted in Northern England in the towns of Oldham, Bradford and Burnley during the spring and summer of 2001, Ash Amin (2002) questioned the efficacy of homogenous / linear communities. He also suggested that indeed this could be an underlying cause of these tensions. He suggested that many heterogeneous multi-ethnic communities exist side by side and do not descend into chaos and that the riots in Northern England showed that other factors played a part such as deprivation levels, segregation and distrust among youth cultures. Amin points out that the sense of suspicion and distrust that underpinned the civil unrest between the white working class community and their Pakistani and Bangladeshi neighbours in Northern England catalysed the divisions in these mixed neighbourhoods – meaning that an enforced homogeneity was counterproductive to real social and community cohesion.

Soon after, the Cantle Report (2001) was released and suggested that 'community cohesion' was central to alleviating the problems in these northern towns. The report suggested a number of steps to be taken to ensure community cohesion; these included: building common values, cultivating social capital, and ensuring place attachment and so on – in other words attempts at homogenising these areas. However, Amin points out that one of the features of these mixed communities is their heterogeneity; that it would be almost impossible (not to mention counter intuitive) to build a sense of community where the ingredients for a homogenous notion of community does not exist. This is because of things like strong diaspora links, a mobile resident population, and other forces that push against the possibility of homogeneity, especially in a globalised age. He states that these places are 'simply mixtures of social groups with varying intensities of local affiliation, varying reasons for local attachment, and varying values and cultural practices' (Amin, 2002, p. 17). He goes on to suggest that:

> These mixed neighbourhoods need to be accepted as the spatially open, culturally heterogeneous, and socially variegated spaces that they are, not imagined as future

cohesive or integrated communities. There are limits to how far community cohesion – rooted in common values, a shared sense of place and local networks of trust – can become the basis of living with difference in such neighbourhoods (Amin, 2002, p. 17).

Ash Amin describes the existence of a number of different types of what is being termed in this paper as 'micro-communities', that might or might not interact with each other but still share the same sense of place and urban space.

This paper argues that one of the many reasons underlying the difficulties in delivering community engagement is due to the fact that communities, especially in large urban areas, are made up of a number of different, overlaying and cross-cutting communities within communities with different narratives, different interests and different manifestations. This is not a new theoretical perspective as it consolidates what many scholars, from different fields and sub fields, have already observed (Amin, 2002; Larsen, 2013; Wallace, 2010, Savage et al. 2005). This paper is therefore consolidating a perspective which can be described as a 'micro-communities approach'. By focusing the analytical lens towards the urban, the local and in some cases the hyperlocal, and by expanding how we understand communities in a regeneration context , the premise of a micro-communities approach is as follows. Often times, and in large urban areas, communities are nested and entangled within each other, made up of what Ash Amin (2002) calls 'multiple publics' and what Mike Savage et al (2005) calls 'elective belonging' propelled by global and social forces such as multiculturalism, demographic change and globalisation. The notion of communities in these areas which are understood traditionally as one coherent entity paints an inaccurate picture. More often than not policy reinforces this linear view.

A micro-communities approach in urban policy focused on community engagement in regeneration contexts suggests that policy is aware of these differentials and targeted approaches become necessitated as they pertain to communities.   These different micro-communities within local areas can be exemplified in a number of ways. While Bailey (2010) essentially argues that voluntary and community organizations represent such a subset, this paper extends this to include other groups such as: small businesses (Leeth and Scott, 1989; Worthington et al. 2006), charities (Hassay and Peloza, 2009), different religious groups, specific ethnic minority groups, resident groups, age groups, interest groups (Virani, 2017) and so on.

As evidence of a micro-communities approach being used as an effective community engagement practice the next section will provide a case study of an intervention called the Chrisp Street Exchange (CSE) focused on Chrisp Street Market in London's East End. A community regeneration team in Poplar – Accents - have been able to develop effective ways to engage the small business micro-community in this part of East London which is under threat from rising property costs. While it is too soon to gauge the full impact of the CSE as an intervention, specific components have been able to engage the local business micro-community as well as encourage new local small businesses to relocate into the area. An important part of this process has been to understand what the barriers to engagement are for the small business micro-community in this part of east London. Using qualitative methods and 'on-the-ground work' (Steiner and Markantoni, 2013, p. 408) from the Chrisp Street Exchange programme, the paper presents empirical findings that help to understand what a micro-communities approach to community engagement in an urban regeneration context begins to look like.

