

*Latina-
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Supporting migrant and
ethnic economies through
regeneration in London



Supporting migrant and ethnic economies through regeneration in London: Lessons from community research, activism and campaigning with Latin Elephant

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Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Department of Geography at King's College London for funding the research and data collection around lessons learnt on which much of this report is based. We are also grateful to our funders during this period: United St Saviour's Charity, Trust for London, Southwark Council, Awards for All, The London Community Foundation via London Funders, National Lottery Fund, Loughborough University Enterprise Fund, Royal Society for the Arts (RSA). We are grateful for the continued in-kind support we receive from Peabody Trust. Many thanks to all our partners and collaborators throughout the process of gathering meaningful data: Soledad Muniz, Insight Share; Ingrid Guyon, Fotosynthesis; Luise Vormittag, UoA; Simon Parris, South London Gallery; Catalina Ortiz, UCL-Bartlett; Julia Ferrari, Julia Ferrari Web Design; Simon Salvador, Petit Elephant; Xavier Lewis Rodriguez, Bridging to the future; Sally Causer and Harpreet Aujla at Southwark Law Centre; Cara Courage and Jane Wells at Tate Exchange; Synthia Griffin at Tate Modern. A big shout out to our past and present volunteers Joselyne Contreras, Alice Chilangwa Farmer, Talia Clarick, Ruth Paterson, Sophie Rebeca Wall, Corin Chaplin, Nicola Hill, Silvia Rothlisberger, Ana Milena Arias Aldana, Cate Trejos, Lorena Raigoso, Veronica Posada. To the indispensable knowledge we gain from community groups and leaders: Jerry Flynn from 35% Campaign; Chris Jones, Southwark Notes; Richard Lee, Just Space; Tanya Murat, Up the Elephant. A big thank you to our past and current Trustees: Katie Wright, Jorge Saavedra-Utman, Carolina Velasquez, Lucila Granada. And last and not least to all the traders that trusted us to work with them during these difficult times.

Introduction

After 55 years, Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre closed its doors for the final time on 24 September 2020. This was not without a fight. This was not without a range of local organisations working in partnership to mitigate the worst effects of the closure. Latin Elephant, a London based charity that promotes participation, engagement and inclusion of migrant and ethnic groups, and in particular Latin Americans, in processes of urban change and supporting BAME traders, residents and workers, has been a key player in this. This report provides some insights and lessons learned into the processes of fighting for fair regeneration processes.

Regeneration in London is taking place in deprived boroughs where there is a high proportion of diverse ethnic populations. Minority ethnic groups and businesses are hence disproportionately affected (Román-Velázquez and Hill, 2016). Spaces long inhabited by migrant populations are being lost as a result of intensive regeneration projects, contributing to further isolation, displacement, lack of ownership and sense of belonging to the place they call home.

Empowering local communities in the face of the transformation of places to encourage a greater sense of belonging, and the development of locally-sensitive policy frameworks for urban

regeneration in London, are testament to the centrality of businesses, places and people in visions and aspirations for London as a global city. Yet, there is little understanding of how BAME groups organize and campaign around issues of gentrification and urban regeneration. All too often these groups are regarded as ‘radicals’ and their evidence dismissed as mere anecdotal. Their campaigns become oppositional tools from which to fight their ‘right to the city’ and their right to a culture. The gulf between land as an economic resource worth exploiting and land as a community asset reduces any opportunity for dialogue and engagement of grassroots groups in the planning process. Participation in the planning process is either patchy or rejected altogether. The choice between protest and participation in the planning process leads to new forms of urban activism where rights, culture and identity take centre stage in claims over the right to the city. More research is needed to understand what mechanisms are in place to guarantee participation of BAME groups in the planning process and the strategies deployed by community campaigning in response to such processes.

In this context, Latin Elephant has conducted qualitative and quantitative research to substantiate planning objections by ensuring transparency and accountability. It has also been auditing the relocation strategy developed by Southwark Council

and developers Delancey in the redevelopment process. Latin Elephant has also generated rich ethnographic material through participatory methodologies to engage diverse local groups in London and uncover the realities and experiences of those most at risk of displacement. The aim is to inform urban policy and build knowledge around a community of grassroots campaigning in the area. Latin Elephant's work addresses systemic inequalities embedded in the planning system with their work highlighted by local and national government, local organisations and professional bodies.

However, little attention has been given to the specific role of community groups in these processes. Community groups have first-hand experience about the impact that regeneration has on the neighbourhoods where they live, and are often more trusted than local politicians, councils and developers. They play a crucial information provider role for the community. They can scrutinise developers' plans, raise community awareness about issues and help organise community responses (Gonzalez, 2016). Community groups initiate campaigns and produce a wealth of information and collective action to support arguments about the negative impacts of regeneration on the communities they represent or form part of. Grassroots and voluntary sector organisations produce, present and generate material to convince authorities of the impact that regeneration might have upon their neighbourhoods and livelihoods. They also use this evidence to present their cases for a fairer, just and more inclusive community-led regeneration. However, these groups are invariably largely resource poor, staffed by volunteers, in contrast to the developers and local councils. The wealth of knowledge and experience brought to light by community groups is often dismissed as 'anecdotal' in policy forums. Engaging often disparate communities, with different interests, to engage with and respond often results in internal divisions

and fragmentation, weakening their position even further and falling prey to the whims of developers who tend to isolate them as the development takes shape.

Thus, the purpose of this report is to shed light on the approach of Latin Elephant and our experiences working directly with groups impacted by a form of regeneration that excludes BAME and other economically disadvantaged groups in processes of urban change. In this report we consider the role that research, community activism and protest have to play in our search for social and spatial justice around gentrification in London.

