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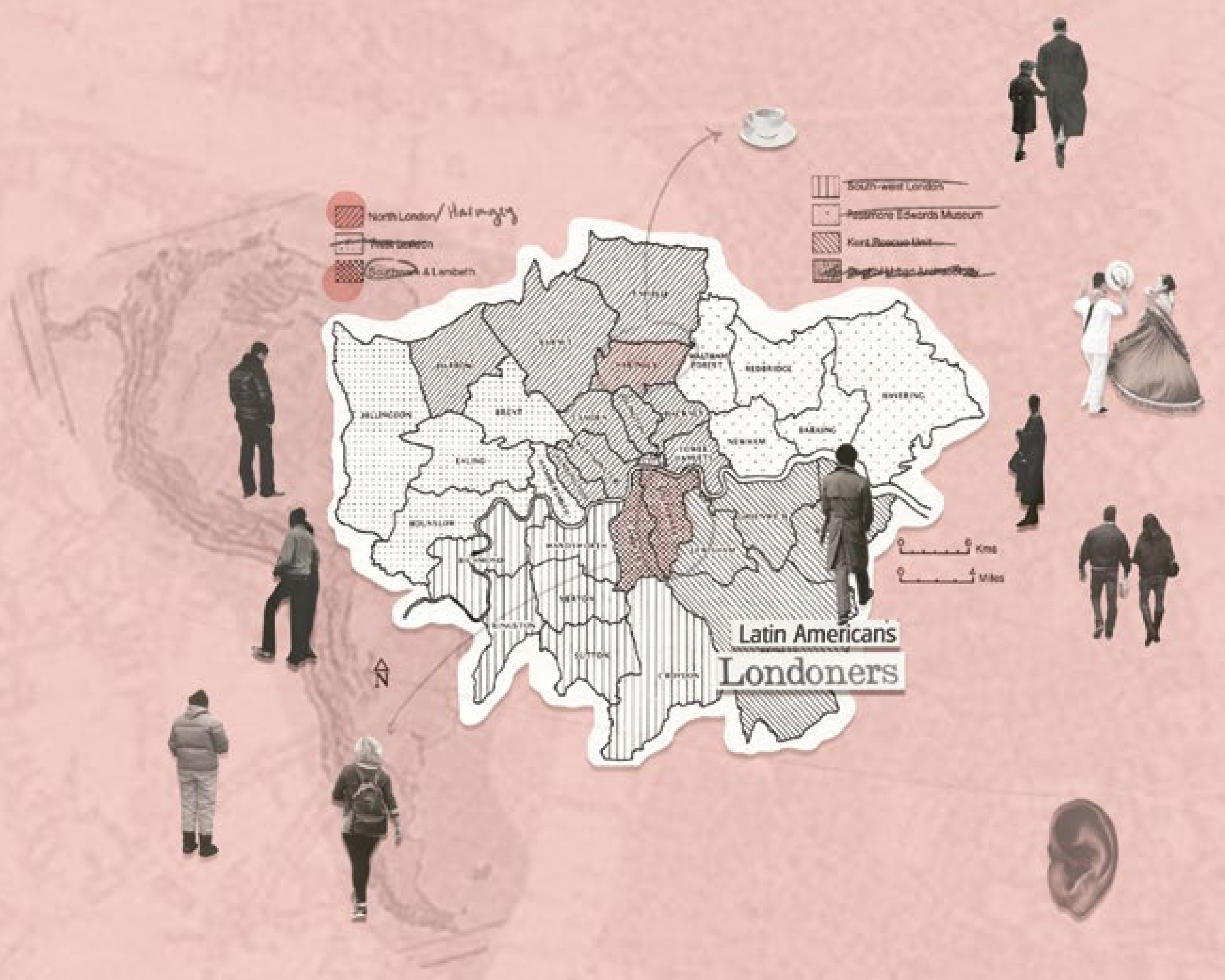
LATIN LONDON:
REPRESENTATION OF LIFE IN THE DIASPORA



THE LATIN AMERICAN COMMUNITY IN LONDON
– 1970s onwards

Verónica Posada Álvarez

LATIN LONDON:
REPRESENTATION OF LIFE IN THE DIASPORA

The Latin American Community in London
–1970s onwards

Verónica Posada Álvarez

CREAM
Centre for Research in Education, Arts and Media

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Second Supervisor, Professor David Bate

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ABSTRACT:

This thesis sets out to explore the representation of Latin Americans in London through a conceptual analysis of visual narratives produced from the 1970s onwards. The contribution to knowledge of this thesis derives from understanding the representational dynamics of the Latin American diaspora in London, including the characteristics of the diasporic group as transcultural and women-led, with a solid political agency. It presents archival research from Southwark and Haringey libraries, visual practices produced by NGOs with community groups, amateur or independent, and my own contributions to different interventions and calls by the communities I was inserted in whilst doing this research.

The thesis provides a theoretical framework around migration, diaspora, and identity; it also contributes with an analytical groundwork using concepts such as transcultural subject, mobilising identities, the rate of assimilation, and visual activism to understand constructions of *Latinidad* in the context of gentrification in London. It does so through a series of case studies, each of which raises interesting and significant questions about the urban, community archives, and feminist activism.

Methodologically, the thesis combines both an original analysis of visual culture and a take on *Visual Methodologies* (Rose, 2022). It draws on the production of arts-based tools like the Podcast Latin London and the audio-visual production Esporas/Spores. As a creative approach to knowledge, it engages in methodological analysis using the visual as essayistic, which interrogates the capacity to reproduce a discourse through images that feature persuasive elements.

It presents Latin Londoners (Román-Velázquez, 1999) as those in the diasporic formation of a community, who have gathered forces and created manifestations of feminised resistance towards urban planning policies in London, and the hostile environment for migrants.

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INTRODUCTION

LATIN LONDON:
Representation of Life in The Diaspora

The Latin American community in London from 1970s Onwards

"To Survive the Borderlands
you must live *sin fronteras*/be a crossroads."

(Anzaldúa, 1987, p195)[1]

This PhD thesis investigates the role of representation within the Latin American diaspora in London from the 1970s onwards. It builds on empirical research of my experience as an active member of the Latin American community in London and as a practitioner in Art and Design. I investigate how visual representation has enhanced the way migrants live in cities. I look at how photographic projects are used as tools for resistance and social justice, triggering sense of belonging. I use autoethnography to understand the role of Latin American women in community building and how that is informed through images (still and moving). By doing so, I contribute to understanding how representation becomes a reality as it informs ideas and emotions in response to what is perceived as the regime of truth: it serves as a transformative mediation process between perceptions and the political management of everyday life.

[1] The work of the Chicana theorist and poet Gloria E/Anzaldúa uses English and Spanish to engage with the consciousness of Latinidad to raise awareness of the struggles that entail navigating different cultures. This thesis plays a *homage* to *Spanglish* as a path to navigate UK academia.

The primary purpose of this original contribution to knowledge is to research the representational dynamics of Latin Americans in London, problematising Latinidad as an identity. By understanding the Latin American community characteristics as transcultural and women-led, I focus on the emotional connections of photographic projects and discuss the sociocultural struggles Latin Americans face in London. I examine the function of visual culture as an activist tool, emphasising how representation affects the diasporic community in an urban environment shaped by redevelopment projects. Employing visual practices increases social consciousness and female emancipation in the community. I discuss the difficulties in comprehending representation around the locations of community gatherings and reunions from a feminist perspective. Keeping in mind that women have led social change and strengthened the community's activist side (Sternbach, Navarro-Aranguren, Chuchryk & Alvarez, 1992; Gargallo, 2014; Lagarde, 2018; LAWRS, 2019).

This thesis comprises the following: a literature review, a methodological chapter in which I explain my practical and theoretical contributions, four empirical chapters, two art-based research pieces (Spores/Esporas and Latin London Podcast), a conclusion and two appendices, A: Glossary, and B: the podcast episodes descriptions and images.

CHAPTERS DESCRIPTION

The first chapter, **Latin Londoners: A Life in the Diaspora**, is a Literature Review on migration, diaspora, and representation. Introducing the Latin American identity as a blend and as a complex process of internalised conflicts and contradictions. Latin America is the product of otherness, and it also produces it "the articulation of superimposed otherness from uprooted contexts" (Louidor, 2016, p156). In doing so, I link the displacement process with the creation of diasporic communities and introduce the geographies of Latin Americans in the UK from the 1970s

onwards. I look at the places of gathering for Latin Americans in London, and present Narratives of Latinidad, highlighting different processes of migration from Latin American countries and addressing the struggles that the diaspora has been facing due to the process of gentrification in the city. Consequently, I delve into the importance of visual representation in creating meaning and a sense of belonging.

In chapter two, **Researching Representation in Latin London**, I outline the theoretical and practical approaches that act as a framework for the project. I analyse the dynamics of the Latin American community in London via a diagram that explores the panorama of transculturality, visual culture, gentrification, and visual essay forms. I present my autoethnographic approach based on the work of Gloria Anzaldúa *La Conciencia de la Mestiza: Towards a New Consciousness* (1987), which allows me to understand my Positionality and the socio-political consequences of conducting this research. I present my arts-based research project, Latin London Podcast, which became a vital account to fill theoretical and representational gaps I have identified throughout the research, particularly the crucial role of women in producing Latin American diasporic visual culture. Finally, I delve into the narratives of Latinidad, as a term that goes back to the legacies of 19th-century independence movements that are a visible link to the creation of nation-states that –to this day– find themselves at the core of massive social turmoil and social inequalities (Aparicio, 2017; Gutiérrez, 2016). This Chapter is crucial for understanding my methods, methodologies, and main contributions to knowledge. Within the context of investigating how the Latin American community in London is represented as a transcultural creation, emphasising the feminist perspective given that this is a community led by women and the significance of the image for activist strategies to tackle urban regeneration.

In chapter three, **Diasporic Geographies: Latin Londoners**, I define the Urban Diaspora and explore the theoretical framework of migrant cities and communities. In particular, the development of the Global

City (Sassen, 1990) based on diasporic communities, which are deeply affected by neoliberal politics. I developed the concept of *mobilising identities* as social movement agents, based on the work of Lisa García Bedolla, *Fluid Borders: Latino Power, identity, and Politics in Los Angeles* (2005). It is an identity with a clear set of values, cosmogony, and connections to place, which coherently sets a political view. *Mobilising identities* within a diaspora group enhances successful adaptation, political participation, protest, and action on behalf of the group. It challenges *the rate of assimilation*, where the diasporic group is at risk of internalising the main group characteristics and values, which triggers a disconnection from the homeland and the disappearance of diasporic values. Finally,I examine photographic representation as a continuous flood in the visual field that allows for strategies of resistance to foster a global form of relation that is not subject to nationalism and nation-states (Azoulay, 2008).

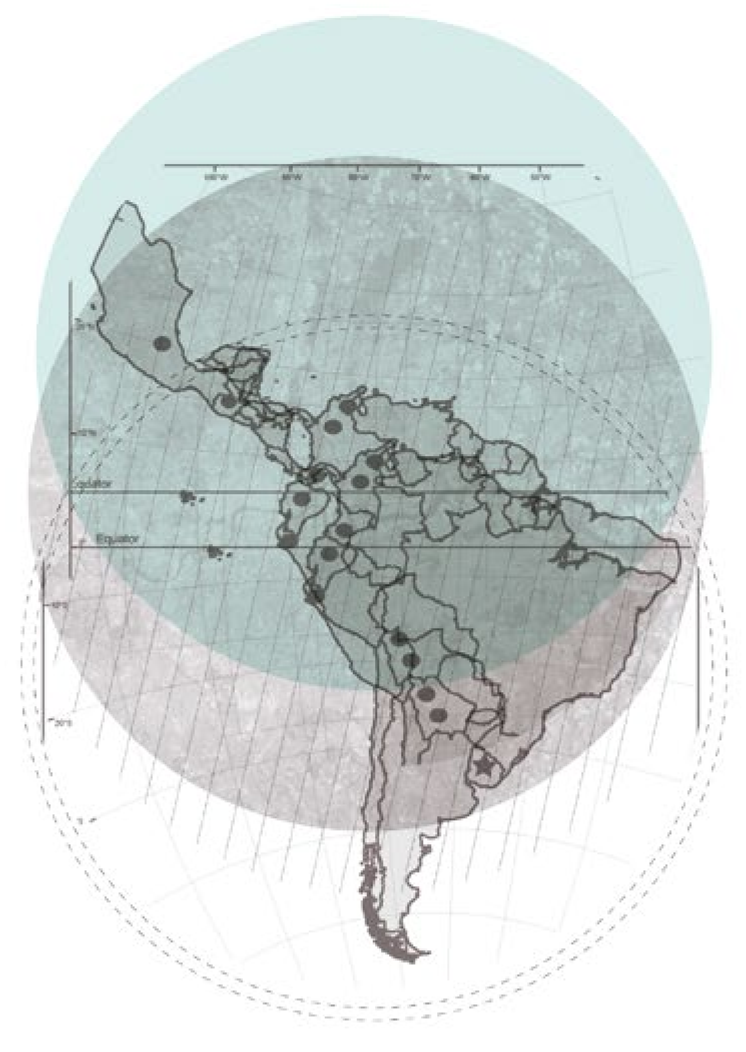
In chapter four, **From Abya Yala to Latin London: A Woman-made Community**, I provide an original empirical insight into the Latin American diaspora in London as a postcolonial space. Utilising decolonial thinking and approaches, women created places in the city that translate into women-made projects and collectives, where the image plays a crucial role. I look at the politics of Latin American feminism in London, its historical roots in Latin America and its connection to London. Finally, I highlight how that led to the international feminist resonance, which presents contradictions and challenges.

In chapter five, **Landscapes of Memory**, I examine the role of memory in the production of belonging. I investigate the local archives of the boroughs Southwark and Haringey by analysing their collections in the light of transculturality and urban memory. Those boroughs hold two essential gathering places for Latin Americans: Elephant and Castle and Seven Sisters. By analysing their collection, I consider the legacies of the empire for archival categorisations and emphasise the invisibilities of Latin American communities in the UK National realm. Later, I look at

the importance of community-driven projects in creating remembrance and mnemonic devices that attempt to produce historical traces of Latin Londoners. Chapters four and five are linked via the production **Spores/Esporas**, a literary illustrated essay in two languages that plays with archival material to create the story of a woman navigating the urban changes around Elephant and Castle in central London.

Finally, in chapter six, **The Migrant Gaze**, I create an empirical approach that looks at Latinidad in the light of Latin American women in London. Through several case studies, I look at the portrayal of Latin American spaces and the impact that storytelling has had within the community. I examine Latinidad and its effects on women's body politics and representation; by doing so, I examine the projects LAWA LATINAS (2022) and *ESPACIO LATINO* (2022). Furthermore, I analyse how urban markets shape the notion of The Migrant Gaze. I do this by looking at the role of the Latin Elephant via community-based projects and two films around Elephant and Castle, and Seven Sisters. Finally, I present storytelling as a strategy of feminised resistance and the future of a feminist diaspora, a process of self/naming and identification that has its roots in communal resistance.

To conclude, I present a summary of my main contributions to knowledge, which I developed in the Thesis, emphasising the empirical data I accessed and my practice as a creative researcher. I stress how I answered my research questions and highlight the academic challenges of doing this PhD to finally present further research opportunities.



CHAPTER 1

LATIN LONDONERS: A LIFE IN THE DIASPORA

LITERATURE REVIEW

CHAPTER 1

LATIN LONDONERS: A LIFE IN THE DIASPORA (LITERATURE REVIEW)

1. MIGRATION AND DIASPORA
- **1.1.** Diaspora and Representation

2. NARRATIVES OF LATINIDAD
- **2.1.** Transcultural Narratives
- **2.2.** Being a Latin American
- **2.3.** The Re-construction of the Latin American Diasporas Discourse –Decolonial Feminist Approach

3. BEING A LATIN AMERICAN IN THE UK AS A TRANSCULTURAL SUBJECT
- **3.1.** The Latin American Community in London
- **3.2.** Gentrification: Latin American Diasporic Spaces at Risk
  - **3.2.1.** The Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre
  - **3.2.2.** The Seven Sisters Indoor Market

4. CONCLUSION: LATIN LONDON REPRESENTATION, STRATEGIES OF RESISTANCE

1.