Engaging with a small business micro-community: The case of Chrisp Street Market, East London

The analysis is derived from a programme of qualitative research and analysis that took place from June 2015 until July 2016. Primary data was collected through the use of in-depth interviews. Interviews were open-ended and lasted between 45 minutes and 1 hour and 30 minutes. They were undertaken with key personnel from Mayor of London regeneration team, London Borough of Tower Hamlets enterprise task group, Poplar HARCA housing association and registered social landlord for Chrisp Street, Accents team, older local business owners (established for longer than 20 years), new business owners (moved into Chrisp Street within the year), Chrisp Street Town Team, and London Small Business centre (LSBC). Secondary data was also used. Data collection included: Reviewing secondary literature pertaining to Chrisp Street Market's history (Kelley, 2015; Mayhew, 1851; Westergaard and Glass, 1954); reviewing web-based material pertaining to Chrisp Street Market (Parrington, 2011); reviewing planning and policy documents (LBTH, 2009, 2014; Mayor of London, 2014, 2015; Portas, 2011; SUM, 2014).

Background and context:

Chrisp Street Market is located in Poplar, East London, in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets (LBTH, 2009). It is a mix of older more established small businesses, market stall traders, a number of

retail outlets, new businesses, and more recently the creation of a co-working space. It also has a large service element including an Idea Store, police, and post office etc. It sits within the Lansbury Ward of Poplar and is representative of what many policy makers view as London's 'hidden markets' (Portas, 2011). According to one business owner who has been in the area since the 1960s, to those living in the Lansbury Ward, this market is central to their lives. Currently the Lansbury Ward has the highest unemployment rate in the borough at 18.8 per cent; significantly above the LBTH average of 12 per cent (LBTH, 2014). While it is considered a disadvantaged area, it is viewed as having a rich cultural heritage that goes back to the Victorian era with a strong history of local enterprise (LBTH, 2009).

The Chrisp Street Exchange (CSE) is an intervention aimed at the local small business 'micro-community' in Chrisp Street Market, East London. The CSE represents a policy intervention aimed at the changes that are currently sweeping through much of East London involving rising property prices that are threatening local small businesses and where markets are struggling to survive (Portas, 2011). The Accents team focuses on all elements of broad-based place making within the local housing association called Poplar HARCA who are the registered social landlord (RSL) for the market. The team is an important part of the multiple communities in Chrisp Street and is responsible for building cultural and enterprise capital locally to support their community regeneration focus – they are also the primary overseers of the CSE. The perceived need for interventions like the CSE by policy makers emerges from the work on specifically high street regeneration (Portas, 2011). According to a representative from the Mayor of London's regeneration team:

> High streets are really important in terms of London's economy. In 2010 we commissioned a study focusing on London's high streets (Mayor of London, 2014). What we found was there are over 600 high streets in London and two thirds of people live within a 5 minute walk from them. But also a huge number of small businesses are on the high street. They are vital to London in terms of identity, culture and the places where people come together. High streets and the small businesses that exist on them are indicative of London's overall health. London's sense of place is bound to the high street.

The overall funding of the CSE had much to do with prioritising the health of the high street in this part of East London due to the number of small, local businesses that populate the high street – or in this case the market. They make up most of the economic activity in the area. The business community here is emblematic of how high streets, and markets that feed high streets (Portas, 2011), are fundamental to the overall economic and cultural health of London.