However, as noted above, we need to acknowledge that the shopping centre closed its doors in September 2020 compounding already high levels of anxiety created by the COVID-19 pandemic. Traders at Elephant and Castle (EC) were already losing income due to decreasing levels of footfall in the shopping centre, and have been concerned about their relocation, with approximately 40 of the 97 independent traders still without a retail site to move to.¹ As of October 2020 most of the market traders have not been relocated. Latin Elephant submitted a proposal² for their relocation and has been in conversations with Southwark Council to find a suitable relocation site for them. If market traders are relocated the figure will drop significantly. The sudden closure of businesses and loss of their only source of income is generating considerable levels of distress. With the onset of the pandemic, Latin Elephant rapidly accommodated to the changing circumstances to support traders and employees we have been working with. If anything, our work has increased due to the unprecedented demand from increasing numbers of people from outside Southwark. In this report we therefore draw on lessons learnt from this pandemic as well as the closure of the shopping centre.

¹ Please refer to: <https://latinelephant.org/map/>

² Please refer to: <https://latinelephant.org/elephant-castle-relocation-proposal/>

Context and background

As a charity, the aim of Latin Elephant is to advocate against the displacement of BAME groups in regeneration projects, and to call for social and spatial justice in urban spaces with a specific but not exclusive focus on the Elephant and Castle area in Southwark in London. Indeed, as a borough, Southwark has a very significant proportion of BAME residents, with 46% belonging to a migrant and ethnic background (LBS, 2017), compared to London's 41% and UK's 14% (ONS, 2011). Southwark is the London borough with the second highest number of Latin Americans in London, representing 9% of the total population, only surpassed by the London Borough of Lambeth with 10% (McIlwaine and Bunge, 2016: 17). This should also be contextualised within the fact that Latin Americans are the second fastest growing non-EU migrant population in the city. According to this research that analyses the most recent census of 2011, two thirds of Latin Americans have arrived in the UK since 2000, representing the eighth largest non-UK born population in London. Although employment rates are high at 70% with 90% of working age, around half work in low-paid elementary, service, caring and processing jobs with marked concentrations in the cleaning sector. This is despite half of Latin Americans having some form of university level education (ibid. 15). According to an earlier study drawing on a survey with over 1000 Latin Americans in London, 11% earned less than the National Minimum Wage, which is 10 times higher than the national rate, with around

half earning less than the London Living Wage (McIlwaine, Cock and Linneker, 2011: 65).

Economically, socially and culturally, the Elephant and Castle area of Southwark has been central for Latin Americans as a community. 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). Indeed, the *No Longer Invisible* research found that 85 percent of Latin Americans in London visited Latin American shopping areas such as Elephant and Castle, with a rate of 87% among Colombians. This commonly involved visiting restaurants, buying cooking ingredients, and sending money home; indeed, 70% of Latin Americans who remitted money did so from Latin American service points (McIlwaine, Cock and Linneker, 2011).

The Latin American presence in the Elephant and Castle core area comprises four clearly identified zones: Elephant and Castle shopping centre, the Arches in Elephant Road, the Arches in Maldonado Walk (inaugurated on 10th Feb 2018, previously known as Eagle's Yard) and Tiendas del Sur in Newington Butts. A survey by Román-Velázquez in 2016³ and 2017 revealed a total of 96 and 94 shops (respectively) in

³ [Latin American Businesses in Elephant and Castle](#)

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 (Román-Velázquez and Hill, 2016; Román-Velázquez and Retis, 2020). This represents a sharp increase in the number of shops registered at the 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. Latin Elephant's survey shows that 72% are of Colombian origin and relatively young, with 77% born in the 1960s or thereafter. A significant proportion (41%) of businesses at EC are owned by women.



Photo: Protest

Elephant and Castle: a long history of 'regeneration'

The Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre opened in 1965 as one of the first American style indoor shopping malls in the UK and Europe, offering more than 100 shops in a three-story building and having immediate access to railway and tube stations. Now home to a cluster of Latin American businesses, the shopping centre has been recognised as an important Latin Quarter in London, as business owners and staff members are of ethnically diverse backgrounds and cater to a diverse clientele, many of whom have migrated from Latin America or are of a second generation Latin American background.

The Elephant and Castle area has been undergoing an intensive regeneration programme for almost over a decade, notably the highly controversial Elephant Park scheme on the site of the former Heygate Estate and the planned new town centre at the site of the Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre, with another 24 projects either underway or in the pipeline in the Elephant and Castle Opportunity area.

The closure, demolition and replacement of the shopping centre will result in the displacement and relocation of the current traders into different sites within the area. The scheme has received criticism and scrutiny from Latin Elephant, local communities, resident associations and campaigning groups due to a perceived

lack of genuine affordable housing, inadequate business relocation strategy and wider concerns of gentrification.

The Elephant and Castle Town Centre development presented by private developers Delancey consists of:⁴

- 979 housing units of which 116 will be socially rented and managed by Southwark Council
- A new underground entrance and ticket halls to the Northern Line
- A new building for London College of Communication, UAL
- Approximately 170,000sqf of commercial space
- 10% affordable retail space with first refusal option given to existing independent traders currently at the EC shopping centre.
- New pedestrian routes and public realm improvements

The number of socially rented housing and affordable retail space were concessions gained by local campaign groups - with Latin Elephant and 35% Campaign playing a crucial role in the opposition and committee hearings.