MIGRATION AND DIASPORA

In an age of global flows of people, capital and information, migration is a key concept when studying human interactions. In *The Age of Migration* (2013), Stephen Castles, Hein de Haas, and Mark J. Miller mention, "migration and settlement is a long-drawn-out process, which will be played out for the rest of the migrant's life and affect subsequent generations too. It is a collective action, arising out of social change and affecting the whole society in both sending and receiving areas" (p19), so contemporary migration is the movement of people from places of origin, which benefit later from the money that those migrants acquire in the host spaces or places of settlement. The authors state, "quite literally, international migration has changed the face of societies. The commonality of the situations lies in the increasing ethnic and cultural diversity of many immigrant-receiving societies, and the dilemmas that arise for states and communities in finding ways to respond to these changes" (p4). The receiving regions undergo drastic social, cultural, political, and economic changes in the long term.

In this chapter, I present my literature review by investigating the theoretical framework on migration, diaspora and representation which links to the section Narratives of Latinidad, where I discuss and present what it means to be a Latin Londoner in the light of transcultural formations and the analysis of the Latin American identity. I develop my argument on how representation impacts the life of Latin Americans in London, placing emphasis on the labour of women and the urban planning policies of London that had led to many processes of gentrification. Finally, I present the visual as a strategy for resistance for Latin Londoners.

Migration is fixed within the human condition; since ancient times, people have migrated in search of better opportunities, and better places to settle. With the World Wars, many Europeans fled to America for shelter. Later on, within the Post-war era and with the recovery of Europe, migration among European countries and from people around the globe increased enormously. From the 1990s onwards, with the expansion of globalisation, international migration became its central dynamic. The massive urbanisation and hyper-capitalism dynamics have also led to migration from southern to northern countries. Yet, it is true that many people migrate as highly qualified professionals, which is how it has become more difficult to enter certain countries. For instance, the UK's migration policies have been changing to make it more challenging for people to get there without large amounts of savings and professional qualifications. That is why it is becoming increasingly difficult for manual, regular workers and refugees to settle. As the authors discuss: "some migrants experience abuse or exploitation, but most benefit and can improve their lives through mobility. Conditions may be tough for migrants but are often preferable to poverty, insecurity, and lack of opportunities at home -otherwise, migration would not continue" (Ibid, p7). Consequently, that has led to the construction of communities abroad, which people can rely on to make the migrant condition more bearable; in this research, I call those communities diasporic.

The concept of diaspora is understood as groups of people/migrants dispersed from the place of origin and established through their sociocultural proximity in another place, called host space. In this project, diasporas are looked at from three fundamental aspects, which Vertovec (1999) analysed. First, as a social formation, that is the grouping of diverse people with a common origin. Second, as a type of consciousness that alludes to the relationship with the place of origin and the host place and third, as a mode of cultural production, which refers to the way in which they move collectively to generate strategies of resilience. "Diasporic connections provide various new means for mobilising people and capital, and new insights into how social organisations can transcend nation-state boundaries" (Kalra, 2005, p15). Diasporic identities are those that share the principle of rupture or disruption.

In the last decades of the twentieth century and the early twenty-first century, there has been a manifestation of a transcultural turn due to the ways new cultures have been created as a result of migratory dynamics. In *The Location of Culture* (1994), Homi Bhabha decentralises the relationship between nation-states as the container of cultural power and puts in evidence his ideas of hybridity as a cultural model which allows fluid relations between and beyond diverse forms of territorial organisation. Such ideas

and postures around *The Transcultural Turn* are explored in the work of Lucy Bond, Jessica Rapson (2014) and Wolfgang Welsch (2016):

> The globalising tendencies as well as the desire for specificity and particularity can be fulfilled within transculturality. Transcultural identities comprehend a cosmopolitan side but also a side of local affiliation (...). Transcultural people combine both (Welsch, p10).

Therefore, it is possible to talk about transcultural identities and understand identity from Simmel and Jenkins' (2014) definitions regarding similarity and difference as the dynamic principles of social interaction. Identification allows us an understanding of who we are and who other people are "(...). Invocations of similarity are intimately entangled with the conjuring up of difference. One of the things that people have in common in any group is precisely the recognition of other groups or categories from whom they differ" (p23). That notion of identity tends to privilege the idea of the other as an enemy who is different instead of focusing on the idea of collectivity, community, and solidarity as fundamental values of identity formation. That is why the author asserts that "the human world simply doesn´t work like that" (Ibid) and suggests that:

> Focussing only, or even mainly, on difference is unhelpful if one wants to understand social change in that it doesn't accord with observable realities. Put simply, collective mobilisation in the pursuit of shared objectives is a characteristic theme of history and social change (...) collective politics involves collective imaginings (p24).

So, it is helpful to differentiate, but it cannot be the primary reason/motivation to act. Diasporic identities should focus on collectivity and transformation and inhabit creatively from there. Stuart Hall, in his famous essay *Cultural Identity and Diaspora* (2014), addresses the link between identity and diasporas as the production of oneself within a sociocultural realm, immersed in a particular space/time point which allows a person to have points of reference, "diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" (p 235). In that sense, to speak of diaspora is also to speak of collective identity.

Nevertheless, in the Postcolonial world, as Hall argues, there has been a shift from mainstream discourses of identity –where the figure of the most popular aspect of each sociocultural formation is the figure that stands out– the hidden stories are put in the place of representation, rebuilt and re-signified from dominant ideas of the West (Ibid, p225). However, he also asserts that those identities are continuously changing from the position that one acquires in different ways to address the narratives of the past and create a changeable present. Hall goes on to address

the Colonial experience of the Black Diaspora to give a reason for how the dominant regime has the power to make them (the diaspora) feel like the other, which changes the conception of cultural identity, as Hall mentioned that it is a matter of positioning ourselves within a spatiotemporal situation. Hall acknowledges how the Western world forced unification despite differences and cutting identification with the past. In the case of Latin America, there has also been unification, as if it were one large piece of geographic land without the distinct cultural affiliations of each country (I will address this in the next section).

1.1. DIASPORA AND REPRESENTATION

In that sense, Hall (2014), Bhabha (2012) and Gilroy (1993) discussed the idea of *Doubleness* as the experience of feeling alienated in the host space but also somehow strange and familiar with their place of origin, and that is the characteristic of a diasporic community. The legacy of the Empire itself is evidenced in contemporary migration policies. As Homi Bhabha argued, referring to 'colonial mimicry' "the desire for a reformed recognisable other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same but not quite" (2014, p122). That is to say, the process of representation of colonial discourses also represents difference as a partial presence, which I will discuss further in this Chapter in the light of Latin Americans in London, and the Latin American identity.

In the light of Hall (2014) the process of identity formation is always present within representation. In terms of the Black Caribbean, a diaspora that experienced separation from their past and their future, as a process of ruptures and "profound discontinuity" (p227). That led to a position of vagueness and anxiety due to the misconnection with their place of origin, in the traumatic face of the colonial experience. It was an idea powered by The West to identify diasporas as *the other*. Consequently, in the manifestation of cinematic, musical and visual representations, it is possible to grasp a political view aiming to express

its cultural identity “through memory, fantasy, narratives and myths” (p226). Diasporas created ways to represent “the lack of any final resolution” (p228), which is most vivid within the rhythms of Caribbean music. That is to say, the hidden presence that tells a story of slavery, emancipation and new identity formations. For instance, when The Civil Rights Movement took place in the late 1960s in the USA (Joseph, 2006), Black musicians, particularly African-American and Black Caribbean diasporas, started to develop music manifestations, such as Hip Hop, to address struggles within the diasporas. Hip-hop has been a way for black popular musicians to speak about and protest within Black Urban landscapes “by giving voice to the everyday human realities of black life in ways that could not be easily reduced to commodifiable stereotypes” (Neal, 2013, p267). That is mainly linked to what Hall calls the representation of the diasporas, as the translation of social conventions to a new place of settlement. Gilroy, as well, argues in *The Black Atlantic* (1993) that African diasporic cultural production is the best illustration of the complex dynamics that a diaspora can experience. This is because, in that sense, the music created in the Black Caribbean can also create social forms “that underpin and enclose the plurality of black cultures in the western hemisphere (...) The performer takes on a communicative role comparable to the role of the storyteller” (p200). Nevertheless, Gilroy also argues:

> Stories are told both with and without music. More important than their content is the fact that during the process of performance, the dramatic power of narrative as a form is celebrated. The simple content of the stories is dominated by the ritual fact of storytelling itself (Ibid).

Here, Gilroy highlights the historical context of the diasporic stories to the reader. The author describes how the word diaspora was first written in the Bible (1993), referring to the narratives of enslaved people escaping from bondage and their ways of making a living in the West. Gilroy argues how music was, and still is, an autobiographical demonstration of diasporic countercultures. The perception of diasporic communities in The West has been mainly shaped through different cultural and countercultural representations; the cultural views have usually been magnified with stereotypes. Throughout this thesis, stereotypes are understood as a narrative based on a socially constructed fiction (Feldman,2002). As exposed in the introduction, I will discuss this concept further in Chapter Six, particularly in the light of Latin American women's identity.

On the other hand, countercultural manifestations are representations made within and for the diasporic communities themselves to create a political, social and economic movement to support each other within the host place. This led to the work of

Margherita Sprio in the book *Migrant Memories* (2013), in which she explores the power of cinema within the Italian Diaspora in Britain to represent the stories of the displaced. The author argues that "the significance of the visual in any migratory experience is not to be underestimated and both photographic and the moving image are crucial in providing a sense of belonging when displacement is experienced" (p5). Sprio profoundly analyses cultural stereotyping through film identifications and representation, looking at the Italian Diaspora in Britain. In the 1950s, many southern Italians migrated to Britain with the hope of getting better jobs and being able to send remittances to their families. In that decade, cinema "acted as a unifying factor in energising the creation of the memories that were to go on to have a significant role in the lives of the Italian diasporic community in Britain" (Ibid, p173). It was a way to consider themselves Italians, as many never had to think about their national identity. Scenes from populist movies were retold to make new layers of meaning for the diasporic communities. They wanted to make sense of what is still called *being an Italian in Britain*. Yet, the stories have a different meaning depending on which generation has been telling and seeing them (the movies), and that is due to the changes in the range of cultural references. In the sense that a diasporic identity changes constantly with new generations. "What is also being engaged with here is the display of difference and of singularity- a particular mode of being in the world" (p188).

In the same vein, Kobena Mercer, in his book *Welcome to the Jungle* (2013), discusses diaspora culture and the aesthetics of black independent film in Britain as a radical message about the complexity of the politics of representation for the experiences of diasporic communities in the UK. Mercer argues about a poetry of resistance that, through film, "marks out its struggle to reclaim and excavate a Creole counter-memory of black struggle in Britain" (Ibid, p61)—represented by non-linear narratives through multiple chains of associations that are made by empowering "subordinate identities within white society" (p276). The aim is to unify identities through representation in order to claim a place in the host space and to visualise their social struggles through film. Mercer goes on to address, as an example, the work *Handsworth Songs* from the Black Audio Film Collective (1986),[2] which aimed to represent the riots in Birmingham, UK, in 1985 caused by racial tension and police brutality. The author describes the films as a way to "interrupt the amnesia of media representation of the 1985 conflicts" (p62). It aimed to be an alternative to articulating England's colonial past and

[2] See https://www.superstationtv.com/examples/2017/9/19/handsworth-songs-black-audio-film-collective-19861987

the contemporary race crisis. Moreover, the images are there as documents to invoke a chain of associations, diaspora's prefigured social change through representation to reassess the differences between the host space and the home country. That brings me to the idea that diasporas cannot go home, because home, as it is known, is no longer there, and that is why identity formation is divided between the place of origin and the place of settlement.

Furthermore, representation aims to reinforce and create new memories, which allows the construction of transcultural identities. T.J. Demos in the book *The Migrant Image* (2013), investigates how contemporary artists reinvent the use of photography, film and video to circulate the reinvention of documentary practices. Demos argues that "the migrant (...) defines an increasingly occupied site of resistance, autonomy and politicisation". So, in this regard, representation gives an aesthetic-political force to social movements which travel from one place to another seeking a "more fluid and transient paradigm of relationships between cultures" (Bond & Rapson 2014). These are the basis of transcultural formations as the path to transcend geographical boundaries. T.J. Demos argues about the need for a closer relationship between creative forms and social movements, and most of all "the expansion of social movements for political and economic transformation" (2013, p247). That is linked with *The Civil Contract of Photography* (2008), a proposal made by Ariella Azoulay, which links photography with citizenry, everyone involved in the photographic situation is a citizen, where there is no sovereign, and the politics of aesthetics offer revolution and political transformation. Finally, Nicholas Mirzoeff uses the term *Visual Activism* to create forms of change, as the action is taken from cultural forms to make those social changes (2015, p297) (I will explain more regarding these in section 4). Cultural representation then, is not only assemblages of images; it is indeed a way to overcome situations of uprooting and to create diasporic communities that do activism through visual tools, such as photography and film. In the next sections, I will present what it means to be a Latin American, in the context of migration to the UK, and the formation of the diasporic community in London.

2

NARRATIVES OF LATINIDAD

Since the origin of Nation-States in Latin America (1805 onwards), there has been a division between left-wing and right-wing parties, breaking Latin America's political landscape into two. Around the 1960s, neoliberal politics emerged in the region, part of a concerted effort by the United States to spread its ideology by explicitly supporting right-wing governments and dialectical relations with dynamics of polarisation. The result is a historical and structural categorisation of fragmented social identities constructed in the region (Petras, 2011). Latin America has always been a region of otherness and alterity; a mixed group of subjectivities: Africans transplanted to Latin America, indigenous populations, Campesinos (farmers), and Latin Americans abroad. Nowadays, "the imposition of the imperial neoliberal model [has] resulted in the productive and social transformation of agriculture and rural society" (Ibid, p222), leading to hyper-capitalist expulsions, what Sassen (2014) refers to as the dynamics of the expulsion of the neoliberal city. In which processes of urban marginalisation are increasing due to a desire for profit of multinational corporations and the so-called global north power. According to David Harvey (2007) in *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, the 1970s and 1980s were particularly important because China, the USA, and Europe supported and consolidated the politics of neoliberalism, free trade, and the free market, which led to globalisation and the conception of life itself as a commodity, compressing time and stretching space. The legacy of Chile's Chicago Boys' ideology for a free market with as little government involvement as possible.

Consequently, capital accumulation and economic growth seem to forget the well-being of the world's population or environmental quality, leading to uneven urban and rural development. As a result, we are drowning in the geography of gentrification: the neoliberal state has created a consensus based on the loss of a sense of collectivism and enhancing

asymmetric power relations. Tensions and contradictions threaten communities in less privileged urbanities. Yet, this forces them to find ways to reclaim and fight for their rights, this affects disproportionately migrant communities, such as Latin Americans in London. I will explain how in the next sections.