As an enterprise-focused intervention the CSE has been designed to face three specific challenges: First, to ensure that the market is ready to benefit from the construction of over six hundred and fifty new homes in the local area as well as over one thousand new homes as part of the larger regeneration of Poplar. Many of these homes will be built on the actual site of Chrisp Street Market itself where two thirds of the market will be demolished and rebuilt, causing potentially great upheaval for the local residential and trading communities. The redevelopment, has just been given the greenlight and is several years in the making. Second, to ensure that as the market is redeveloped and demographic shift takes place, local businesses are equipped by having the capacity and support to grow alongside that change; and third, to encourage the creation of new small businesses and enterprise. In dealing with these three specific challenges it is anticipated that the CSE can act as a local support anchor for the local area as well as across this part of East London.

The challenge of micro-community engagement:

While there have been a number of themes that have emerged from the research, the issue of engaging with the micro-communities that make up the locality is significant. It is also much more of a concern amongst the small business micro-community that has been in the market longer. The initial challenge for Accents has involved facilitating ways to negotiate existing barriers to engagement. There are two overarching barriers to engagement within the small business micro-community in Chrisp Street. These barriers are: (1) a resistance to change by the older more established businesses due to unintended consequences of past policy, and (2) the after effects of a history of enforcement culture on primarily the market stall traders. These challenges are illustrative of parts of London that have historically evolved alongside redevelopment initiatives, like Chrisp Street, and the challenges associated with this. According to the Accents team an approach like this is necessary because the alternative is one which 'wipes away the local community and rebuilds from scratch'.

While many within the existent small business micro-community in Chrisp Street believe that the market could benefit from a change, there is resistance. Currently, many older businesses and market stall traders stay in business through a combination of local custom, subsidized rents, and sporadic business from outside of the market. A handful of older enterprises are very successful and have built reputations which make them sustainable; this is evidenced by the various pie and mash eateries in the market who have been in business since the 1960s at least. For the majority of older businesses in the market however, it is a 'hand to mouth' existence; this is the status quo and many have become accustomed to it. This mirrors the work conducted by Mathers et al. (2008) who show

that non participation occurs as a result of survival strategies that have been adopted away from the 'gaze of the state'.

In some cases this type of existence can be the result of past interventions and policy. For example, the rental rates for some of the older businesses are highly attractive. They are a legacy of past policy providing subsidised rents for less than perfect premises in order to encourage retention. In fact they are so attractive that businesses are de-incentivised to move out of the premises in order to grow. Whilst the provision of lower rents is conducive to relief and has benefitted some particular businesses, it can cause a cascade of stagnation in the market's business community as it prevents newer, early stage businesses from having access to cheap space. At the same time it removes the incentive for older businesses to grow and increase capacity. This results in blockages in the system, a legacy from past policy.

Another reason some older businesses are reluctant to change is due to information about when the wholesale regeneration of the area will in fact begin – this has now been confirmed to commence before the end of 2020. Regarding Chrisp Street there have been a few false starts, and because of this there is a reluctance to trust this information. To many, impending change may take years to commence. As a result some businesses refuse to upgrade equipment until the changes arrive. The reluctance to upgrading a business can sometimes lead to what has been termed 'planning blight' (Davies, 1972). Planning blight is understood as the reduction of economic activity or property values in a particular area resulting from expected or possible future development or restriction of development. Stagnation therefore is directly linked to diminishing capacity.

In Chrisp Street, the market stalls are owned by the council and not the housing association. The council have ramped up a long standing culture of enforcement. This was first recognised by the Town Team who were created as part of the Portas Pilot (2011) – the Portas Pilot was a study into the importance of the High Street in London and the pivotal role of markets. The creation of a 'Town Team' was the first recommendation given as part of the Portas Review. It essentially meant the creation of a 'visionary, strategic and strong operational management team for high streets' (p. 5). According to a member of the Town Team:

> Many of these traders have been slapped by an enforcement ethos that comes from ages of top down policy making. When we think about market traders we don't think of them as communities, they are enforced and given fixed penalty notices for transgressing over their borders. This is a culture of municipalism that has developed over ages.