⁴ <https://elephantandcastletowncentre.co.uk>

It is within this context that migrant and ethnic traders are vulnerable, at risk of displacement and of losing their only source of income and livelihoods. Our work concentrates in Elephant and Castle where approximately 130 small and micro businesses are directly or indirectly affected by the EC Town Centre Development in the Borough of Southwark (Planning Application 16/AP/4458)⁵ and the vast majority of these are of migrants.



Photo: Castle Square

⁵ <http://planbuild.southwark.gov.uk/documents/?casereference=16%2fAP%2f4458&system=DC>

Lessons learnt from Latin Elephant's work at elephant and castle



Photo 1: Traders at a migrant and ethnic business readiness workshop in partnership with Bridging to the Future, 2017

In order to achieve social justice, our approach has focused on stimulating agency among those people who are affected and negatively impacted by the development. Listening to their voices and amplifying these was important and strategic; but more so was encouraging their participation in planning forums and strategic meetings with local government officials, elected members

(Southwark Council) and developers; and other public gatherings for raising awareness. Latin Elephant uses a bottom-up approach that includes knowledge-sharing, the visibilization of underrepresented traders, and their participation in planning forums with robust arguments. It is about encouraging resilience, confidence, empowerment and agency (see photos 1 and 2).

This would not have been possible were it not for all those who have contributed to our work and for a united community campaign coalition. Below we outline some of the lessons learnt in working with different partners and areas of work.

Working with BAME traders

Working with BAME traders has been at the core of Latin Elephant's work. Initial research was published in *The case for London's Latin Quarter: Retention, growth and sustainability* (Roman-Velazquez and Hill, 2016). In 2017, Latin Elephant launched the [Migrant and Ethnic Business Readiness Programme](#), a unique programme targeted at addressing the specific needs of BAME traders under stress because of regeneration. This section draws on the experiences and lessons learnt from this programme.

Traders' intersectional experiences

For BAME traders, starting their own businesses has been a lifelong dream and has meant

successfully overcoming many hurdles. We have heard numerous distressing accounts of the challenges of migration and settlement. Many challenges have revolved around making ends meet and securing an income in multiple low-paid and low-skilled jobs with exploitative working conditions. A large majority of BAME traders started out in the cleaning industry - with no employment rights, no contractual sick pay, and a lack of dignified and safe conditions - being paid less than the London Living Wage. Starting their own businesses has often been described as a journey from humble beginnings to self-empowerment. From daily 4am starts in the cleaning sector to running a successful business, generating employment, serving the community and being an integral element of multicultural Southwark and London.



Photo 2: Market traders delivering alternative sites for outdoor market pitches - October 2020

Box 1: Johanna's Journey

Johanna Alvarez is the owner of Ivany Store at The Elephant Mall, Unit 7 Farrell Court (photo 3). Johanna is 30 years of age and she has been running her business for nearly two and a half years. Ivany Store offers a variety of goods and services, including selling beauty products and clothes, CDs and DVDs amongst other items and money remittance services to Latin America.

Before opening her shop, Johanna worked tirelessly in two jobs including in the cleaning and retail sector as a shop assistant in the Elephant and Castle area. Johanna is a single mother of a three- year old girl. Her daughter is called Ivany and she named her shop after her daughter's name. Three years ago, she became unemployed. Things became quite challenging for Johanna as she needed to meet both hers and her daughter's basic needs. Full time cleaning was her first available option of income, but Johanna wanted to pursue her dream of being an independent woman managing her own business and time. Johanna managed to access some capital and used her savings to open her shop at The Elephant Mall.

Johanna Alvarez tells us that she is concerned about the future and the uncertainty of her business and the investment she has made. She is concerned about the future of Arch 7 as she has heard that it could be up for demolition from the Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre development.

“ I am concerned, and I am trying to stock less as I don't want to end up with a lot of products in storage”. I want to have more certainty and clarity about the future, and I am very grateful to Latin Elephant for helping me improve my business and understand the situation and my options with the Shopping Centre Development. ”

In the summer of 2020, she participated in an online meeting with other traders, Latin Elephant and Southwark Council to find solutions to existing problems with accessing government grants due to Covid-19. Johanna participated actively in the meeting and sent Latin Elephant an uplifting message: “Natalia and Santiago: Thank you because after all they can't say we are invisible, we are here, and unity makes us stronger”.



Photo 3: Johanna Alvarez, owner of Ivany Store at The Elephant Mall, Unit 7 Farrell Court, Elephant Rd, 2019

Setting up and running a successful business as a sole trader has its challenges, especially as many are breadwinners juggling long working hours and family commitments. As a consequence, traders often have limited availability for engagement with external activities. In the early stages of the Migrant and Ethnic Business Readiness Programme we adapted our implementation to respond to the needs of traders following extensive consultation. For example, running workshops outside of working hours and providing childcare at our events.

Even though 44% of Latin American owned shops are led by women, when it comes to participating in forums like Council deputations and the Traders Panel, male traders tend to dominate the floor. When collective demands are advocated, women tend to lead but usually have to navigate this in a heavily male-dominated environment. Strong women voices are present, but given the sexist environment and/or caring responsibilities

they tend to be less visible in the more formal forums. This reflects wider challenges within the community around gender norms. Other studies have shown that Latin American women's more prominent economic roles can lead to tensions within relationships as men can feel undermined when women work and potentially earn more than them. This is especially marked when women own businesses or when women and men work alongside each other in cleaning work. It has been shown that some men feel the need to compensate for their perceived emasculation which can result in domestic violence or exaggerated displays of masculinity (McIlwaine, Cock and Linneker, 2011; McIlwaine, 2010, 2020).

Latin Elephant's work with traders is intersectional and crucial to addressing discrimination. Our opposition to Elephant and Castle's Town Centre planning application drew on our work with traders to argue that the development had a disproportionate impact on BAME groups, older populations and women.