The concept of Latinidad itself embeds a narrative. The term refers to aspects shared between people affiliated with the whole geographical area of Latin America: from Mexico to Tierra de Fuego, the Caribbean, and the diasporas. It refers to a vast variety of politics, cultures, identities, subjectivities, and ideologies. The term Latin America is sometimes misunderstood to represent unity versus diversity. Through the process of trying to define a narrative of Latinidad, some many complexities and paradoxes are necessarily going to be unpacked through this work. The term Latinidad refers to social interactions that create rhetoric around its people. Latinidad is a term that has its roots in the colonisation process of the Americas and its interaction with European colonisation. The legacies of 19th Century independence movements are visible in the nature of the creation of nation-states that –to this day– find themselves at the core of massive social turmoil and social inequalities. The term Latinidad has been popularised in the USA by Latin American scholars, such as Felix M. Padilla (1986), who identified Latinos as ethnic groups. García Canclini (1987) and Barbero (1992) invoked the term to define the hybridity and mixed backgrounds characteristic of the Latin American identity. However, we cannot forget that the narrative associated with the creation of Latinidad privileges a European point of view as a result of colonisation processes, embedded in the production of knowledge. As Román-Velázquez (1996) stresses, the re-making of cultural identities referencing Latinidad are evidenced in cities across different geographical spaces that allow a sense of belonging to appear. In *The Difference Latinidad Makes*, Marissa López (2019) suggests that Latinidad be read "as a continually evolving practice rather than an articulable subject position" (p113) - as a political performance that encourages democratic participation and resistance to neo-colonial projects. It is fundamental to acknowledge the complexities embedded in the term Latinidad, as Flores argues (2021) "if we are to speak about territorialities and roots, it is suitable to ask oneself where today is the location of that Latin America frequently hypostatized— and reified at the same time—by the discourse of origins, pure languages, and fixed or continuous legacies" (p65), tracing the term to colonial times, as a way to name the non-black and to be aware on how the ideologies behind Latinidad have also produced segregation and European domination amongst Latin American countries is fundamental, particularly towards the erasure of black lives, which is reflected, for Flores, in Latinidad as an identity in the USA.

Nevertheless, for this research, Latinidad counts as an identity that in a complex hostile environment helps to sustain individuals and create communities to cope with the migrant experience. Román Velázquez and Retis (2021) have addressed the term in relation to the construction of British-Latinidad, which is crucial for this research, "a new form of identification, one that constitutes a hybrid imagined community with pieces collected from various countries that make up the Latin American and the Luso-Iberian region, but that finds commonality in the relational context in which they meet" (Ibid, p24). The authors emphasise the differences Latin Americans conform in super-diverse London, and the challenges of urban change for the production of communities. Which I will explore through this research (chapters three and six).

Therefore, the narratives of Latinidad are diverse stories of resistance, via transcultural interactions. In the next sections I will present, what it means to be Latin American, and being a Latin American in the UK as a transcultural formation. I will place emphasis on the role of feminists in the construction of life in the diaspora and will present the gentrification landscape in which Latin Americans inhabit contemporary London.

2.1. TRANSCULTURAL NARRATIVES

Transculturation concept dates back to 1940s when the Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz coined the term in the book The Cuban Counterpoint of Tobacco and Sugar (1995). Describing the Island's colonial practices in specific workplaces such as the *Vega*—a field where Tobacco is grown—, the *Cañaveral* —where sugar cane is cultivated—, and the *Ingenio* —where sugar cane is processed into sugar and other products. This implies an encounter in which both cultures acquire elements from each other and, in this way, create a 'new culture' that nourishes from various traditions and social practices. It allows the production of a social relation that nourishes the cultural practices of people moving to a specific geography and the practices of the people in the host place. That creates new cultural practices that are reproduced and manifested by that mixed group, the transcultural group. For example, Latin Americans in London as Latin Londoners are a transcultural identity. Some contemporary authors have addressed the term (Bauböck and Faist, 2010; Bond and Rapson, 2014; Moraña, 2017; Welsch, 1999), as identities that have elements in common and allow for a dialogue to appear between different cultural practices in a particular space that puts them in contact.

Latin Americans started to migrate to the UK predominantly in the 1970s due to The British Government Immigration Act of 1971. Later in 1974, The Act opened the doors for people from Chile to settle in the UK as exiles during Pinochet's dictatorship -1973 to 1990 (Román-Velázquez, 1996). In the next two decades the number of Colombian and Argentinian refugees increased sharply; the Latin American population, particularly in London, started being noticed by the beginning of the 1990s (McIlwaine, 2010). Many Latin Americans flee and try to make a place in the colonizer's world. It cannot be taken for granted that the USA has the biggest number of Latin American diasporas living there, as it is geographically closer. Moreover, it is also important to address the different cultural backgrounds that one –as Latin American migrant– has to carry. For this reason, this research addresses the concept of transculturation, as a crucial element to interpret the subjectivities and identities present within the contemporary diasporic community of Latin Americans in London.[3]

In the next sections of this chapter, I will explain further what it means to be a Latin American, and what informs the narratives of Latinidad presented in this thesis, I will do this by presenting the Latin American community in the UK, to move on to introduce the narratives of Latin London as a transcultural identity, emphasizing two sites of encounter, Elephant and Castle, and the Seven Sister's Indoor Market. Finally, to conclude by highlighting the role of representation as a strategy of resistance to maintain Latinidad in London and overcome processes of urban regeneration.

[3] See Appendix A.

2.2. BEING A LATIN AMERICAN

The number of migrants from Latin America and the Caribbean is approximately 40.5 million people, according to a UN report (2019), with 75% of them residing in North America (even with the restrictions triggered by September 2011 events in the USA, which forced the migration of Latin Americans to diverse parts of the world) (McIlwaine, 2011). It is crucial to emphasise that migration to Europe from Latin America was limited until the first decade of the 20th Century century. In the 1970s, a large proportion of the exiled population going to Europe from Latin America, particularly Chile and Argentina, was due to authoritarian regimes in the Global South. Later, in the 1980s and 1990s, many asylum seekers migrated mainly from Bolivia, Ecuador and Colombia due to conflict and violence at home (Ibid; Martínez Pizarro and Villa 2005; Padilla and Peixoto, 2007). Latin American communities started manifesting and growing in global cities such as London, Madrid, and Paris, setting up diasporic communities (Bermudez, 2011; McIlwaine, 2010; Román-Velázquez, 1999, 2009).

The fact that people coming from North, Central, and South America have created a shared collective identity in Europe as Latin Americans caught my attention at the beginning of this research, as this is something that builds on my MA research about Latin Americans in London

and Urban Change. Davis (2001, p65) speaks of the social reproduction of Latinidad, in which people don't merely identify and are identified as being from their particular countries, but emphasise their Latin American common origin, thus appearing as the same social group. McIlwaine (2011) from the perspective of her geography studies on Latin Americans in the UK remarks: "despite comprising a wide range of nationalities, ethnicities, and cultures, Latin Americans are generally referred to as a community" (Ibid, p98).

Latinidad, as a I will expose further in Chapter Six, is a complex concept, that has taken a particular strength within diasporic communities in the global north (Aparicio, 2017); recently Latinidad has become an expression of ethnic pride and a movement in defence of migrant lives, "it seems that *latinidad* is, and is not, a collective rubric; it is both inclusive and exclusive, delineating and distorting, yet its past and current trends suggest deeper dimensions" (Gerke and González Rodríguez, 2018, p2). As a concept, it manifests the diverse and complex geographies of Latin America, from the intimate realm of self-representation. In that sense, it can be argued that Latin Americans have a common cosmogony that is enhanced by the long distance from their place of origin. Latinidad triggers the production of communities, understanding the term from the many regions that Latin America represents and by having a common point of uprooting. The notion of community is built from collective memory which aims to reclaim, restore and repair historical roots with the homeland, detaching a sense of belonging, even in the diasporic condition; memory in terms of the Latin American diaspora is further developed in Chapter Five, where I explain the production of cultural memory from the diaspora as a process of restructuring fragments of identity to form a transcultural manifestation (Erll, 2011; Welsch, 1999; Brunow, 2015; Kuhn, 2005). To understand this framework is crucial for my Literature Review to place emphasis on the historical process of uprooting experienced in Latin America. In *The Open Veins of Latin America* (1971), Galeano mentioned:

> For those who see history as a competition, Latin America's backwardness and poverty are merely the result of its failure. We lost; others won. But the winners happen to have won thanks to our losing: the history of Latin America's underdevelopment is, as someone has said, an integral part of the history of world capitalism's development (p2).

Galeano, refers to the common uprooting of the Latin American identity through the process of expansion of capital, which led to the looting of the land once called *Abya Yala*.[4] The concept of rooting is associated with the idea

[4] The name was given to Latin America before the Spanish arrived. I will explain this concept further –later in chapter four.

of settling down in a certain place or, indeed, taking root. The concept of rooting is complemented with the concept of dwelling since it speaks of the natural capacity of a human being to adapt to a new environment, and survive in it (Louidor, 2016). When we talk about rooting, we talk about the various ways in which a subject creates a relationship with an established territory; the formation of rooting can be given in terms of internal factors (own choice) or external factors. Consequently, the concept of uprooting is defined as the result of expelling or driving someone away from their place of origin. Uprooting occurs when the person is forced to leave their place to live somewhere else, and this can be caused by factors like poverty, natural disasters, violence, politics, among others. When an individual is forced to move away from their roots, their family and their culture, a detachment of identity occurs. The subject begins to be affected in an emotional and psychological way. They are being forced to start from zero, in an unknown territory and culture.

For Latin Americans, uprooting is linked to migration, and particularly to forced migration, internally as well as internationally. There are four main specific subtypes when speaking about uprooting and being a Latin American: Africans abducted to Latin America, indigenous populations, *campesinos* (farmers or people who works the land) and being a Latin American abroad. Wooldy Edson Louidor in the book *Articulaciones del desarraigo en América Latina* (2016) –[Articulations of uprooting in Latin America] mentioned that since 1492 Latin America has been a fragmentation of subjectivities trying to put together a cosmogony that is never going to fit with the changes produced by the European, North American and African presence in the region. Firstly, the indigenous populations were uprooted from their own lands; there are vestiges of major civilisations such as the Incas, The Aztecs, and the Mayas. For instance, Deborah Poole, in *Vision, Race and Modernity: A Visual Economy of the Andean Image World* (1997), addresses this image [Fig.1] to explain that the stereographs –double images which cause a three-dimensional effect– allow the viewer to get deeper into the picture and create a spatiotemporal dimension which depicts the ruins of the 'pre-Hispanic' cultures in Latin America, particularly the Incas' in Peru. It can be argued that the indigenous presented in the image are standing in their ancestors' stonewall made to protect themselves from the Spaniards. As Galeano mentioned "Atahualpa saw the first Spanish soldiers arriving on spirited steeds adorned with plumes and little bells, making thunder and clouds of dust with their swift hooves: panic-stricken, the Inca fell down on his back" (Galeano, 1971, p18).[5] After assassinating the Inca, the Conquistador Pizarro advanced

[5] Atahualpa was the last Emperor of the Inca Empire.

to Cusco and destroyed the Inca Empire. The indigenous populations in Latin America are still seen as *the other*, as second-class citizens, as people who resisted change, and who try to retain their connection to nature, as well as their way of communicating with the world, i.e. their language. As people occupying a rich land. They were not included in the formation of nation-states, just until recently they have been recognised. For instance, in Colombia the indigenous populations and their cultural diversity were recognised in *La Constitución* only in 1991, which means that they were, until then, unprotected by the law.[6] Secondly, the African people who arrived as slaves, and tried make a living in exile, the Afros –people with an African background–, in many regions of Latin America. For example, the *Afroantioqueñidades* evidenced in the work of the Colombian Photographer Benjamin De Calle [Fig.2], who dedicated his career to the marginalised population from his studio in central Medellín. De La Calle's work manifested the presence of African people in Colombia and particularly the effect of ideas, powered by The West, on how to look and how to dress in order to be socially accepted (MDA, 2015).

Thirdly, the *campesinos* that have permanently been excluded from the construction of the nation-state as the surplus population, the ones that do not fit in the idea of the urban dweller (Louidor, 2016, p131). That is evidenced in the work of Jesús Abad Colorado, one of the most famous photojournalists in Colombia. His work has covered a considerable part of the armed conflict from 1970 onwards. Jesús Abad's images help establish a collaboration network between victims, displaced persons, rural workers, and rural and urban inhabitants. Colorado is primarily interested in the *campesinos* displaced from rural areas due to conflict. That is a legacy of the Colonial practices where the farmers always had to be displaced when the war started. As an example, the image [Fig.3] of the Church in Bojayá, a Colonial town. The image depicts the aftermath of a bomb thrown by the FARC -Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia- that was aiming to reach the AUC (Counterinsurgencygroup) in 2002. Images like this one have helped in the process of reparation and reclamation of the *campesinos* community as part of the broader Peace Process in Colombia to understand what happened and how ("¡Basta ya!, 2012).

Furthermore, Louidor (2016) refers to Homi Bhabha (2012) to argue that decolonisation is an idea that left Latin America in the space of the in-between, between colonisation and a desire for freedom that has become a frustration within the logic of neoliberalism. In Louidor's view, uprooted people in Latin America must recreate themselves in various

[6] See Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos. OEA.

FIG.1. Photo of Stereograph, "The Fort where Native Chiefs held off sixteenth Century Spaniards", Cuzco, Peru

FIG.2. Photograph of Juan Bautista Villegas G., 1908. Estudio Benjamin De La Calle Muñoz, Medellín

FIG.3. *Bojayá* church, victim of a guerrilla attack, Chocó 2002.
Photography: Jesús Abad Colorado. Semana Archive

ways, trying to elaborate strategies to build community and individuality from the hybridity of different articulations. It is not to deny that uprooting is tragic and painful, but it is a moment that forces creativity to appear to allow the production of *Lo criollo* (creole), "it is evidenced that uprooted people are not only victims instead, they are makers and designers of new things for within the realm they are inhabiting" (2016, p135).[7]

In that sense, uprooting leads to a conversation about identity and otherness. In the process of uprooting, the subject is forced to move to another territory, understanding it as a social construction. Louidor (2016) discusses the ideas of Eugene Gogol (2004), who presents Latin America as *the other* that has been exploited and *the other*, that resists. In the light of Gogol, the otherness in Latin America is the product of colonisation and capitalist exploitation, which informs the logic of migration, that is to say, the fourth specific subtype: being a Latin American abroad, as I will emphasise in section three.

Nevertheless, Louidor argues that Latin America is not one large unified other; rather, it is a blend of many different others. It has been a construction of internal and external relations. Latin America is the product of otherness, and it also produces it. "It is the articulation of superimposed otherness from uprooted contexts" (Louidor, 2016, p156).[8]It is a context of uprooting because it produces and reproduces displacement situations. Louidor mentions three historical contexts that are, in a sense, responsible for the uprooting of the region: the first one was the Spanish invasion of 1492, which was when the Spaniards encountered the Indigenous population: The Conquest. The second one was the colonial times, which signifies the slave trade from Africa. Finally, the third one was the multiple movements of resistance or independence from the hybrid race categories such as *criollos*, *mestizos*, *mulatos*, and *zambos*, a mix of the indigenous population, Africans, and Europeans (mainly Spaniards). All of them sought independence from within the Colonies, which contributed to the creation of nation-states within Latin America. Some of these events are the causes and consequences of what we know today as Latin America. All of these are related to the concept of *desarraigo* (uprooting) as the common element of Latin American identity and as the articulation of all these people. Even today, people

[7] Author translation, see the quote in the original language: "Se evidencia que los grupos desarraigados no son solo víctimas sino también constructores y creadores de cosas nuevas desde el medio en el que se encuentran" (Louidor, 2016, p135).

[8] Author translation, see quote in original language: "Es una articulación de alteridades imbricadas desde contextos de desarraigos" (Louidor, 2016, p156).

are coming from northern countries, such as the generations of Jews and other European migrants who fled to Latin America during the World Wars, who are adding to the identities of uprooting (p158).

Latin America is a construction of similarity and difference; in that sense, it can also be seen in Latin Americans abroad. The Latino/a/x identity has carried with it the idea of the coloniser as being inferior in a relationship of power with other hemispheres of the world, and that is why there are massive numbers of social movements that try to defend their interests, for instance, The Zapatistas in Mexico, The Congreso de los Pueblos in Colombia, The Nadaístas, Madres Plaza de Mayo, MOVICE and many others (Ibid, p161; CNMH, 2013; Petras, 2011).