Enforcement culture, especially if it has existed for generations, can have a lasting effect on contemporary market places and practices. This is because the lasting effect of enforcement is that traders become very protective and hyper aware of their boundaries – they become municipalised. An enforced boundary is more visible than one that is not enforced. Traders pay fees as well as penalties, and because of this a culture of entitlement and resentment has developed perpetuating divisions within the market's micro-communities. Complaints start to take the shape of questions about, for instance, how to break up boxes properly in order to avoid a penalty. According to the Town Team the initial challenge here is fundamentally about culture change, however this culture has a long history, going all the way back to costermongering in the Victorian era.

Chrisp Street's market stalls descended from costermongering. Costermongers were street sellers of fruit and vegetables during the Victorian era, in London and other British towns and were viewed by many as an important part of market life. However, according to Henry Mayhew (1851), they were seen as a lower class of street trader. They were viewed as a necessary nuisance, and were consistently policed by the establishment. Many of them were originally Jewish and Irish migrants. Costermongers developed a culture of resilience because they were enforced formally by the police but also informally by other traders.

This insight by the Town Team is an important one. While some might think that socio-cultural activities which took place in the past have no bearing on contemporary times, others believe that they leave a lasting legacy on the urban landscape and that they can become enshrined in the culture of that place. Koch and Latham (2011) state that urban public place-making happens over time. This place-making involves the activities of people and their environments, including how policy, past and present, might affect them. In the case of London's hidden markets the past is very much present in the day to day.

According to the Town Team member, East End markets and market traders are a resilient community, however this resilience is characterised in a number of ways: a distrust of outsiders, keeping your head down, and protecting your patch. This is the antithesis to engagement with what might be viewed as the establishment. When asked what can be done to ameliorate this the Town Team member stated that they should be treated as a community in their own right which is an example of a micro-community approach as it emerges.

Many see the market trade as a whole as 'a dying trade'; a sentiment that has been documented in John Parrington's short film on Chrisp Street Market (Parrington, 2011). The problem for

organisations like Accents is to balance how important markets are to the high street with how important it is for them to change if they want to survive the impending changes. This entails adapting away from solely retail oriented activity (SUM, 2014). This highlights a possible over reliance on the traditional retailing model adopted by most markets and brings into focus the need for upskilling. However, translating this need to market stall traders and the older business micro-community is a difficult prospect and a culture of enforcement and entrenched municipalism is not conducive to change. Thus engagement highlights a number of challenges in the market.

Accents team and engaging Chrisp Street's small business micro-community:

It is still too early to gauge the full impact of the Chrisp Street Exchange (CSE). However, regarding the fundamental issue of community engagement there are a number of components of the CSE that have the potential to break down these aforementioned barriers to engagement and build trust. Through (1) facilitating network building, (2) enhancing local capacity, and (3) making business support a part of the market, the CSE is proving an effective engagement intervention.

Building networks is an effective way of creating a community but it also enhances local community capacity by providing access to each other where access may not have existed before (Honig, 1998). It is also an effective way of 'curating' a community to ensure that capacity is enabled and embedded and not stifled. Importantly there is an understanding, within the Accents team specifically, about the types of businesses that they would like to see populate the market. This essentially protects the market from the usual suspects that end up occupying important enterprise space in many redeveloped localities such as betting shops, bars, and large fast food chains. It also illustrates an understanding of the local small business micro-community by having policy that recognises the importance and uniqueness of this micro-community and their multiple contributions to the locality. Thus encouraging new enterprises that continue to contribute to the market, as well as engage with the community, is critical and central to Accent's curatorial role. Utilising network building to achieve this seems to be effective.

The Poplar and Bow Enterprise Network (PBEN) is a component of the CSE that focuses on creating a community through network building. The PBEN also 'communicates the type of support that exists' for the local area according to Accents. There are three specific functions of the PBEN: first, putting on networking events where the local business micro-community can listen to talks given by experienced entrepreneurs as well as themselves; second, providing mentoring opportunities matching early stage businesses to growth stage businesses; third and probably most importantly, allowing the business micro-community to get to know itself. This type of network building opens

roads to community building while at the same time placing Accents at the centre of it as curators but also as catalysts. This can empower newer businesses by helping them build capacity which subsequently establishes trust from the start. It also allows for an understanding of the challenges that exist within the older community without doing large scale community consultations which can be costly, inaccurate and sometimes biased by focusing on one micro-community as opposed to others. Networking becomes the mechanism for capacity building as well as continuous access to the Accents team. Importantly, facilitating the PBEN accentuates and deepens the Accents team's knowledge of their small business micro-community.