Approaches to working with BAME traders: sharing, trust and representation

Gaining trust amongst traders and local groups is paramount for our work and it goes hand-in-hand with our achievements. This allowed us to convince traders of the importance of attending meetings with the Council and developers, despite their initial mistrust. Traders are best placed to explain and talk about their demands and issues - Latin Elephant can only summarise these. It was also crucial for our involvement in the local campaign - for us, it was important to learn how to deal with divided interests. Always in support of the campaign but not necessarily always in agreement with all actions or approaches. Where dissent amongst traders was apparent, Latin Elephant remained neutral. This was the case regarding the Judicial Review (JR) against the Planning Committee's decision to grant planning permission. Latin Elephant did a consultation with traders, which involved surveying, talking to traders one to one, and walking around the centre to collate feelings and tap into their views on the JR and other issues about the campaign.

An essential part of this process has been our bottom-up horizontal approach. During the consultation period we organised and delivered a free workshop in collaboration with Southwark Law Centre entitled: 'Demystifying the planning process', attended by over 20 traders many of whom submitted their own objections to improve the quality of the scheme. Some participants later highlighted how 'constructive' and 'valuable to understand the ways to get involved in planning' the workshop was.

Upon delivery of this workshop, Latin Elephant used mapping techniques to build a database with information on the rent levels, location and use classes of the businesses within the development area. Based on such evidence, at Planning Committee on January 9th 2019, we negotiated substantial improvements for

temporary units at Castle Square in relation to: a) reduction of 33% in rent proposed by the developer for single and double units over the 5 years, which represents net savings of £8,198 for single units and £16,391 for double units; b) longer hours of operation for businesses, extending it until 11pm; c) improvements in the quality of units, with commitment for extra windows for traders to display items; d) better access for disabled people as the original plans did not provide lifts.

These findings were shared with the wider public in the form of an [interactive map on Latin Elephant's website](#), as part of our awareness-raising strategy that includes knowledge-sharing, visibilization of underrepresented traders, and engagement with local residents, researchers, journalists and other campaigns throughout the UK. This case study illustrates the role that research, community activism and protest have all played in achieving changes and gains for traders impacted negatively by the development.

This holistic approach has also led to ensuring greater transparency and accountability in the redevelopment process, as well as auditing the relocation strategy envisioned by Southwark Council and developers for BAME independent businesses rooted in the area.

What worked

- Gaining the trust of traders and local communities
- Working closely with traders to understand first hand their challenges
- Working closely with experts and local organisations
- Concerted media efforts
- Adopting a holistic approach in our work and research

Challenges and barriers

- Addressing and responding to diverse and at times divided interests amongst traders

Box 2: Castle Square application

To raise awareness and increase traders' participation in planning, Latin Elephant holds workshops to brief traders and residents on upcoming developments and to organise businesses to respond to planning proposals.

Latin Elephant has a history of bringing local businesses together and advocating for the importance of planning: during 2017 and 2018, we delivered a series of free workshops focused on the Migrant & Ethnic Business Readiness Programme including topics such as employment rights, settlement schemes and urban planning, in which around 100 traders participated and resulted in four micro business support guides covering commercial leases, employer's duties, building an online presence, and models for business planning.

In December 2018, as a result of the advocacy for more affordable retail space for displaced traders the relocation facility Castle Square (temporary retail market for 25-30 traders) was put forward by developers Delancey. This planning application was a condition to approve the £3 billion EC scheme, meaning that if this new facility was rejected the redevelopment wouldn't go ahead.

The challenge Latin Elephant and traders faced when the application was submitted was the lack of information and transparency. For example, the information provided was vague and lacked precision on the total number of businesses that could be relocated, unit sizes and even rent levels.

To tackle these issues, we had to carry out our own independent research, consisting of creating a database that could register the existing conditions of the independent traders (focused on unit sizes and rent levels) to compare these with the new provisions on offer.

Achieving this task would have been impossible without our continuous presence and direct support and contact with traders and the local community creating a bond of trust with the traders.

Through direct engagement with affected traders and exchange of privileged information, and thorough fieldwork and remote analysis, Latin Elephant surveyed and mapped all the different businesses (and uses) in the shopping centre, allowing us to substantiate demands and quantify the objections to Castle Square application before Southwark Council. It is important to note that the trust from traders is not built overnight; it was built up through hours, days, weeks and months of open conversations and advocacy work.

- Convincing traders of the importance of participating in planning forums
- Addressing and responding to traders' individual circumstances around trading hours and caring responsibilities which limited participation at workshops, meetings and planning committee meetings.

Research to inform policy - Planning Gains

Latin Elephant has been at the forefront of putting race and migration on the agenda for wider engagement and understandings around gentrification. We have consistently argued that there is a gap between migrant and ethnic economies and urban planning policies and that developer-led regeneration disproportionately impacts migrant and ethnic groups and the working poor (Román-Velázquez and Hill, 2016).

Latin Elephant gained recognition for migrant and ethnic economies in the London Plan⁶ in 2015, and we built on this to make sure it was noted at Borough levels. Our evidence and work were noted by the community of traders and local and regional groups we worked with but also by national, regional and local ethnic media. This argument was later noted by the Town and Country Planning Association in their report [London - Planning for a Just City? Exploring how local planning authorities are embedding equality and inclusion in planning policy](#), in which Latin Elephant was selected as a case study for good practice around the inclusion of BAME groups in the planning process.