From the outset, it is essential to look at the concept of Latinidad that Mike Davis addresses in his book *Magical Urbanism* (2001). The author argues that Latinos in Los Angeles, USA, are a constructive force that revitalises neglected and marginalised neighbourhoods through improvisation and regeneration. Nevertheless, they usually struggle for official documents "to confront the labyrinth of laws, regulations and prejudices that frustrate, even criminalise, their attempts" (p62). The construction of the Latin American identity abroad is a re-fragmentation of what I have already presented as the problems that came from colonial times. Latin Americans have been trying to create spaces abroad similar to the practices in their home countries, which has derived as "the social production of *Latinidad*" (p65) mainly in the northern hemisphere.

Davis exposes the creation of a Latino Metropolis and how Spanish-speaking urban neighbourhoods are massive transnational and transcultural networks. Davis's idea of Latinidad comes from international migration from Latin America to other latitudes. Mette Louis Berg (2011) analyses Europe's first big wave of Latin Americans. In 1959, when the Cuban Revolution started, many islanders moved to Spain and, later on, to the USA. Fidel Castro took power in Cuba, helped by El Che Guevara [Fig.4], whose picture became very popular in representing Latin American political and social clashes worldwide. That was a crucial episode for the upcoming years of the continental social practices, rebelling against Europe and North America. Nonetheless, such disclosure habits against Fulgencio Batista –the dictator– were neither firm nor intelligible. Therefore, a national time of savagery and political emergency began to impact the entire mainland (Castro and Collins, 2009). With the installation of a socialist government in Cuba and the Iron Curtain in Europe and Russia, there were some places where Cubans could migrate to get educated. However, some of them decided to go and live in Spain after their studies instead of returning to Cuba. Nowadays,

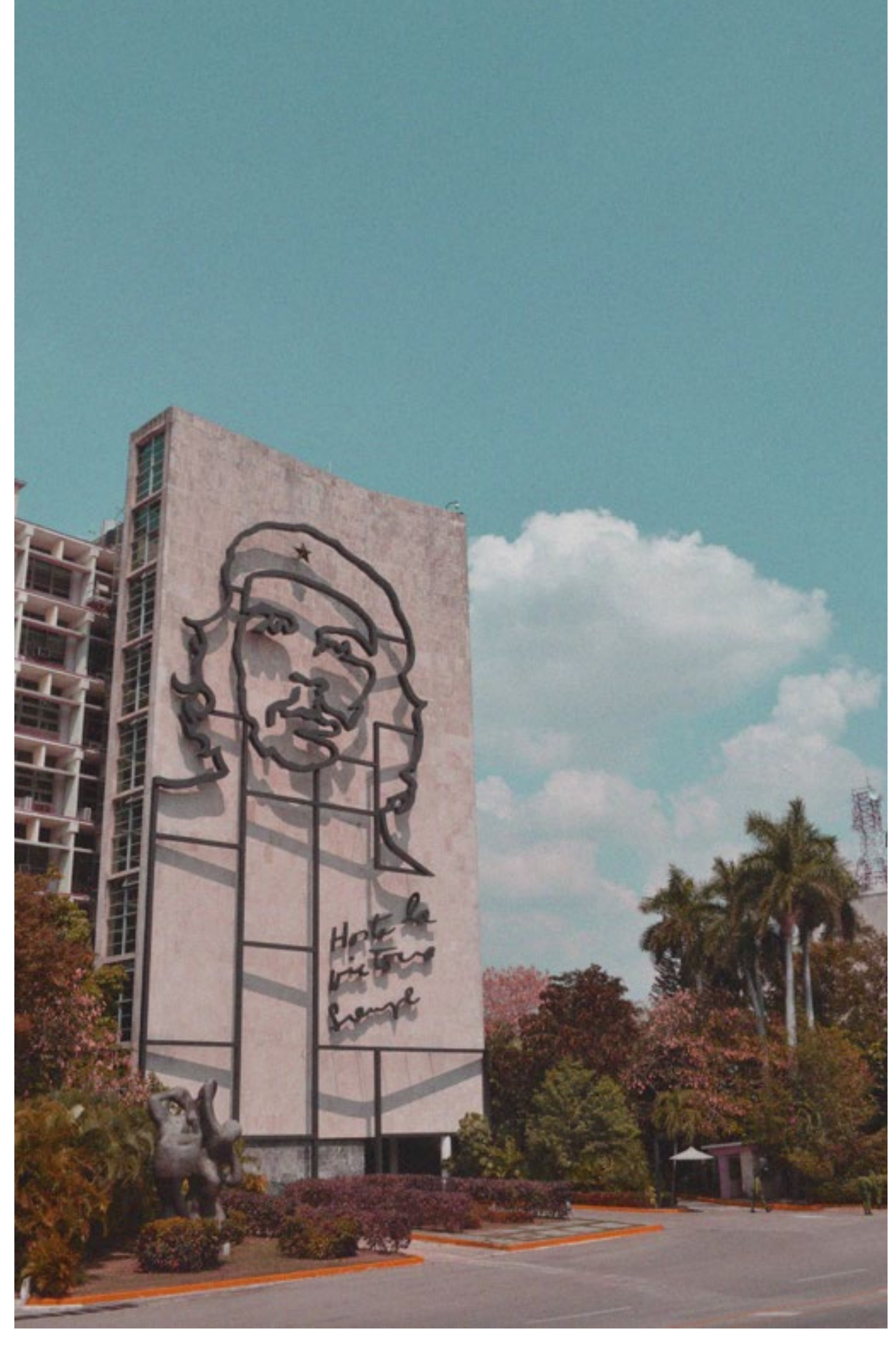


FIG.4. *La plaza de la revolución. Hasta la victoria siempre.* [Revolution square. Until Victory Forever] La Havana, Cuba. Verónica Posada, 2015

approximately 150,000 Cubans live in Spain.[9] From the 1960s until the 1970s, many ex-Nazi officers travelled to South America protected by the exfiltration network, which provided them with proper ways to escape prosecution (Compagnon, 2013). During this time, there was a lot of tension between Cuba and the U.S. due to the Missile Crisis, which put the world in an atmosphere of panic and consternation.

In 1963, Uruguay was the home of the main urban guerrilla group, *Tupamaros*. They tried destabilising the Uruguayan government and promoting the Cuban political system as the best possible approach to sustain the nation. In 1964, one of the first military coup d'états in South American countries took place in Brazil. It led to a 21-year dictatorship, and it was used as an 'example' for other countries such as Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Paraguay and Peru. Following the *Tupamaros,* in Peru the *Sendero Luminoso* [Shining Path] appeared in the 1970s, and it was the first Maoist guerrilla movement in Latin America calling for a revolution. In 1973 (and until 1990), General Augusto Pinochet took power in Chile, supported by the U.S. due to his interest in standing up for anti-Communist ideas. That process left Chile with a large number of disappearances, casualties and state crime cases. In addition, in 1976, another military coup took place in Argentina, responsible for the disappearance of more than 30,000 citizens (Moyano, 1992).

Due to many reasons explained above, Latin Americans began to move to the UK. Moreover, the British Government Immigration Act of 1971 permitted numerous individuals from Chile to settle in the UK as outcasts amid Pinochet's dictatorship. In the following two decades, Colombian and Argentinean migrants increased sharply, and the quantity of Latin American inhabitants, especially in London, started being noticeable by the beginning of the 1990s (McIlwaine, 2010, p13) when the transcultural manifestation of Latin London started as I will present in the following sections.

[9] Instituto Nacional de Estadística https://ine.es/dynt3/inebase/es/index.htm?-type=pcaxis&path=/t20/e245/p08/&file=pcaxis&dh=0&capsel=0

2.3. THE RE-CONSTRUCTION OF THE LATIN AMERICAN DIASPORAS DISCOURSE

–Decolonial Feminist approach

Additionally, this literature review must notice that I have in mind a Feminist approach, which is based on the work of women precursors of postcolonial studies and postcolonial feminism. Who have had a pivotal role in constructing the Latin American Diasporas' discourse, environments, transactions, and communities across the globe.

Firstly, the work of Audre Lorde (2012) reflects the transformation of silence into actions and the importance of creating visibility for communities through different art tools, in her case, poetry. Lorde's work is a transcultural approach to understanding Afro communities globally, as connected through their roots in Africa and their interactions in Global Cities. "Without community, there is no liberation, only the most vulnerable and temporary armistice between an individual and her oppression" (Ibid, p11); it is crucial to forge profound interactions across differences through the life and work of diaspora people within transatlantic and transnational practices, such as Politics. Moreover, Lorde alluded to the importance of positioning oneself in the world through the question Who Are You? So, the attention to the asymmetry of power across diaspora communities can be tackled. It is an attempt to define ourselves instead of being defined by someone else. An example of this are the official forms in the UK that usually ask for ethnicity. They

do not have the Latin American box, so the community has asked for this to be added since 2014. It is officially recognised only in four boroughs of thirty-two: Southwark, Lambeth, Hackney, and Islington (McIlwaine and Bunge, 2016; IRMO, 2021). Audre Lorde was undoubtedly an essential voice for creating the Intersectional discourse, later named by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1992) as the pursuit of a feminism that understands multiple forms of inequalities and oppressions –which will be developed further in chapter four–. Lorde's cutting-edge thinking is central to today's women's movements.

Secondly, the work of Angela Davis puts in evidence that activism through images can create positive changes, such as in the Civil Rights Movement in the USA in the 60s, a movement capable of dismantling the Jim Crow segregation laws, which was the division of the space between black and white people (Davis, 2011). Angela Davis was part of the USA communist party and collaborated with the Black Panther movement, organising for African-American rights. She was arrested in 1972, and people took to the streets with signs and songs to reclaim her freedom; she was released a year after that. Davis is an activist dedicated to highlighting and visualising how black and diasporic communities suffer the inheritance of slavery times and how the prison complex and industry are based on injustices and racism. She highlights the global inheritance of systematic colonial social inequalities in *Women, Race, and Class* (2011). Davis is also a key figure in the concept coined by Crenshaw in 1989: intersectionality, which means that feminism and women's movements have "to create a more egalitarian system" (Coaston, 2019).

Moreover, Davis creates a historical approach to the ideas of women, slavery, and the power of women within social movements. Enslaved black women resisted, defended, and, most importantly, organised to get freedom; the domestic space became political. That is why intersectionality is crucial within social movements and in diasporic communities. Davis noticed the importance of Radical Imagination for communities at risk –migrants in the global north– to create new dynamics of dwelling and imagine different ways of living. For Davis, the legacy of colonisation is represented in the division of the global north and the global south. Davis proclaims that revolution is a way of living and a form of connecting spiritually (2016). As will be exposed in Chapters Four and Six, this is crucial for Latin American women in London as the leaders of the diasporic community.

Furthermore, the work of bell hooks, in *Feminist Theory: From Margin the Centre* (1984), the author describes the concept of Sisterhood and the political solidarity between women, a place from where it is possible to create communities. Bell Hooks describes feminism as "a

movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression" (Ibid, p26). Yet, the practice of it has been very complex and has had massive thresholds, particularly for diaspora communities. It has been misleading as a vision that emphasises common oppression primarily based on the experience of white bourgeois women who ally to see themselves as victims, and that was toxic for feminism as it might imply that it is a movement only for women who feel victims and not for a more significant cause, such as resistance and surviving. Sadly, that disguises and mystifies an enormous social complexity that is sexism, a false sisterhood that is only based on the idea of seeing the other as a victim. It's based on shallower notions of bonding that do not aim for the creation of a shared and healthy environment but rather a place for anger and discontent, not for solutions. So that leads to the appearance of intersectionality as the need for movements that share strengths and resources, not the notion of victimhood: "To develop political solidarity between women, feminist activists cannot bond on the terms set by the dominant ideology of the culture" (Ibid, p47). Instead, create radical imagined places to help each other. One of the main issues of why feminism is crucial for the diaspora can be seen in the work of bell hooks. The author suggests throughout her work that fundamentally, all the inequality and oppression are rooted in traditional Western thinking; there is always someone superior and someone inferior. Like urban redevelopments all over London, those are displacing communities, dispersing them from their spaces of encounter. In such panorama, the role of images in the construction of a community that is feminist and diasporic is crucial. The creation of global cities has led to the development of a capacity of diasporic people to see themselves as outsiders and, for that, to encapsulate in their communities that are fixed to spaces at risk within cities.

Furthermore, we delve into the notion of the community from Maria Lugones's *Pilgrimages/peregrinajes: Theorizing coalition against multiple oppression*s (2003) in which, she addresses the notion of feminist communities as pluralist. The construction of spatiality is a site of resistance against the spatialities of domination, for example, urban developers that do not consider neighbourhood and locality. e.g. Delancey for Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre, Elephant One and Castle Square; Lend Lease for Heygate Estate land, now Elephant Park; and Grainger & Co in Seven Sisters –as it will be exposed in Chapter Three–. The notion of spatiality in Lugones' work is particularly interesting for this research as the author suggests: "Your life is spatially mapped by power. Your spot lies at the intersection of all the spatial venues where you may, must, or cannot live or move. Those intersections also spatialise your relations and your condition concerning the asymmetries of power that constitute those relations" (Ibid, p7). In that

sense, the everyday life spatiality of diasporic communities led by women is also mapped by the resistance to those powers and the construction of new realities; as exposed above, it is an act of logic and radical resistance. It is Fundamental to place emphasis on the Decolonial Feminist perspective of this thesis as a way of inhabiting with a consciousness of the struggle against the heritage of the colonies in terms of the extractivism of the hyper-capitalist world –The decolonial logic will be exposed further in Chapters Two, Three and Four–. In the words of Françoise Vergès, it is "reconnecting with the feminist power of imagination" (2019, p82) to return to the creative forces of resistance and defiance, which have been the basis for the construction of Latinidad.

Finally, the work of Sandra Cisneros is crucial for understanding women in the context of biculturalism at home and transcultural formations in urban places. From the 1970s, Cisneros (Donohue, 2010) started to power the Chicana literature-integrating bilinguals in her writing, which is a link to the resistance mentioned by Lugones in the sense that looking and embracing one's struggles can be a site of poetics and of self-recreating in host places. As Verónica Gago suggested in *La Potencia Feminista o el deseo de cambiarlo todo* (2019), recent feminist movements have given us the possibility to find security, peace, and recognition as a strange complicity feeling that is made of strength and urgency (p41).

In the processes that Latin Americans, particularly Latin American women, face in contemporary London, there is always a sense of reinsertion or recreation that the communities deal with in a remarkable manner. As Maria Lugones puts it, "The insertion often reread me, reconstructs me, whatever my desires or intention." That is, the impulse of finding a place in the global city is crisscrossing to its brutal forces of expulsion. So, the city constantly moves its migrants through its centrifugal and centripetal forces to produce its capital spatiality.

A decolonial feminist Latin London has been formed and it is expanding; I will explore the formation of this community in the following chapters and sections.

3.