An important aspect of knowing a local area's business micro community is knowing the range of business activity that exists. Importantly, according to a member of the enterprise task group at LBTH, increasing the number and range of employment opportunities is now a priority in the borough. Thus, implementing a strategy that facilitates networking opportunities and identifies business sectors can inform a vision for the future. This is an example of how community engagement like this is effective. For instance, Accents has identified 'food' as a potential growth sector in Chrisp Street. Identifying sector activity and potential growth areas is essential to the work of the CSE, and PBEN facilitates this by providing support and looking for opportunities to attract new businesses.

Curating the types of business in the market is also about building and developing nascent local capacity. The older businesses in the market of course have natural social capital, longstanding systems and processes of doing this. However the kind of social capital needed to future proof the market and ensure engagement revolves around attracting new businesses. New businesses and a younger entrepreneurial community brings with it new capital, new ideas and new energy. This can make Chrisp Street attractive to production oriented sectors emblematic of the new economy epitomized by small scale digital start-ups, new light manufacturing and the like, which east London is particularly well known for. This goes hand in hand with future proofing local economic growth and in market areas it means a move away from being reliant on retailing (Portas, 2011). This goes to the heart of supporting capacity building here.

Thus the Accents team in particular, recognise the importance of establishing an area that is friendly to new enterprise and that enhances the market's identity as opposed to undermining it. The standard gentrification discourse is usually drawn upon here (Atkinson and Bridge, 2004) and what differentiates what is happening in Chrisp Street with what has happened elsewhere in east London, is the recognition by Accents and others that the market and a culture of local small businesses has always been in Chrisp Street and cannot be dispensed with.

According to Chaskin (1999), community capacity is contingent on access to resources. In this case while a formidable task, it is not enough to create a network of small businesses – these networks have to have access to resources behind them. In this case, capacity building includes the provision of business support which has the secondary benefit of providing opportunities for upskilling; especially important in bringing markets into the digital age. The CSE provides business support through an Enterprise Growth Programme (EGP) which supports one hundred and fifty five businesses locally, including start-ups. The delivery encompasses the use of two external organisations: Pop – Up Business School (PUBS), and the London Small Business Centre (LSBC).

PUBS deliver sessions on the fundamentals of running a business, as well as bespoke one-to-one services for businesses. PUBS also focus on how enterprise can help change a community. They have been influential in helping newer and more established businesses in the market. They also help older businesses who may not be actively engaging with new digital tools that exist for business growth and sustainability. They are effective at providing upskilling in the community. LSBC also deliver a significant part of the CSE. Their model is based on business support for small businesses and start-ups. They provide advice, loans of up to £50,000, one-to-one sessions, and general support.

As is evident using external organisations that specialise in business support activities to deliver specific parts of the CSE is an important way of attending to the needs of the business micro community in Chrisp Street. It brings these support services to the area. According to Accents 'partnerships like these mirror the capacity-building that the CSE is set up to do'. This delivers routes to upskilling. It does this by: first, concentrating on those who are genuinely interested in starting their own businesses and linking them to PUBS, and then provides the opportunity to build networks through the PBEN while at the same time gaining real support from LSBC as well as Accents. Specifically, the combination of these particular organisations and support structures facilitates the consolidation of ideas, interests, and community targets, allows for formal and informal support provided by being connected to a business community while at the same time knowing the community, and provides the learning of important business skills whilst providing real apparatuses for growth and sustainability in terms of accessing loans, one-on-one advice, and sometimes mentoring. It essentially provides a non-prescriptive course of support and growth; all of which builds trust and lowers barriers to further community engagement.