⁶ London Plan 2016 – Policy 4.8 Supporting a successful and diverse retail sector and related facilities and services page 171-172 – Policy 4.8/B/g/viii – 'Potential to realise the economic benefits of London's diversity'. Available at: <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/london-plan/current-london-plan/london-plan-chapter-four-londons-economy/polic-6>

The Elephant and Castle Town Centre application, one of the most ambitious, in Southwark's history was first deferred and rejected at the Planning Committee meeting (30 January 2018) for not being policy compliant. We have advocated for a development that was policy compliant and for greater rights and mitigation strategies to compensate traders and customers of BAME background, who are set to be negatively impacted by this development. The rejection and deferral of this application at the end of January 2018 has made possible further negotiations to guarantee more gains for traders, even though the application is still not policy compliant. The communities of Elephant and Castle demanded a deal based on social justice for Elephant's most disadvantaged communities. Latin Elephant, with other community groups, have been clear since the beginning that we did not oppose development, rather, we opposed this development because it did not bring tangible benefits for the local community, made up of traders and regular customers and locals who are disproportionately affected by regeneration.

We have produced a series of reports (in house research and with partner academics and experts - listed in participatory methodologies section) in order to strengthen our arguments and produce robust evidence to inform planning policy and to achieve gains for migrant and ethnic traders negatively impacted by EC development.

What worked

- Working together with regional organisations to gain space that we could otherwise not have gained.
- Working towards a common goal and in the spirit of collaboration
- Acknowledging each other's strength and building on that to produce evidence
- Working with academics and experts in addressing gaps in our data to produce robust evidence that would support our arguments.

Challenges and barriers

- A thirst for protagonism and authorship from locally elected councillors
- Advocating for payment from third party organisations or partners in fulfilling their projects.
- Protecting organisations and partners who worked with us from harassment, disruption or challenges to their work
- Convincing authorities that presenting evidence to support our arguments is not adversarial but our responsibility in our search for social justice.

Participatory methodologies for social justice

At Latin Elephant we use collaborative participatory research techniques to map and register the contribution and aspirations of those traders that are impacted by this development. We also use participatory research methods to strengthen community voices and raise awareness of the contribution that Latin American and other migrant and ethnic traders have made to the area using a range of multimedia formats.

Latin Elephant delivered 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 has a strong research and policy component with participatory workshops using video, photography, urban design and mapping techniques. Latin Elephant 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 and use it as evidence in our opposition to the planning application. The results and outcomes of these were 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 [The case for London's Latin Quarter: Retention, growth, sustainability](#) (Román-Velázquez and Hill, 2016).

Throughout the consultation period from 2014 up to 2018, Latin Elephant organised a series of events, workshops and activities, which included: the video [London's Latin Quarter](#); a photography project with BAME traders entitled [London's Latin Quarter and its people](#); a ten session participatory video and photography workshop under the name [My Latin Elephant](#), which led to [Ser Latinx en Elephant / Being Latin in Elephant](#) a public exhibition and video; a participatory urban design workshop with UCL students to explore alternative relocation sites for traders, the results of which were published in the report [Participatory workshop in the context of the Elephant and Castle Town Centre Regeneration plan](#); a series of design workshops to capture everyday use of the shopping centre entitled [Recorriendo Elefante / Walking the Elephant](#); and we were also community partners in the exhibition [Under the same sun: Art from Latin America today](#).

The activities, workshops, documents and materials we gathered throughout the process contributed to raise awareness and increased participation of traders, BAME groups and a wider group of people in discussions about regeneration. It opened up dialogues across different populations and groups across London who were / are facing similar circumstances. They highlighted the importance of business clusters such as those in Elephant and Castle for not just providing specialist goods at affordable prices, but being important meeting points and contributing to the social and cultural diversity of the area. Some of this material was presented as evidence to support our arguments about the need to recognise the value of migrant and ethnic economies in London's most deprived and ethnically diverse boroughs, particularly in those experiencing intense regeneration.

What worked

- Sharing skills and raising awareness of the issues whilst also producing evidence to support our work.
- Heightened interest and attention by members of the community and local, regional, national and international media.
- Bottom-up approach that included knowledge-sharing, the visibilization of underrepresented traders, and their participation in planning forums and wider community discussions and activities.

Challenges and barriers

- Encouraging traders to participate – requiring considerable labour time not just through emails, leaflets, but also knocking door-to-door, reminding them on the day, sometimes just a few hours before the event.

Working with universities and academics

As with other voluntary organisations we also engage and work with London-based universities, academics and their students to supplement some of our work and community engagement initiatives.

There is a difference in working for the ultimate goal of producing knowledge for knowledge's sake and to achieve a change whether this be systemic or more micro level – personal or socially based.

What worked

- All those who approached us to offer their skills and work with us rather than as a way to build their academic careers.
- Those who discussed our needs and worked with us from design to finished project.

Challenges and barriers

- Those who saw us as a data mine to fulfil their goals, not our needs.
- Those who came with preconceived ideas of what they wanted to do regardless of whether it addressed our needs or not.
- Those who approached us at the end of a project grant proposal - rather than working with us in developing the proposal.
- Those that assume that we could do the work for free - or in exchange for a summary of their research. This was heightened by the fact that as academics we knew how much money goes into research grants.
- Differing approaches to impact. Those academics in search of academic impact - but knew very little about what impact means on the ground.

Working with other local organisations and developing partnerships

Latin Elephant worked and developed partnerships with local, national and regional organisations and groups. Drawing on specialist work and expertise of like-minded organisations made us stronger in delivering workshops and in our understanding of the planning process, commercial property law and business development. We drew on the voluntary sector experience of one of our directors to, for example, develop referral mechanisms. We also strengthened relationships with other BAME groups by participating in joint events. We continue to support the work of the Coalition of Latin Americans in the UK (CLAUK). This strand of work has increased attention to the specific needs of the Latin American and other BAME groups.