BEING A LATIN AMERICAN IN THE UK AS A TRANS-CULTURAL SUBJECT

London was the centre of the British Empire, a rich place enriched by its migrants. As the previous capital of the British Empire, the city is a place of encounter between various migrants: Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshi, Polish, and Caribbean (Census, 2011). Those gatherings of migrants have made their own spaces in the city, feeding London's urban fabric with their social practices.[10]

The prefix trans connotes practices that go "across, over or beyond" space and time (Mikula, 2008). Back in 1940, Cuban Anthropologist Fernando Ortiz wrote *El Contra-punteo Cubano del Tabaco y el Azúcar* [*The Cuban Counterpoint of Tobacco and Sugar*], describing the island's colonial practices through the description of types of work. Ortiz presents the appropriation of Cuban land by Spanish colonisers as one of the first transnational practices in the Latin American region. An important argument of Ortiz is that what has happened in Cuban society since colonial times was not a process of acculturation, conceived as the erasure of one culture due to the imposition of another more powerful, but a process of transculturation. It involved a process of uprooting and rooting; it is a process of mourning and creation from the ashes of the culture in the place of origin. This implies an encounter in which both cultures acquire elements from the other and in this way create a 'new culture' that is nourished by various traditions and social practices (1940, p86). Yet, it does not erase the concept of a powerful culture impinging upon another one. Ortiz describes the process of colonisation in Latin America, particularly in Cuba: it happened "with force or by force, all its peoples and cultures, foreign and uprooted, with the

[10] Some of the information in this section has been taken from previous research done for the MA in Art and Visual Culture at the University of Westminster. Particularly the subjects Interpreting Space, Urban Cultures, Representing World Cultures and the Dissertation.

trauma of the original uprooting and a rough transplantation, to a new culture in creation" (Ibid, p88).[11] Regarding the process of colonisation in Latin American, particularly in Cuba. The concept was created in conjunction with the Polish sociologist Bronislaw Malinowski, as it is mentioned in the *The Cuban Counterpoint* (1940, p91) and in the work of Vladimiy A. Smith (2016). Ortiz and Malinowski correspond by letter about the connections of Cuba with Eastern European countries. This correspondence guided Ortiz's research and led to the first attempt at transcultural studies in Latin America. At the end of the chapter, which addresses the issue of transculturation, Ortiz argues:

> All cultures embraces are associated with what happened in the genetic intercourse of human begins, the subject always has something from both parents, yet it also is different from each of them. In that sense, the process of transculturation comprehends all the faces of the axis (1940, p90). [12]

From that point, other authors addressed the terminology in contemporary matters. For instance, Welsch (1999), in his studies of transculturality, defines how it seeks to create a permeable society in which local and global aspects are in constant dialogue with a new constellation of exchange and interaction. Welsch noted how "today the majority of persons are characterised by a plural, hybrid type of identity. People draw on sources from various cultures when developing their identity. Each arising from transcultural permeations" (Ibid, p6). Similarly, Molefi Kete Asante within his studies of the African American population in the USA, suggests that contemporary transcultural studies should seek "other ways in which to experience phenomena rather than viewing them from a Eurocentric vantage point" (2000, p3). In this sense, the process by which it is possible to experience transculturality in contemporary times is transnationalism as it is a term that defines the lives of migrants, which are constantly involved in social, political, and economic issues of the place of origin and the place of settlement, allowing the appearances of new cultural formations (Bauböck and Faist, 2010).

British Latinos or Latin Londoners (Román-Velázquez, 1996) are, of course, an example of people who have gone through a process of

[11] Author translation, see quote in original language: "Con la fuerza o a la fuerza, todas sus gentes y culturas, todas exógenas y todas desarraigas, con el trauma, del desarraigo original y de su ruda transplantación, a una cultura nueva en creación" (Ortiz, 1940, p88).

[12] It is also essential to problematise the perspectives of Ortiz in terms of heteropatriarchal and binary views, as it is associated with ideas of biological determinism.

transculturation, and that have dealt with the complexities of (re)locating national social practices. This leads to the creation of a new social environment and cultural practices, for instance, they might use visual codes and urban dynamics of other nations and mix them with their own practices within the host place. As an example, in the Seven Sisters Indoor Market in North London, one can dance salsa, drink Mate (a typical drink from Argentina), eat a Colombian Arepa and play *Rana*.[13] Moreover, the place is permeable to other identities, as there are also retailers from Uganda and Jamaica that form part of the Latin American community (Román-Velázquez, 2015). I will delve deeply into these transcultural practices in chapter three.

[13] Traditional game from Peru and Colombia.

3.1. THE LATIN AMERICAN COMMUNITY IN LONDON

As mentioned before, Latin Americans started to migrate to the UK in significant numbers around the 1970s onwards. During the 1980s, Latin American associations such as *Carila* (Latin American Welfare Group), LAWRS (Latin American Women's Rights Service) and *Casa Latinoamericana* (Latin American House) were established in London. Later, in the 1990s, there was already a large population of Latin Americans in the city, most of them coming as students, refugees, or asylum seekers, who ended up in low-paid jobs and the low-status sector of the Labour Market (McIlwaine & Bunge, 2016). Around the year 2000, a range of Latin American hubs started to get attention in London, for instance, the Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre in South London and the Seven Sisters Indoor Market in Seven Sisters, North London. In addition, a wide range of activities started to grow, such as digital communities and media newspapers, for example, Extra Media, Latino News and Express News, among others (Ibid; Cock, 2011; McIlwaine, 2011). Since 2008, there has been an increase in the number of Latin Americans coming from European countries, particularly Spain, the third displacement that most Latin Americans experienced.

In 2016, *Towards Visibility*, a report created by Professor Cathy McIlwaine estimated that around 250,000 Latin Americans were living in

the UK, of which 145,000 were living in Greater London (McIlwaine & Bunge, 2016). Earlier in 2011, Professor McIlwaine brought to light the first report about the Latin American community in London: *No Longer Invisible* (NLI). The report evidenced the trajectories of Latin Americans to London, showing that most Latin Americans in the UK were coming for economic reasons (43%), education (22%), political reasons (concentrated among Chilean, Ecuadorian and Colombians) (6.3%), family and social reasons (15.7%) and other (12.4%) (ibid, p41) [See Fig.5 and 6]. Most of them had passed through Spain as a 'gateway country' due to the language and migration policies for Latin Americans, and more than a quarter had Spanish nationality (26%). Later on, in the report from 2016, the data is compared and analysed in light of the 2011 Census, the Annual Population Survey, and other ranges of data (for instance, researchers' quantitative surveys of 400 Latin Americans). The report highlights that most Onwards Latin American Migrants (OLAs) were coming as EU citizens. The report addresses three key issues: the first one is reasons for moving from which it is possible to identify that almost 70% migrated to the UK because of economic reasons and chose London because of friends and family living in the city. 9 out of 10 OLA migrants live and work in the UK permanently. The graphic [Fig.7] shows that the majority left their home countries from 1996 to 2000 and 2001 to 2007 due to economic reasons, for example, in the case of Argentinians and Venezuelans, or conflict reasons in the case of Colombians or Ecuadorians. "Almost three-quarters of OLAs entered their previous European country as tourists, and more than 80% left with an EU passport to enter the UK" (Ibid, p43). 40% of OLAs arrived in London due to connections with family and friends, only 6% arrived through travel and official agencies, and 13% arrived alone with no contacts. The significant number of 40% gives a glimpse of the Latin American community that has been growing in London as a group that helps each other in the sense that they are in a place that, at first glance, allows what I have addressed earlier as the reproduction of Latinidad.

Secondly, the report addresses the Labour Market 50% of OLAs work in the cleaning and hospitality industry (contract and domestic). More than three quarters have more than one job and don't meet the level for the London living wage, and they have also experienced work exploitation. OLAs in the UK, particularly in London, experience downward occupational mobility; only 1% worked in cleaning back home, and only 10% did so in European countries. One fact is the language barrier, which does not allow many Latin Americans to get jobs related to their careers and equivalent to their qualifications. It is important to highlight the fact that no men worked in cleaning back home, whereas in London, 65% of men worked in cleaning. Only 1.5% of OLAs have managed

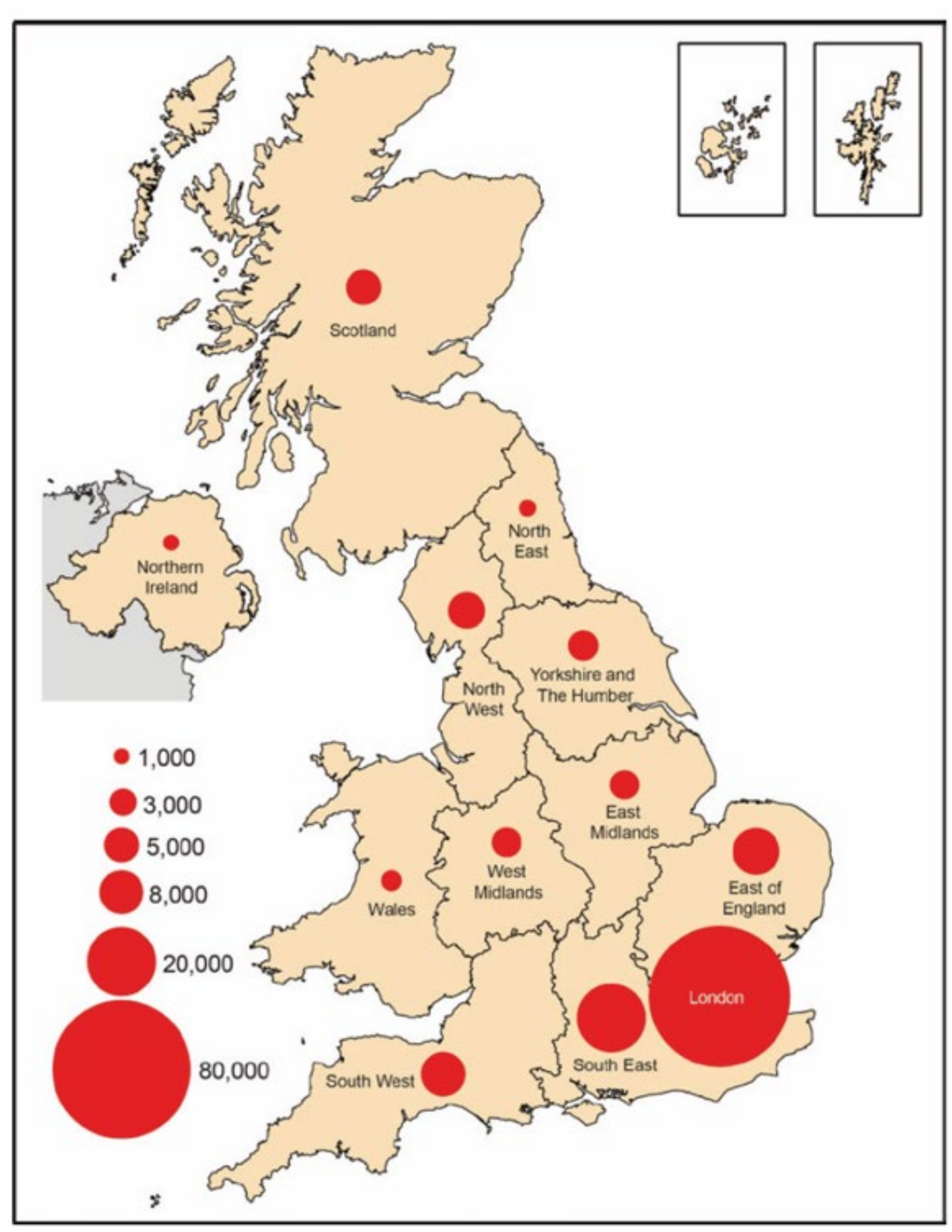


FIG.5. Latin Americans in the UK. Source: ONS Census 2011, Office for National Statistics © Crown Copyright 2013

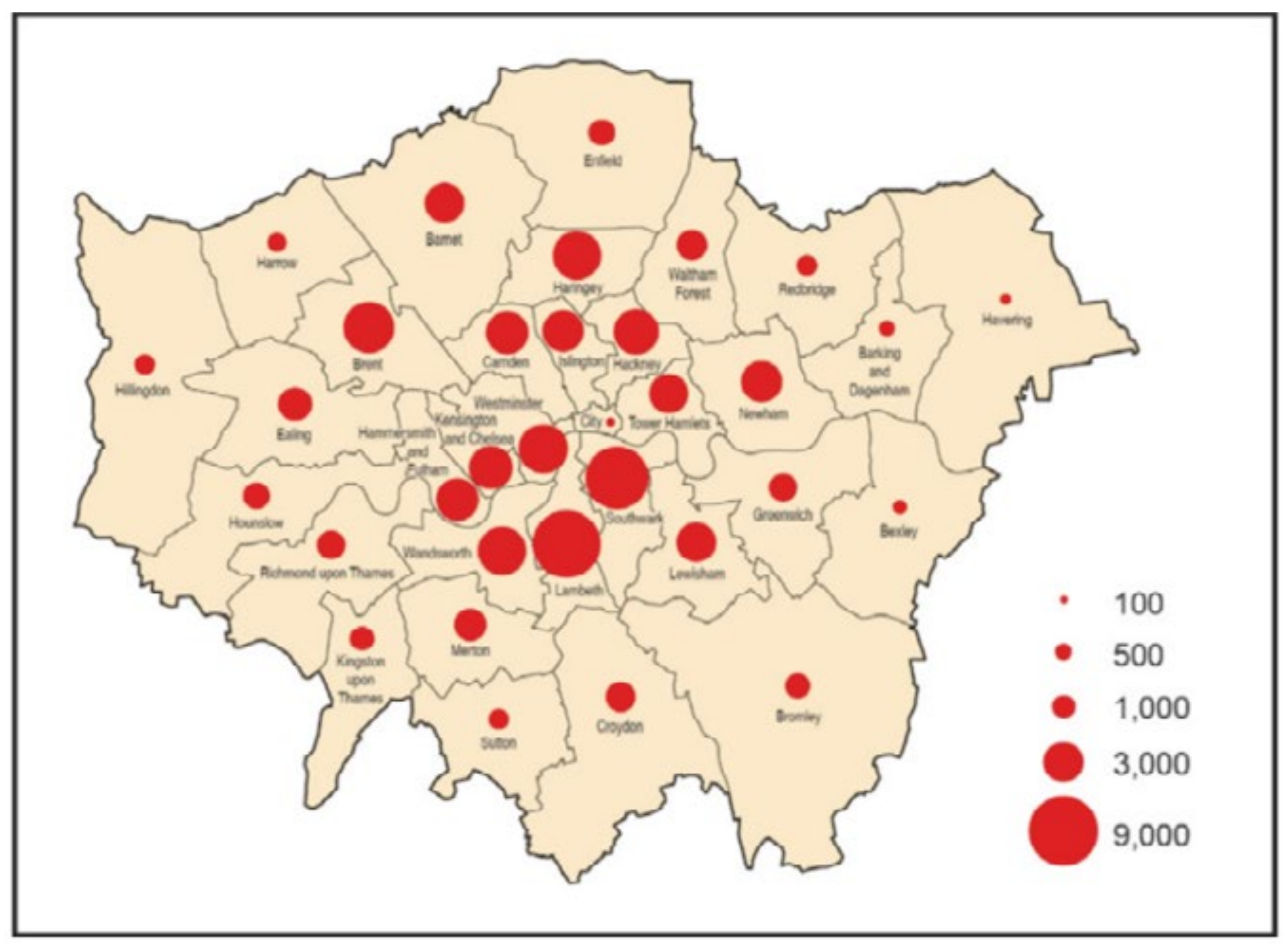


FIG.6. Latin Americans in London. Source: ONS Census 2011, Office for National Statistics © Crown Copyright 2013

to establish their own business; that is mainly because they come with few options, and they take the first job someone offers them to be able to cover living expenses. Latin Americans established in London for a more extended period (the first big wave of migrants in the 1970s) have managed to acquire their own businesses, for instance, the *Pueblito Paisa Café* or *La Chatica*. Many onward migrants have experienced unfair conditions at work and are unable to claim due to migration status, even though they have EU citizenship (Ibid, p52).

Thirdly, the report addresses wider housing and living conditions. Overcrowding conditions are widespread amongst OLAs due to the fact that they have to share rooms and houses with friends, family, and, in some cases, unknown people in private rental housing. Owner occupation is extremely low. There is a big issue with temporary housing and homelessness, above the average in London. 3% of Latin Americans are homeless, and that is also a consequence of the level of debt, with 51% of OLAs having to borrow money since their arrival in London -that is higher than the NLI report, which at that time stated only 37% had debts. It is important to mention that almost half of the OLAs send remittances to their homes or their places of residence before arriving in the UK (Ibid, p54). Finally, the report *Towards Visibility* highlights how migrant individuals rely on migrant communities; for instance, they seek advice to register with the GP, to claim housing and child benefits. Around 25% of OLAs are connected with LAWRS (Latin American Women's Rights Services), 18% are associated with IRMO (Indo-American Refugee and Migrant Organisation), and 6% with the Blackfriars Advice Centre [Fig.6] (Ibid, p60).