Summary:

In summary the small business micro community here is fragmented along the lines of how long they have been present in the market. Older businesses and market traders face issues of stagnation, whereas younger ones have needs around business support, and all have challenges around upskilling and being overly reliant on retailing. Curating the environment, as the Accents team is doing, allows for the lowering of barriers to micro-community engagement through the facilitation of trust in order to enact changes that will hopefully benefit the enterprise micro-community. This entails moving the market away from being heavily reliant on retailing.

What the work that Accents are doing shows is that a micro-perspective must be at the fore of identifying the challenges while at the same time designing-in the solutions to meet those specific challenges. For instance, keeping the market free from large chains allows competition to be low and provides breathing room to other small businesses in the area; providing small businesses access to PUBS and the LSBC as well as the networks grown through the PBEN.

What is also markedly prevalent is how Accents negotiates the tension between paving the way for wholesale change while trying to ensure that the small business micro-community can survive this change. Housing Associations like Poplar HARCA are in a peculiar position in the context of regeneration and they seem to sit as quasi-private organisations as identified by Paul Watt. According to David Mullins (2010) there are a number of different types of housing associations in England. They can differ along the lines of scale, type of activity as well as whether or not they choose to be closer to community based organisations or not. According to Mullins (2010) smaller housing associations seem to have more affinity with the wider third sector whereas larger ones are in a better position to 'exploit the opportunities that have been created to operate "between state and market" with a degree of relative autonomy through hybrid financial models that enable commercial surpluses to be generated and distributed to social goals in an approach that may be seen as akin to corporate social responsibility (either implicit or explicit)' (P:06). They are acutely aware of the need to deliver social and financial returns which can often times be at odds with each other.

The Accents team are tasked with delivering local support but at the same time preparing the area for change and wholesale regeneration. This essentially places Accents in-between the global forces of market driven area-based regeneration and community engagement processes that benefit the numerous micro-communities in Chrisp Street. This exemplifies the tension between neoliberal urban policy and communitarian approaches to community engagement that they must negotiate,

and indeed what current urban policy must also negotiate. While Accents can embark on the numerous facets of their intervention the overarching message is that change is coming and there is not much anyone can do to halt that change. The machinations of global capital seem to supersede localities. That being said, Accents have been able to work with and assist the small business micro-community. They have put in place a package of support that fits the unique and specific challenges associated with being located in Chrisp Street Market.

Conclusion:

This paper contributes to the debates around community engagement in a regeneration context. Its primary concern has been how traditional uses of the concept of community have been utilised in a way that reinforces potentially inaccurate and linear representations of community. This paper uses a micro-communities approach to frame the empirical work. A micro-communities perspective consolidates work by scholars such as Amin (2002), Bailey (2010), Larsen (2013), and Wallace (2010). The paper provides evidence of the effectiveness of this approach through a case study of the Chrisp Street Exchange in east London. The CSE as an intervention focuses on the small business and enterprise micro-community, including the market traders, in Chrisp Street Market as a way to future proof the market from impending regeneration as well as a way to upskill the market's tenants in the face of these changes. This represents a micro-perspective as it hones in on a particular community within the larger Chrisp Street community and addresses problems that are specific to that particular group.

Community engagement as it is understood in regeneration is not easy to deliver under any circumstances. The literature shows that whether the engagement route is more consultative than engagement oriented or if it is deeply engagement oriented challenges arise. Understanding it as a process rather than an exercise that has a fixed start and end date is a useful first lesson. However within the changing political and policy landscapes which inform and affect urban regeneration policy it is important to recognise where a change in approach needs to happen. In the case of community engagement, changes have been incremental since the 1980s and have generally travelled in a trajectory towards favouring more local community engagement. The current era is proof of this and sees a number of initiatives adopting this type of approach whether termed 'deep engagement' or 'hyper localism' or indeed a 'micro-communities approach' the writing seems to be on the wall. This paper adds to a growing consensus it seems, especially from the frontline, that treating communities as linear constructs that need to be bypassed in order to embark on

regeneration projects will have unfavourable outcomes. Attending to the nuance of 'community' and resisting its instrumentalisation are important roads towards a more fair planning policy culture.

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