At times this work is fraught with tension and working through the challenges that this represents is also a learning curve. Funding

for the voluntary sector is limited and working collaboratively brought about some positive outcomes, mostly evident in responses to provide evidence on specific topics affecting our communities. This made our voices stronger and increased our visibility.

What worked

- Working in collaboration - Just Space, CLAUUK, Bridging to the Future, Southwark Law Centre
- Exchanging knowledge and skills to build responses to planning policy and applications; engage in research; organising and participating in campaigns.
- Strengthening the work of Latin American organisations through CLAUUK
- Working on collaborative responses to address the needs, circumstances and contributions of BAME groups and Latin American in particular.

Challenges and barriers

- When our area of work was engulfed by larger organisations thus diverting scarce funding from us.
- Working together / talking engaging in developing joint funding applications - due to time and staff poverty

Engaging with the planning process and developers

The role of the state oscillates between private capital and residents as much as it depends on investors to fulfil part of the functions that it can no longer afford and on the votes of its residents to maintain political power (Zukin, 2009). Thus, the participation of Latin American retailers in the regeneration process and the relative gains or losses throughout this process relies precisely on the oscillating role of the state in regeneration initiatives.

We relied on community experience to understand the history and impact of regeneration in the area. We drew on expert knowledge to understand the planning system. We worked collaboratively to facilitate participation of traders in planning forums. Navigating the planning system and understanding rights and the impact that a development of this magnitude would have for BAME groups (main users of the shopping centre) is not an easy task. Local groups expressed a sense of frustration about the planning process and did not trust developers' intentions given their experience with previous developments like that of the Heygate Estate.

Latin Elephant had to navigate through this rather complicated set of circumstances and remain neutral whilst keeping focused on our core responsibility as a charity supporting our beneficiaries. With this in mind, Latin Elephant achieved a series of planning gains for traders. However, every little gain had to be evidenced, argued and literally fought for.

What worked

- Evidence based research: our evidence was compelling and could not be ignored. We drew on our research experience and on working in partnership with other academics and experts who brought in different perspectives and skills - all of which made our arguments stronger.
- Carrying out our in-house consultation with traders and local groups to tap into the aspirations of the local population. This was the first time the community we worked with was asked what their aspirations for the area were (instead of bringing models for them to choose from).
- Sensitivity and first-hand knowledge of the needs and demands of traders.
- Engaging in meetings with Council. This was double edged, but overall, entailed respecting each other's position. We managed to maintain dialogue, managed some gains (relocation fund),

recognition of all traders as businesses (not just those with leases).

- Engaging with locally elected councillors to present our argument and evidence.

Challenges and barriers

- Engaging and encouraging traders and other local groups to participate in the consultation process led by developers
- A sense of not being listened to emerged as a result of community consultations not being considered in the submitted application.
- Local residents and groups engagement with locally elected councillors was strategic in that it tapped into their roles as community advocates, but was also fraught by political alignments.

The role of campaigning

The context of urban regeneration has exacerbated inequalities and power struggles in London and Southwark in particular. However, under these circumstances it has also strengthened community ties and a sense of solidarity amongst the working-poor, economically disadvantaged and ethnic and migrant groups. Strategic alliances are formed at times of extreme uncertainty. When powerful institutions and a frail local authority (whose economic power has been diminished) and whose only power rests on planning powers, community campaigns gain momentum – different roles are played out and enacted by different community groups and an alliance built around common ground develops.

The destabilising role of local authorities and local election contexts were all at play. Campaign groups gained momentum and took all in their stride to challenge developer plans that were not only economically overpowering and unequal but came with racial undertones.

We identified emerging discourses in the UK,

and in London in particular, from other campaigns, coalitions and grassroots organisations against developer-led development. Basically, these groups are not against development, but against a form of development that excludes and displaces disadvantaged populations. Coalitions expressed an interest in community-led developments and demanded meaningful engagement in consultation processes. They highlighted how consultation is about listening, negotiating and making compromises; but overall the aim is to ensure that local populations are not disadvantaged because of regeneration. Basically, the focus is on a fair and just redevelopment. Social and spatial justice is at the core of many community and grassroots campaigns across London.⁷

Latin Elephant developed their own consultation with local groups and also engaged and encouraged BAME traders to participate in council and developer-led consultations. However, these efforts led to nothing. When the application was submitted (December 2016) none of our communities' basic requirements and aspirations were addressed or included in the planning application. To our dismay the application was not policy compliant.

Up the Elephant, a coalition of local groups, organisations and individuals, was formed in November 2017. The main objective was to strive for a development that brought benefits to local residents, consumers and users of the Elephant and Castle. Latin Elephant joined the campaign to strengthen the demands and requests from traders, BAME and other groups who felt alienated by the consultation process and a development that did not take into account their needs and aspirations to remain in Elephant and Castle. The campaign recognised the contribution of Latin Americans to the area and shopping centre and the role of traders for the campaign.