From the information above, it can be seen that Latin Americans are a highly vulnerable population and that they find reassurance in the diasporic communities. Around 67.9% thought there is discrimination towards Latin Americans as a community in London, with 51% of the cases taking place in the workplace and 90% saying that it is due to English language difficulties (Ibid, p61). For those reasons, the Elephant and Castle and Seven Sisters areas have increased their importance in the city as places of gathering, and safe diasporic hubs for Latin Americans in London.

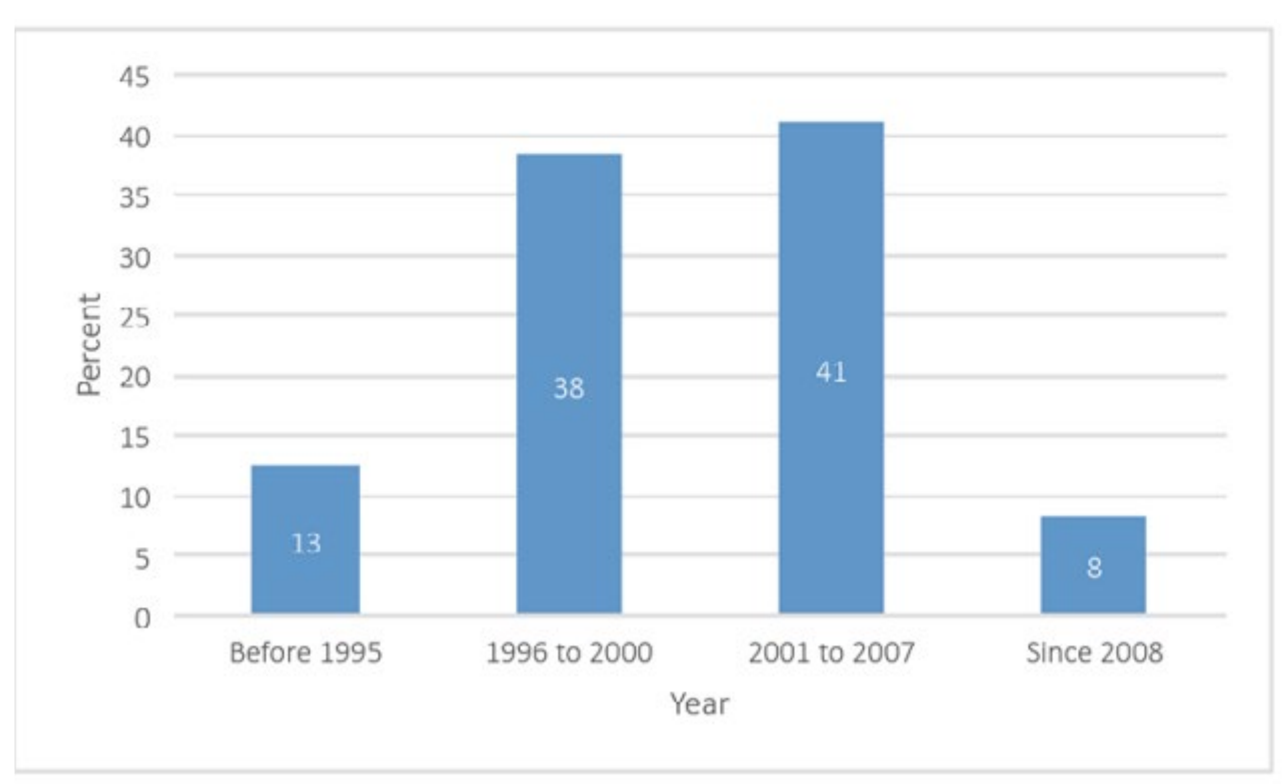


FIG.7. Year OLAs left origin. Professor Cathy McIlWaine survey for *Towards Visibility* (n=400)

3.2. GENTRIFICATION: LATIN AMERICAN DIASPORIC SPACES AT RISK

The academic and activist Patria Román-Velázquez has contributed essentially to understanding space and attachment to a place in the context of urban change, particularly in London, in the areas of Elephant and Castle, Seven Sisters, and Brent. Román-Velázquez (1996) addressed the topic through the idea of *The Making of Latin London*. Later, Román-Velázquez & Hill's (2016) work focuses on how urban change harms the Latin American communities in those areas of the city, putting their cultural practices at risk of disappearance. It also highlights how local authorities tend to ignore the community as they benefit from the activities of influential developers operating there, such as Lend Lease and Grainger & Co.

The cited works prove how Latin Americans have appropriated specific spaces in London, re-developing imagery from their own countries to strengthen their identities and give them the character of transnational centre points. Additionally, the author uncovers how these spaces are endangered, because of what Sassen (2014) highlights as the logics of expulsion of the neoliberal city, in which minorities and settlers face the powers of the worldwide economy, that is, gentrification.

The notion of gentrification—notable in contemporary society—is undeniably vital to understanding the present circumstances of Latin

FIG.8. Anti-gentrification campaign in Southwark. Elephant and Castle area.
Verónica Posada. (2016)

Americans in London and many cities around the globe. The term was coined by the British Sociologist Ruth Glass (1964) to allude to an issue of rivalry for space in which the removal of average working-class individuals or white-collar workers happens. Decades later, Loretta Less (2008) contended that the centrality of Glass' work, in connection with the procedures indicated by improvement, was that she anticipated the urban future, given the contemporary flood of land speculations and the impact that huge relocation has had in London. Furthermore, Sharon Zukin defined the gentrification process as divisions in modern society that lead to the loss of authenticity in the city: "A city loses its soul when its continuity is broken" (2010, 25). Zukin's exploration in New York strengthened the ideas of changes inside migrants' networks in the city, which have been moved out because of the quest for a modern creative hub, as part of its characterisation as a millennial city, developed by what Richard Florida (2012) later called *the creative class* or on the other hand 'the bourgeois bohemians'. These people were ready to change marginalised territories in urban areas to make them increasingly liveable and appealing to potential financial specialists.

For David Harvey (1989), since the 1980s, cities started to be promoted as centres of entertainment, and the role of local governments, such as Haringey and Southwark in this case, shifted into partnerships with private developers to make them more attractive and innovative to trigger consumerism. In 1999, with the Labour government in power, another London recovery plan was opened –The Greater London Authority [GLA] - aiming for blended networks and inclusion where there had been exclusion. Systematic regenerative changes emerged all over London as the after-effect of coalitions between local government, the market and real estate speculators. Thus, this created polarisation and urban uprooting with arrangements that went for 'mixed ownership housing' and requested the demolition of council estates. An example of this is the Heygate Estate in Southwark, the obliteration of which prompted firm criticism of the council as a 'social cleansing' institution, as can be seen in [Fig.8], which uses the logo of Southwark Council as a visual metaphor for urban displacement. The atmosphere in the process of urban change in London has shifted into a post-political environment – protest, dissent, and resistance have been part of institutionalised urban regeneration (Lees, 2014, p937).

In urbanism, practices in space are intertwined with the massive flows of migration that characterised the global city. In this panorama, an ancient space, such as the urban market (Elephant and Castle and Seven Sisters are examples of such markets), shifts into a

transcultural site that allows the production of a new type of dwelling. It is an urban scape of political and social discussion, a place that embodies Lefebvre's definition of a *right to the city*, where citizens should be able to shape the process of urbanisation; the author emphasises the process of losing spaces of encounter (1996). Harvey reiterates the *right to the city* in a more contemporary discussion, as the *urban revolution* in which cities have become such an extreme manifestation of capitalism that claiming a right to the city implies struggle and a reconstruction of the urban system (2012).

Román-Velázquez has made an essential contribution to the understanding of the redevelopment process in Elephant and Castle, London. The author mentioned, "The processes of urban regeneration and intra-urban competition across London Boroughs for a place in the making of the world city obliterate the aspirations of long-standing residents and local businesses. In this context, the Latin American presence in Elephant and Castle is at risk" (2016, p91). That is also happening in Seven Sisters, London. The local government's responses to the systematic problems of gentrification (that had been denounced on many occasions all over the city) will lead to a change, be it positive or negative. The council's response has benefited private property developers instead of local traders and residents, who have shaped the area into a space of social interactions.

Indeed, in 'global cities' there is a new dynamic of expulsion, in Sassen's words (2014), which appears in the urban fabric, breaking familiar connections between neighbourhoods, enhancing dynamics of isolation and, consequently, homogenising urban places that no longer identify with one particular place. This means the dynamics of belonging are undermined. All this creates anxiety about the urban future and puts diasporic spaces at risk of vanishing from the city. Yet, the Latin Londoners and people interested in the community have gathered forces and created manifestations of resistance to put the problem to a much wider audience, hoping to reclaim the values and traditions at risk of disappearing.

3.2.1. THE ELEPHANT AND CASTLE SHOPPING CENTRE

The Elephant and Castle area used to be known as the "Piccadilly Circus of South London" (Humphrey, 2013, p5). The place's name was taken from a public house around 1765. Elephant and Castle was a meeting point for social interactions, a busy roundabout full of horses, [Fig.9 and 10] cars, buses [Fig.11 and 12], shops founded by local entrepreneurs [Fig.13] and leisure centres [Fig.14]; the essence of the place was and still is its people. The blitz left South London brimming with rubble and destruction [Fig.15 and 16], so in the 1960s, the development of the Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre planned to rejuvenate the territory and give South Londoners another space for social interactions [Fig.17 and Fig.18].

Even though this area is a business space, it is genuinely how it has moved into being a social area. It is a gathering point occupied by the Latin Americans who arrived in London from the 1970s onwards. "What marks them as 'Latin Americans' is the agglomeration of commercial spaces owned by and aimed at Latin American migrants as well as the recurrent use of local public and community spaces for gathering and faith meetings" (Cock,2011, p180). The area is a dedicated portrayal of transculturality (Welsch, 1999), where various social gatherings crossed social limits and became a part of London's dynamics.

FIG.9. Elephant and Castle Roundabout 1786. Southwark Archives

FIG.10. Elephant and Castle traffic. Around 1826. Southwark Archives

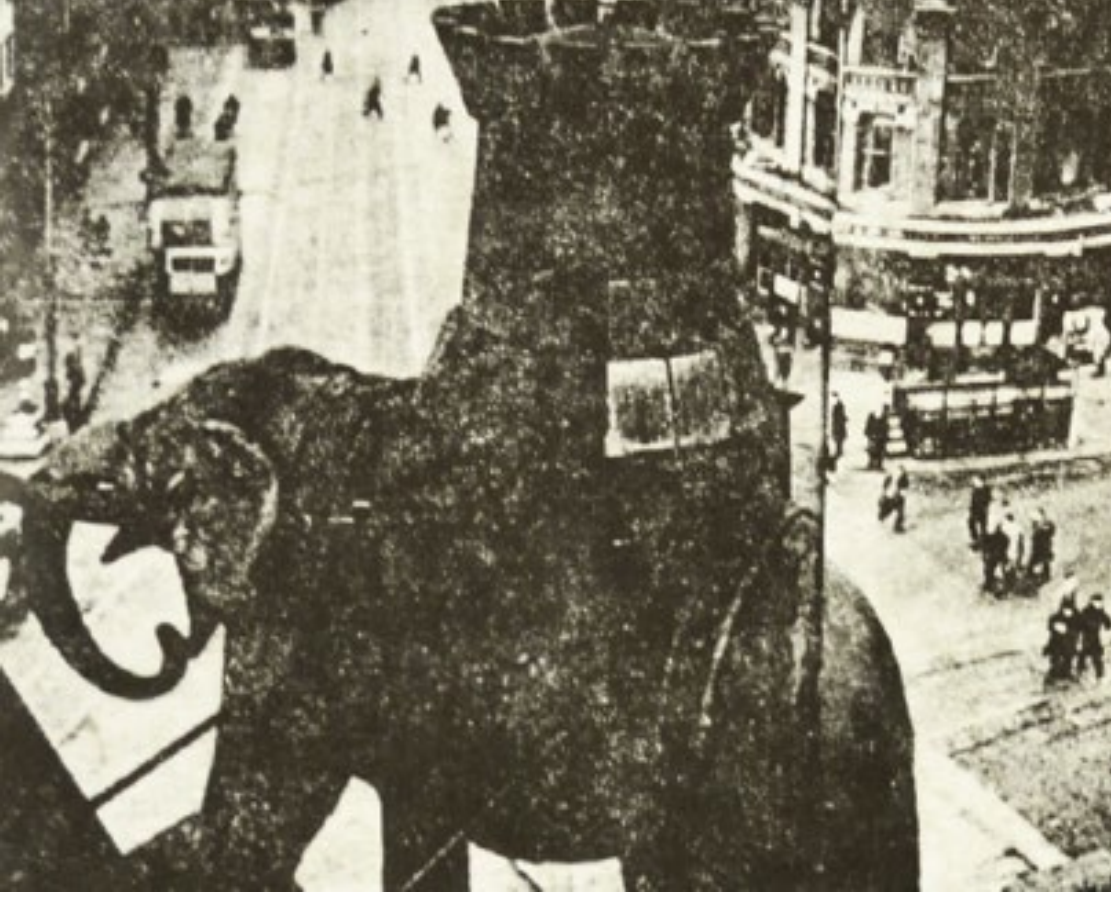


FIG.11. Six traffic arteries of South London. Elephant and Castle symbol. Indian Elephant with *howdah*. 1949. Southwark Archives

FIG.12. Walworth Road. Southwark Archives

FIG.13. Elephant and Castle Theatre.Southwark Archives

MEET YOU
AT LA FOGATA

South London - or South America?

FIG.14. *La Fogata* one of the first Colombian *Cafés* in Elephant and Castle.1993. A symbol of South America in London.Southwark Archives

FIG.15. Elephant and Castle juction. London News February 11, 1961. Southwark Archives

FIG.16. Elephant and Castle Roudabout. It can be seen The Metropolitan Tarbernacle, The Faraday Memorial, Elephant and Castle station and The Shopping Centre. 1970.Southwark Archives

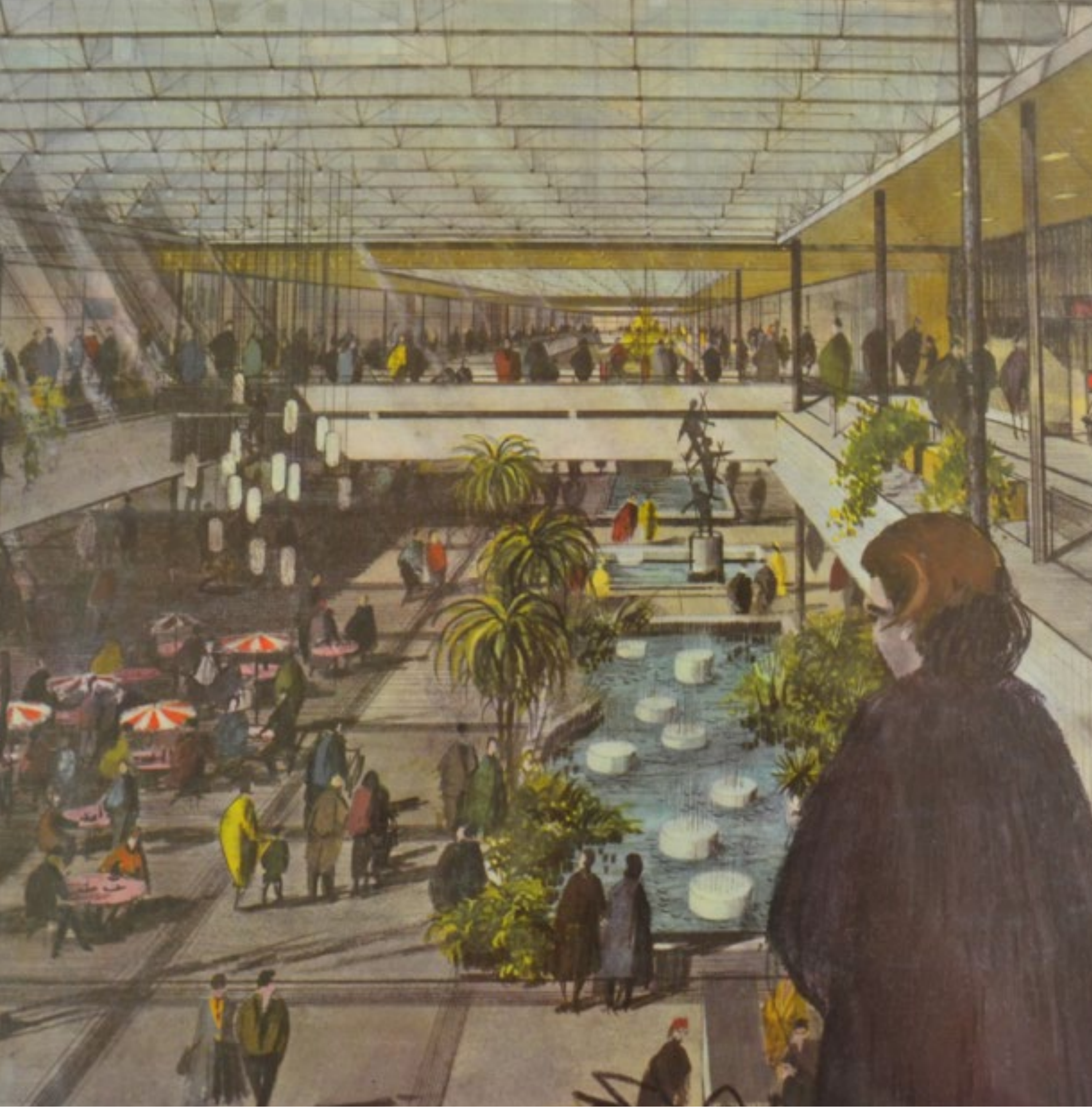


FIG.17. Design Proposal for Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre. 1965. Southwark Archives

FIG.18. Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre. From outside The Metropolitan Tabernacle.1976. Southwark Archives

In May 2016, Southwark Council acknowledged the area as London's Latin Quarter (Román-Velázquez & Hill, 2016). Yet, the area has been passing through a regeneration plan resulting from the forces of capitalistic investment and interest, which aim to profit from migrants that have recovered the area from its deterioration. As Román-Velázquez (2014) mentions, what is at stake in the area's urban regeneration "is real estate speculation and private ownership in the search for global competitiveness..." (p90). Considering the bleak conditions of the Elephant and Castle zone, looking for better conditions and transport is for sure a positive thing. Yet, it is likewise vital to consider the community when the recovery plans are drawn, yet for this situation, lamentably, that has not been a priority. The consistent uprooting of a network place because of its privatisation causes society discontinuity that somehow breaks down the layers of London and evaporates the presence of communities in specific areas.

Sadly, on September 24, 2020, the Shopping Centre was closed. It is now demolished, and the site is in the reconstruction process for the New Town Centre, called The Elephant and Castle Town Centre development. Not only was the pandemic harsh for retailers and the local community, but the closure of the Shopping Centre also implies further isolation, displacement, the production of uncertainty, and lack of ownership. There were 150 Latin American and migrant ethnic businesses in the Elephant and Castle area. In the latest report *Supporting migrant and ethnic economies through regeneration in London: Lessons from community research, activism, and campaigning with Latin Elephant* (Román-Velázquez, 2021), it is mentioned that approximately 40 of 97 retailers don't have a place to move or relocate. Some retailers have been allocated a place in the new Castle Square in Elephant Road, those at the arches remain, and others were reallocated to Elephant One and Deacon Street. Nevertheless, it has broken their link as people have to walk more considerable distances to meet. It has dispersed the community; in particular, the clients think that they are gone, not to mention the impact that COVID-19 has had on their sales numbers. At the moment, traders in Elephant Castle haven't managed to get agreements with the council or developers for the new relocation sites. The place where they are at the moment is not cost-effective, and it seems temporary, like a non-place.[14]

Importantly, it's not all bad, as Latin Elephant mentioned in their report: "However, under these circumstances, it has also strengthened community ties and a sense of solidarity

[14] See https://www.35percent.org/posts/2021-11-20-elephant-traders-without-new-premises-one-year-after-shopping-centre-closes/

amongst the working-poor, economically disadvantaged and ethnic and migrant groups. Strategic alliances are formed at times of extreme uncertainty" (Ibid, p21). Some social movements like Up the Elephant, Save Latin Village, Save Brixton Arches, 35% Campaign, and the Wards Corner Community Coalition have gained global visibility and have taken the Latin American community one step into recognition around London. It is a matter of time as to whether the Elephant and Castle area and its Latin American spirit will remain.

3.2.2. THE SEVEN SISTERS INDOOR MARKET

Around the year 2000, Latin Americans started settling in Tottenham, North London, remodelling and improving the aspects of the Seven Sisters Indoor Market –*Pueblito Paisa* [Fig.19] between Seven Sisters Road and Wards Corner. The market took its name from the homonymous place in Medellín, Colombia, known as a tourist spot, representing the traditional towns of the region Antioquia. The Seven Sisters Indoor Market (SSIM) is a group of Edwardian buildings located where a department store functioned until the 1970s when the buildings were abandoned [Fig.20 and 21].

Although the market has African, Afro-Caribbean and Indian retailers, its soul is predominantly Latin American. There are cafés, hair salons, clothes shops, money transfer agencies, property agencies, law offices, a store renting Latin American TV shows or *novelas*, a butcher and a Latin American food store that transforms into a bar around 7 pm, where people dance and chat until it closes around 3 am, and even an architecture agency. In every corner, someone speaks Spanish or Portuguese.

The land of the SSIM is owned by TFL (Transport For London), yet Haringey Council supplies permission for developments. Private landlords rent or sell the units to different traders, who put the market to work. Between 1970 and 2007, the area was deprived and ignored. In 2007, the council closed a

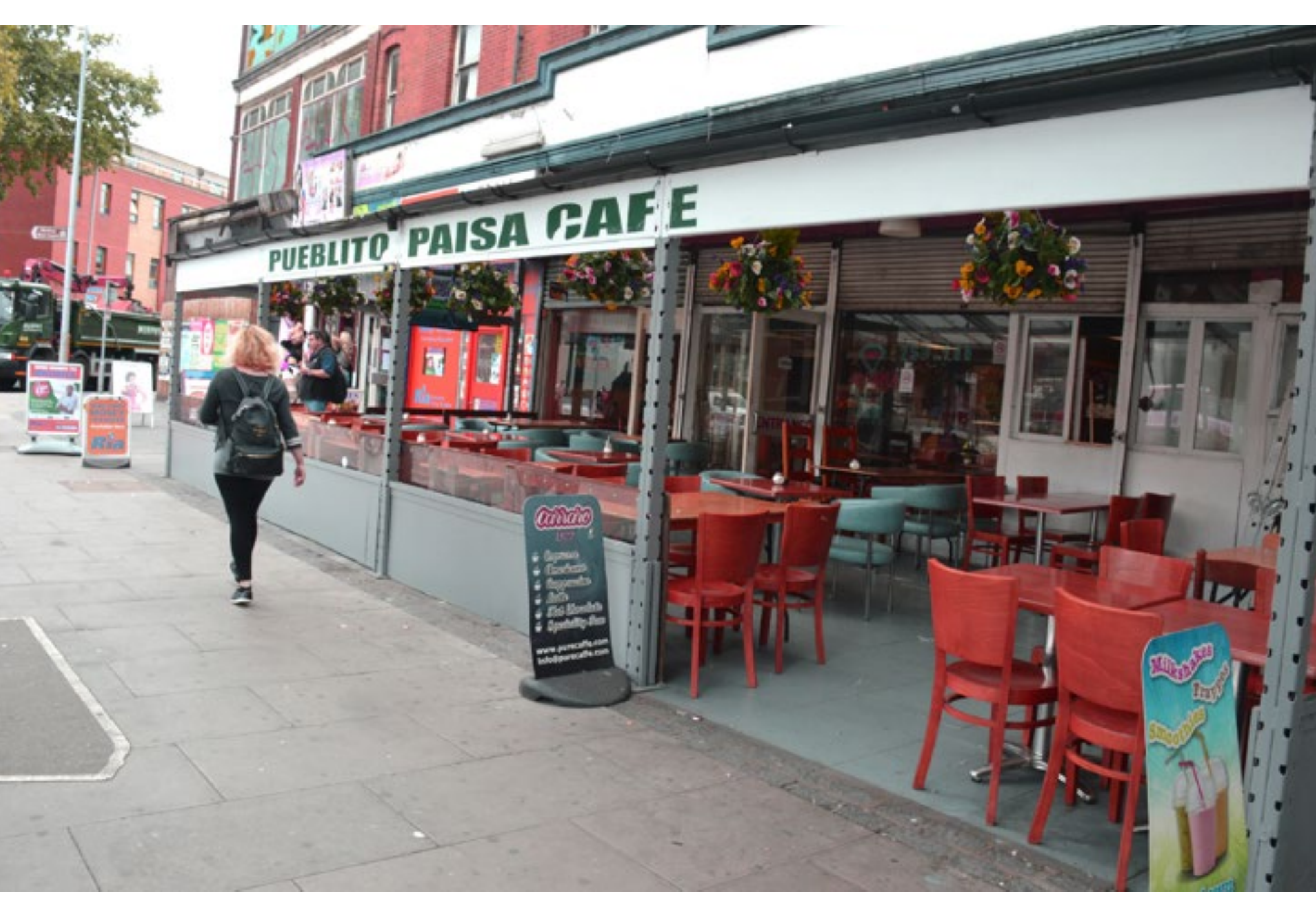


FIG.19. *Café Pueblito Paisa*. Entrance to The Seven Sisters Indoor Market. Summer 2016. Verónica Posada

FIG.20. Wards corner abandoned. View from the Seven Sisters High Road.1976. Southwark Archives

FIG.21. The Seven Sisters Market in 2002.Southwark Archives

deal with Grainger Co (a UK developer –Residential Asset Manager), and the company had planning permission to build 200 houses and more than 40,000 sq. ft of commercial space (Russell, 2016) and regenerate the Wards Corner area (the place encloses by West Green Rd, Suffield Rd and Seven Sisters Rd). Traders mobilised immediately and created a community trust called Wards Corner Community Coalition (WCCC) and the Save Latin Village Campaign to produce an alternative development plan based on the community's needs and desires [Figs.22,23 24 and 25]. As a reaction to the community proposal, Grainger Co. changed its plan to negotiate with the WCCC, and by the end of 2008, its plan was once again approved by the council. This meant that by 2010, the two plans were approved. However, the community won a landmark judgment in The High Court, and the developers had their plan repealed in mid-2010. The community was given three years to raise the funds to deliver the plan. Sadly, they were unable to get all the funding, and the council had supported Grainger Co. to make changes to their proposal. At the end of 2016, the council announced a CPO (Compulsory Purchase Order) (WCCC, 2016). It is worth mentioning that in order to obtain more support from the community, Grainger Co. invited the traders to both individual and group meetings to let them know about the plan. They promoted these meetings as a process of participatory redevelopment, but in the end it was only making the traders participate in their own exploitation. Trying to negotiate between traders, Grainger Co., the council and TFL (Transport for London) has been a process of resistance and struggle in which the impetus for change has trapped the community into a process of participant exploitation. It demonstrates the failures in the systems of participation in urban planning.

Nonetheless, social movements involving some of its members have moved forward in resisting, challenging and confronting this redevelopment process. In parallel, with awareness of the problems, Dr Patria Román-Velázquez in alliance with Professor Cathy McIlwaine, Carolina Velásquez, Libia Villazana and Katie Wright, have established the charity Latin Elephant –mentioned above –that aims to incorporate Latin Americans and migrant minority ethnic business in the processes of urban change in London:

> Latin Elephant facilitates channels of communication between retailers, councils, local organisations, developers and other stakeholders and regeneration initiatives. We encourage attendance at consultation events, workshops, and conferences to raise awareness of the needs of the Latin American community (2014).

Furthermore, the acknowledgement of Elephant and Castle as The London Latin Quarter, and Seven Sisters Indoor Market as Latin America in North London, can also be a strategy to let Latin Americans know that they have a right to decide about their future urban spaces, where they can enjoy gathering and practising everyday life activities that nourish cultural expression from both sides of the Atlantic.

FIG.22. Proposal of Grainger Co., where it is clearly not a Latin American-inclusive proposal, as they argue in a meeting with the community in summer 2016

FIG.23. Proposal made by Wards Corner Community Coalition

FIG.24. The Proposal of Grainger Co

FIG.25. Proposal made by Wards Corner Community Coalition

In this process, representation has played a crucial role in allowing people to join a social encounter for reflecting on place and identity and working as a vehicle for communities to start their urban revolution, in which the cracks of urban regeneration processes and what can be lost to gain economic profit is evidenced. Later, in 2017, the community managed to achieve its recognition by UN High Commissioner Office as a cultural place "condemning the development of the Seven Sisters Indoor Market as a threat to the 'right to cultural life'" (UN Human Rights, 2017).[15]

Since March 2020 in the dawn of the pandemic, the market has been closed down and only the high street units, like the *Pueblito Paisa Café* remain open. In August 2021 Grainger Co. retired from the redevelopment project with Haringey Council, as part of the impact COVID-19 had on the real-estate industry. Haringey Council has given TFL the responsibility of the market. So far, TFL has accepted the 2019 Wards Corner Community Coalition plan to be delivered by West Green Road/Seven Sisters Development Trust, a non-profit organisation. The plan was co-designed with UNIT 38, an architectural practice, "who specialise in working with community groups to deliver high-impact social projects and community wealth building strategies through a co-design and co-research approach" (2022) whose members are part of the community, architects David McEwen and Ben Beach.[16]

Nonetheless, there is a group of traders that does not agree with this plan. There is a profound struggle at the root of these disagreements between the traders. What is at stake in the market is how to overcome different political ideologies to seek what is best for a community that has had its place of income closed for almost three years and will need to come up with an interesting and viable proposal to be accepted by the council and TFL.[17] This dynamic will be explored further in chapter three when I expose the urban diaspora and the gentrification panorama in London, and in chapter six when I discuss the Urban Market via film representation.

[15] See https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?LangID=E&NewsID=21911

[16] See https://unit38.org/home - https://www.wardscornerplan.org/ and https://columnadigital.com/seven-sisters-la-felicidad-es-enorme-en-el-mercado-latino-de-londres/

[17] Listen to https://open.spotify.com/show/3UV77vJmHol1no68Ml1zPc?si=038ff-4b4167e43c3

4.

CONCLUSION: LATIN LONDON REPRESENTATION, STRATEGIES OF RESISTANCE

The Israeli Ariella Azoulay in *The Civil Contract of Photography* (2008) argues that there is another way to create space and think of politics in stateless places, one that can be manifest "in the form of nongovernmental political activities of many forms and agendas, in empirical form throughout the world today. That is politics founded not on singularity, but on the equality of the governed" (p88). To explain how photography is as a space that goes beyond the boundaries of the sovereign state, Azoulay goes back to some decades between 1839, when the declaration of the invention of photography was made by the French government – who considered the Daguerreotype the first ever photographic technique put in the hands of civilians– in hand with the invention of the portable cameras around 1877 (p116). Indeed, photography became a place to think about politics freed from the state. Azoulay argues that anyone involved in a photographic situation is a citizen of the citizenry of photography, and in that sense, the civil space of photography is open; it is an encounter itself, and it constitutes a community (the photographer, the photographed person and the spectator) - it is a space of plurality. The duty derived from The Civil Contract of Photography is to use representation towards other citizens. Representation, as a strategy of resistance, enacts visibility of civil grievances to trigger activist acts; it is an act of activism for struggling communities. The citizenship of photography is a global form of relation that is not subject to nationalism and nation-states.