⁷ See for example: [FocusE15](#); [Save Latin Village](#); [Friends of Queens Market](#); [Save Brixton Arches](#); [35% Campaign](#)

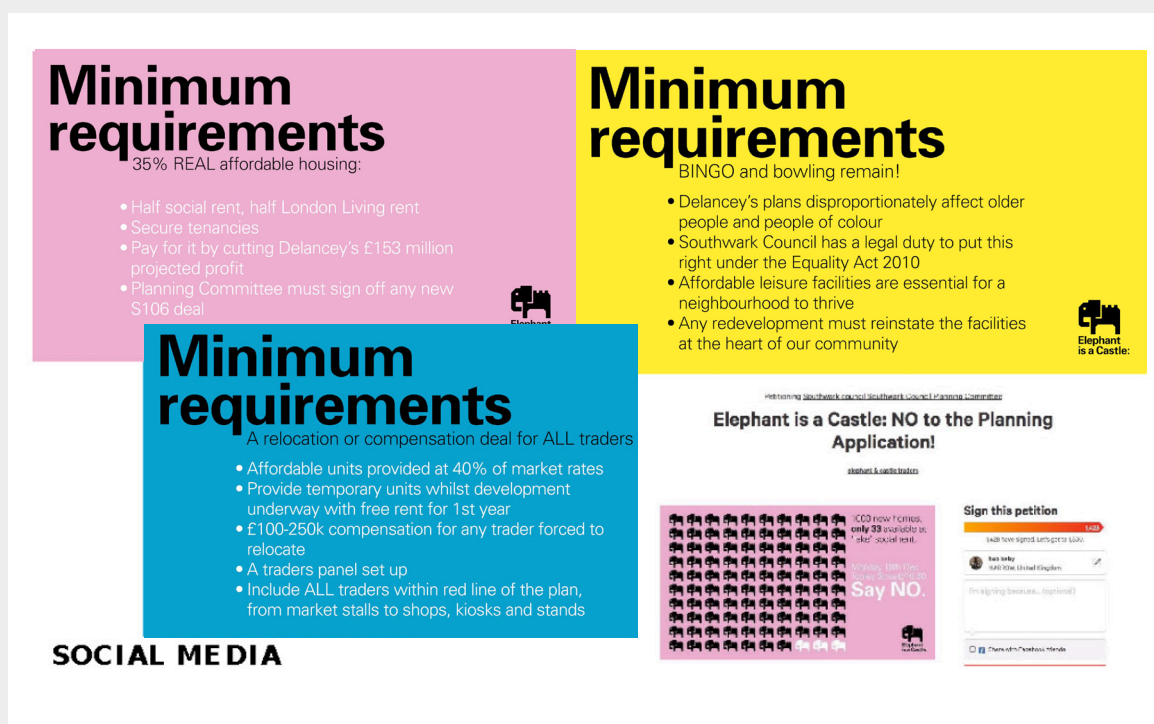


Figure 1: Minimum Requirements: Up the Elephant Campaign. Source: <https://twitter.com/SouthwarkNotes/status/952875510882820097>

The campaign brought together the demands of local residents and traders in a concerted effort to resist gentrification.

The group members of the coalition played to each other's strengths to build a social movement. This included formal opposition at Planning Committee Meetings; meetings with local councillors (14 Cllrs signed and circulated a letter against the development); 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 Communication 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 international, 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 multi-faceted campaign that gained support from a diversity of groups and campaigns across London. This was also a collaborative campaign strategy in which all local groups shared knowledge, skills and strengths. Campaigners, supported by the planning officer's report, argued that the development would have a disproportionately negative impact on BAME groups and for Latin Americans in particular.

One year of formal written opposition, meetings, protests, building or joining campaigns, advocating, amplifying messages and campaigns via social media (twitter / Facebook) finally brought some of the results the community wanted. Some concessions were made by developers, but only after the application was rejected and deferred by Southwark Council's Planning Committee.

Amongst the most significant gains are:

1. Increase in socially rented housing from 33 to 116 units - still not policy compliant.
2. Allocation of 10% of affordable retail space in the new development with a first refusal option for current independent traders.
3. A relocation package for traders of up to £634,000 conceded by the developer and an additional £200,000 by Southwark Council.
4. A relocation sites database.
5. A traders' panel.
6. Temporary and permanent relocation units within the vicinity.
7. An extension of 15 years to the existing 5-year affordable rent policy (see Figure 2).

What worked

- Trust is essential - with traders and community groups
- Only through concerted opposition did we (the community) gain some concessions. Long standing local campaigners and activists refused to be involved in consultation exercises. Trust in the process, developers and local authorities diminished throughout.
- Emergence of multi-ethnic and economic coalitions. In London the campaigns are marked by multi-ethnic, the working-poor, and housing coalitions.
- A multifaceted campaign - from research to build evidence and draw attention to the situation – all the way up to protest as Salsa dance, bingo as protest. Expressions of ethnic

identity and practices in protest and public spaces to draw attention to loss of cultural spaces.

Challenges and barriers

- How coalition and campaign groups can act as amplifiers of demands but also to mute the voices of the stronger ones - to absorb rather than promote. How to deal with this and what we learnt from the process.
- The process of coalition building is also fraught with fissures. It is difficult to pin down the exact causes or motives for division. The causes are perhaps rooted in old rivalries or problems, but these were deeply worrying at a time when unity was more than ever needed. Could it be the result of its own success? Perhaps about protagonism and leadership failure or leadership contests. Perhaps about retaliation, funding considerations and so on. This was not the case in Elephant and Castle's campaign, but we experience it in other coalitions across London.
- Other groups hooking into the cause to bring their own agenda through.

Traders who were already in distress and under duress due to the imminent demolition of the shopping centre are now hit by the unprecedented events triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic.



What was gained for Traders and Residents in our campaign?



- + Participation of Traders in planning forum meetings
- + Equalities Impact Assessment report for the Bingo Hall to evaluate the effects of the new development on users of protected characteristics

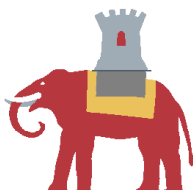
£634,700 Uncapped Relocation Fund by Developers
£200,000 Extra Fund by Southwark Council
up to £16,000 of rent reduction per Trader in Castle Square over 5 years and further rent discounts in Perronet House



- 45+** Traders relocated (so far)
- + New Market for traders without relocation
 - + Creation of the Traders' Panel
 - + Lifts and greater number of windows/shop-fronts in Castle Square



- 116** New social rented homes when the original offer was 33
- + Increased offer of 'affordable' flats for households on incomes of up to £60k



- 10%** of affordable retail area in the new development for existing Traders
- 75%** Market rent cap for years 6 to 15 of trading
- + First refusal option for Traders and the Bingo

Figure 2: Gains for traders and residents



The impact of COVID-19 for migrant and ethnic traders

Additional challenges posed by the current pandemic, potentially compound an already difficult situation for migrant and ethnic traders at the centre of regeneration schemes. These traders are experiencing altered working arrangements, sudden loss of income and are at risk of closure due to heightened business disruption provoked by restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 crisis. These business communities are hit doubly hard: if previous conditions were difficult to attain growth and sustainability, current circumstances have put them under extreme pressure to survive.

The unprecedented nature of this pandemic has put into stark relief and arguably exacerbated existing social and economic inequalities for groups with protected characteristics, and BAME groups in particular who have been experiencing disproportionately high infection rates, not to mention economic precarity. Preliminary scientific papers (Kirby, 2020) and news reports (Butcher and Massey, 2020; Cookson and Milne, 2020) suggest that those with protected characteristics and BAME groups have been hit the hardest and highlight how existing inequalities are exacerbated under such unprecedented conditions. Community organisations, NGOs working with vulnerable groups and unions representing key workers and other low-paid staff have reported unprecedented levels of inequalities (UVW, 2020). For example, workers with precarious contracts who find themselves with very little or no help from the government, migrants who have lost

their jobs and whose visa restricts them access to public funds, self-employed people, sole-traders and other SMEs that do not qualify for government grants.

Here, we aim to highlight some of the issues we have identified and draw lessons from these experiences. We argue that inequalities present at the systemic level are exacerbated and replicated at community levels.

BAME communities have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 with the Latin American community being no exception. The pandemic has exacerbated an already precarious condition for our community. In the case of Latin Elephant's beneficiaries, this has come in the form of a double impact: not only did COVID-19 not stop the imminent demolition of Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre, it posed an even bigger threat to the lives of hundreds with the pandemic hitting hard their livelihoods.

Despite the different forms of government economic support, many of our beneficiaries have not been able to access resources; many are ineligible for government schemes or with no resources to public funds. It is particularly distressing that a significant number belong to COVID's age-risk group, adding an extra layer of disadvantage for those disproportionately affected due to their other protected characteristics.

Since the pandemic, the following consequences have been experienced by our beneficiaries:

- Fallen into sudden unemployment, furloughed staff without the certainty to return to employment, poverty and precarious conditions
- Faced hardship as COVID-19 closed their only form of income for their families in the UK and abroad putting their livelihoods at great risk
- Beneficiaries within the Covid-19 age risk group are having to face hard choices between continued isolation or risking reopening business
- Not able to qualify for government support or have access to any form of public funds
- Facing hardship due to closure of business while having to pay rent, service charges and bills
- Facing IT and language barriers to decipher complex government fund applications
- Facing uncertainty with regards to Covid-19 government guidelines, health and safety, social distancing and new rules to reopen business
- Facing a double challenge: while dealing with Covid-19 consequences in their businesses also having to deal with developers' and landlords' commercial interests, mostly unaligned with BAME traders' interests (rents, date of reopening of businesses, regulations, and various costs).

These challenges have quickly made us shift our priorities to tackle beneficiaries' urgent needs, impacting and increasing the delivery of our services:

- Raising awareness and providing advice on financial support available to beneficiaries hit by Covid19
- Translation and dissemination of documents relating to government support
- An overwhelming number of queries on employment rights

- Advocating for local authority mediation and pushing for protection of tenants (beneficiaries) in relation of their contractual agreements with landlords
- Advocating for hardship funds to reach those businesses (beneficiaries) excluded from government support
- This has seen an increase in the number of beneficiaries in and around Southwark as well as Haringey (Seven Sisters)
- An increase in the number of cases referred to other organisations (many of which are CLAUUK members – also strengthening ties within Latin American community)
- Service delivery completely transformed and adapted online (Zoom, social media platforms) without affecting the quantity or quality of service delivered
- Intensified media presence to disseminate useful information to beneficiaries (Express News, BBC plus social media platforms)
- Recruitment of a freelance project manager to cope with increasing demand
- Moving towards offering business transformation support derived from changes to consumers habits – online shopping

Initial work by Latin Elephant since the onset of the pandemic and associated lockdown, has begun to uncover the stark structural inequalities that permeate these business communities, and which potentially intensify during the crisis. This also sheds light on how alternative economic strategies which sustained migrant and ethnic communities which previously went unnoticed despite contributing to their very existence, are now at the core of their survival and possible demise.

Latin Elephant's work on addressing the needs of these vulnerable populations during COVID-19 is beginning to tap into the implications that informality regarding registration, leases, contracts, and informal employment arrangements is having on BAME traders who were already under duress due to regeneration. It is therefore essential to



capture the experiences of this neglected group of migrant and ethnic traders whose economic contribution has been central yet often invisible to the survival of BAME populations in London and beyond (Román-Velázquez and Hill 2016). An assessment of their experiences in the face of government support, or lack thereof, is also critical in appraising the economic and policy implications of the effects of COVID into the future, and ultimately enabling government policies to deliver better outcomes for BAME traders.



Photos: Elephant masks campaign.



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