Similarly, Nicholas Mirzoeff (2011) argues that visuality has often been a process of classification, which designates social and cultural practices. In contrast, Mirzoeff makes a demand for *The Right to Look* as a claim to the right to the real, which is the boundary of visuality from the mind to the territory. The Right to Look is related to The Civil Contract of Photography as a way to:

> Encounter a grammar of nonviolence—meaning the refusal to segregate—as a collective form. ... [T]he right to look is not simply a matter of assembled visual images but the grounds on which such assemblages can register as meaningful renditions of a given event (Ibid, p477).

The given event alludes to a situation in which *The Civil Contract of Photography* takes place; it is a space of cooperation where a process of recognition of the other enters the realm of empathy to understand codes and symbols that are visible in a particular context, which is also visual activism. Likewise, Gillian Rose, in her book *Visual Methodologies* (2016), provides a wide range of methods to study and understand visual culture, particularly the study of images regarding cultural significance, social practices and power relations embedded in the ways of seeing and imaging. Throughout the text, the author argues how images have been analysed, the discourse fixed in the image itself, the production and circulation of the images, and the social effect they can produce, which is the specific interest of this research. As Rose suggest: "paying attention to the effects of images is fundamental to a new field of study that has been emerging over the past few years, perhaps another symptom of the importance of images in the contemporary period" (Ibid, p10). The socio-cultural context where the image is produced mediates the impact of the display and circulation of the image itself. For the Latin American community in London, representation triggers dynamics of belonging, which enhance the construction of socio-political, economic and cultural bonds.

Consequently, the relation between representation and cultural memory is imperative. Cultural memory is defined as a construction made by members of several different sociocultural groups (Halbwachs, 1992), which change in time and space and are exposed to different interests that impinge upon a particular society, creating permeable memories between different cultures. Traditions, values, and actions are shared between different social groups through memories. To further develop the notion of memory, it is fundamental to highlight the importance of the visual within the creation of collective memory, as it acts directly into the representation of elements that a group has in common, and elements that are more stable during time-space lead to the creation of archives and collective representation. Collective memory is also the creation of a visual culture related to events and actions; it enhances the sense of belonging. Therefore, memory is a web constantly being produced via dynamics of remembering and forgetting, which are triggered by forces of resistance.

In that manner, Latin Londoners, as mentioned before (Román-Velázquez 1996), have undergone a transculturation process. In that process of (re) location to a host place, the image works as a mechanism that allows representations

of place and identity. In this literature review, I have presented the theoretical framework for the coming chapters. Firstly I have presented the role of representation for the migration process and the formation of diasporic communities, followed by the narratives of Latinidad, explaining the origins of the concept as well as its complexities, to go on and address the community of Latin Americans in the UK and debate around what does it mean to be Latin American in London, highlighting the urban regeneration dynamics happening in the city that threaten the places for encounter for the Latin American community. Lastly, I finish by emphasizing the importance of the image for the process of identity formation, and community making.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCHING REPRESENTATION IN LATIN LONDON

METHODOLOGY

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCHING REPRESENTATION IN LATIN LONDON (METHODOLOGY)

1. RESEARCHING THE URBAN DIASPORA:
Contribution To Knowledge, Questions, Aims and Objectives.
Introduction to case studies.

- **1.1.** Research Background
  - **1.1.1.** Methodologies Diagram, Positionality
  - **1.1.2.** Transculturality and Visual Culture
  - **1.1.3.** Gentrification Panorama
  - **1.1.4.** Latin Americans Visual Activism
  - **1.1.5.** The Essay Form
- **1.2.** Arts Based Research Approach
  - **1.2.1.** Podcast Latin London
- **1.3.** An Autoethnography Approach

2.2. **MEMORY, IMAGINED COMMUNITIES AND REPRESENTATION**

- **2.1.** The Visual as Essayistic
- **2.2.** Photo Essay
- **2.3.** Film Essay

3. CONCLUSION: VISUAL RESISTANCE

1. RESEARCHING THE URBAN DIASPORA

The migration experience triggers a sense of feeling alienated. In the process of recovering identity as a subject of alienation, otherness, and ambivalence (Bhabha, 1994), the image triggers recognition and community building, actions that allow for the construction of a diaspora. In Hall's (2014) terms, a diaspora is a group of people that share principles of ruptures, differences, and similarities; it emerges from a collective identity, which means that a social group "reflects the common historical experiences and shared cultures codes which provide us, as 'one people', with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of references and meaning" (Ibid, p223). The comprehension of the image as a system that drives collective identities into action, offering the possibilities for diasporas to cultivate an identity -connects a host place with the place of origin. Those identities become collective; they are constructed through discursive processes where the image plays a crucial role in conversing with the modalities of power in the place or places of creation, as proposed by Hall in *Who needs 'identity'?* (1996). This then creates a process in which the aesthetics of the existence of a diasporic group questions symbolic boundaries of host places built upon movement and displacement usually expressed in the urban environment. Therefore, diasporas as urban communities enlarge the notion of familiarity through the reconstruction of social and cultural values related to a place of origin; the city becomes a space where family values interact with the gathering space, producing a sense of warmth and belonging.

In this chapter, I present how this research examines the role of visual culture as a tool for activism within the diaspora community of Latin Americans in London from 1970 onwards.[18] To establish a comprehensive understanding of these debates, the specific objectives of this research

[18] See Appendix A.

address the characteristics of the Latin American community in London, the relationship between transcultural formations, visual culture studies, urban studies, social movements and cultural memory as topics that refer to the re-construction of urban habits from the place of origin to the host place, within the diasporic condition. By doing so, this chapter presents my research questions, and how I have approached them through my case studies, I present and place emphasis on my contribution to knowledge through my key findings, and then I move on to present my methodologies diagram as part of my thinking process, then I present my arts-based research approach: The Latin London podcast, and the audiovisual production *Spores/Esporas*. Later I present the *essayistic* as a key methodological innovation, to conclude with the role of visual culture as resistance and activism.

CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE, QUESTIONS, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES. Introduction to case studies.

As demonstrated above, my contribution to knowledge derives from understanding the representational dynamics of the Latin American diaspora in London, including the characteristics of the diasporic group as transcultural and women-led. I look at the role of visual culture as a mechanism for activism, highlighting how representation raises social awareness and empowerment using visual practises in an urban landscape shaped by regeneration schemes.

I produced work based on different research questions, that are linked to the case studies I have analysed, research questions are as follows:

1. How do the productions of representational systems create memories to enhance the sense of belonging?

2. Which mnemonic devices do diasporas use to recreate their places of origin in the global city?

3. How do these devices acquire value?

4. How are transcultural processes of the Latin American diaspora in London evidenced?

5. How does representation address processes of urban change for the Latin American diaspora in London?

6. How do the dynamics of diasporas, as a community, affect the urban landscape of London?

7. How are Latin American women challenging/resisting gentrification in London?

Now I am going to unpack how I have worked on each of these questions in relation to the case studies.

Firstly, I am investigating the role of memory in the production of a diaspora community to answer my research questions: **1) How do the productions of representational systems create memories to enhance the sense of belonging? 2) Which mnemonic devices do diasporas use to recreate their places of origin in the global city? 3) How do these devices acquire value?** I address these questions in depth in chapters four, five and six where I look at systems of image-making that function as tools to foster sense of belonging through memory, highlighting Latin London mnemonic landscape. I analyse these three questions in the next case studies. Firstly, in chapter four From Abya Yala to Latin London I analyse the work of FLAWA -Festival of Latin American Women in the Arts-, by looking into the role of feminist representation for Latin American women in London, reflecting on narratives that influence the community mobilisation and create dialogues for cultural bonding, in chapter four I also look at the collective Diaspora Women, which emphasises on the ways memory works as a process to represent the place of origin and recreate spaces to belong in a feminised global city, via the micropolitics of everyday life. Secondly, in chapter five Landscapes of Memory I provide a new theoretical understanding of Latin London dynamics via the comparative analysis of representation produced and triggered by community activists and the local archives of Southwark and Haringey. I look at the projects Latinidad LDN, the film *Salsa Fever*, and the project *My Elephant Story*, to examine the role of memory in the production of belonging by investigating the importance of community-driven projects in creating remembrance and mnemonic devices that produce historical traces of Latin Londoners. Finally in chapter six The Migrant Gaze, I analyse the representational systems produced by Latin American women in London as devices for resistance and community building, I looked at the projects *LATINAS* by Latin American Women's Aid (LAWA) and *Espacio Latino*, I provide an empirical approach to examine Latinidad and its role in the production of belonging for Latin American women in London. Later I look at the project *The Elephant Walking Tour* to introduce the role of urban markets for the production of migrant memories and a feminised Latina city. Moving on, I present the two films *Seven Sister's indoor marke*t and *Élefan* to emphasise on the role of community-based project for visibility of migrant hubs in London. Finally I present storytelling as a strategy of feminised resistance analysing the visual work of MinA (Migrants in Action) for denouncing inhumane migrant experiences and claiming a place in the city, as an essential account for contemporary Latin American women lives.

Secondly, through questions **4,) How are transcultural processes of the Latin American**

diaspora in London evidenced? 5) How does representation address processes of urban change for the Latin American diaspora in London? 6) How do the dynamics of diasporas, as a community, affect the urban landscape of London? I am investigating how representation plays a fundamental role in the construction of Latin London, and the implication of contemporary urban change (gentrification) for this community in London. In chapter three Diasporic Geographies I analyse questions 4 and 5 in the light of a transcultural formation, the creation of a Latin-Londoner identity (Román-Velázquez, 1996), addressing the struggle the community has had to pass through to create a communal space in the global city, via looking at the work done by Mapping Memories, and Latin Elephant's project *My Latin Elephant*, and *Ser Latinx in Elephant* using the essayistic as a practice to denounce, resist and reproduce the sense of belonging through their work, and their collaborative project with the photographer Ingrid Guyón called *Latin Quarter and it's people*. I also look at the production *Uncovering the Invisibl*e to highlight the life of Latin American migrants in London by photographers Pablo and Roxana Allison. For question 6, in chapter five Landscapes of Memory, I present the role of visual culture as a field that allows the production of activism through cultural significance and social practices embedded in the images, displaying the work of Latin Elephant's project *My Elephant Story* as a fundamental example of how Latin Americans in London affect and contribute to its urban landscape.

Moving forward, my last question **7) How are Latin American women challenging/resisting gentrification in London?** Reflects on the political management of everyday migrant life and how the community has been maintained through women's labour, a question and argument that is presented through the thesis, but particularly addressed in these case study presented for chapter six, The Migrant Gaze (already introduced above, LAWA, MinA and *Espacio Latino*), to answer this question I am integrating a feminist perspective in terms of understanding the challenges for representation around the areas where the community meets and reunites. Keeping in mind that women as the leaders for social change have enhanced the activist aspect of the community. In this task, I based part of my research on amateur sources through my connection with the Latin American community. This includes Latin American Women's Rights Service (LAWRS), Latin American Bureau, and Latin American Women's Aid (LAWA) as charities and organisations that work for the right to the city of Latin Americans in London and the preservation of memory of Latin American processes in the UK. For in-stance, LAWRS has worked in the UK since 1983 as a feminist and human rights organisation that aims for the well-being of Latin American migrant women; they have a variety of services and programs,

such as *Sin Fronteras* to build empowerment for Young Latin American women, counselling, housing advice, advocacy, forums and protests. [19] Also, I have been creating my fieldwork approaches, including the aforementioned Podcast, Latin London: A life in the diaspora. In this series, I am interviewing academics and leaders of the community to talk about postcolonial theories considering the awakening of Latin American feminism from the 1970s onwards and the creation of the Latin American community in London. The 1970s in Latin America had a particular impact on a female population that later was projected in the creation of diasporas as communities. The role of women within the diaspora has been crucial for the economic, cultural, and social heritage, and that is what we are exposing in these episodes.[20]

Additionally, the important contributions of Latin Elephant, charity based in Elephant and Castle in London, which works for the inclusion of migrants and minority ethnic communities on the process of urban change in London, and Latin Village a movement to protect the Latin Village in Seven Sisters (I have address both in the Literature review) both meeting spaces (Elephant and Castle and Seven Sisters) are characterised as urban markets for migrants. Michael Rios mentioned that Latinos seek to create spaces of gathering that re-semble a domestic space in their homeland, turning them into a private-public space that "anchors group solidarity in the urban landscape" (2010, p103). The urban market itself –Outside (street) market or Indoor market is a spontaneous space shaped by environment and social relationships. I addressed the work of UNIT 38 as a cooperative architectural practice in the community-based proposal for the Seven Sisters Indoor market.

Furthermore, Extra Radio1, FLAWA (Festival of Latin American Women in the Arts), Latinidad LDN are vital in the production/dissemination of content production for Latin Americans in London and are a path for the recognition of the community through representation. This also encompasses recent work by Latin American Heritage, a network via social media of Latin Americans living and working in London. Finally, Southwark and Haringey Archives are situated where most Latin American migrants reunite, work and live in London, so they contain essential sources of information to map the representation of Latin Americans in the city. I will now explain my position and the autoethnographical approach to this research.

[19] For more information http://www.lawrs.org.uk/

[20] Listen here https://open.spotify.com/show/3UV77vJmHol1no68Ml1zPc?si=2d-da0b308cbf4551

1.1. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

The first time I arrived in London was on June 28th, 2015. I remember going to the Home Office to do my Police Registration on the second day of my arrival. This was also the first day I walked into The Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre. From my previous experiences, I knew I needed to walk in the city to recognise its palimpsest character and navigate its social layers. As Suzanne M. Hall suggests, the first way to get a deep sense of a city is by walking at your own pace, trying to connect with the place, and analysing and feeling the street.

> The street begins to emerge through a labyrinth of intricacies, collections of rooms each distinct yet somehow connected. Surfaces and sounds share space with objects, displays, and subdivisions, a street paraphernalia of mercantile pragmatics and cultural preferences (...) Gradually the politics of the street seeps through the tighter and slower circuits of conversations and observations (2021, p29).

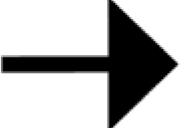
Through my walking in London, I developed my interest in this research. This project builds on my MA in Arts and Visual Culture at the University of Westminster (2017), where my research focused on Photography and Urban Change: the case of the Latin American Community in London. I discovered a gap in research on the representation of this diasporic community, Latin Americans in London, from the 1970s onwards.

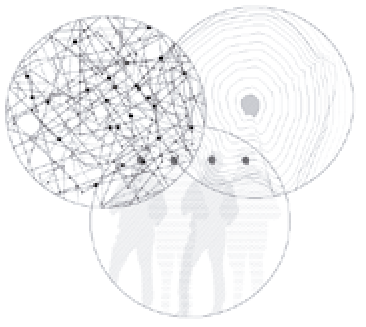
I have contributed with this thesis to the understanding of activism through the uses of the image as a tool for the representation of diasporas and their social movements in an urban realm shaped by regeneration schemes.

For Hank Johnston (2014), a social movement is a key force for social change: they are the groups and organisations that make up collective action, creating events that promote protest and spaces to reclaim for each cause; its ideas unify the group and guide activists. A social movement comprises three spheres [see diagram], which I will analyse in this research through the movement of the Latin American community in London. The first sphere is based on the network relations of participants in the movement; the second is the ideational-interpretative sphere, based on values, beliefs, motivations, ideology and identities that gravitate around the social movement. The third is the performative sphere, one I find instructive to analyse through the case of Latin Americans in London as it allows for a discussion on urban change and gentrification. It is based on the collective actions displayed by participants, activists, protesters and people who form part of the movement to communicate, resist and act towards a cause; it allows for dynamic relationships.
Having this configuration of a social movement in mind, I will now explain my methodologies and positionality.

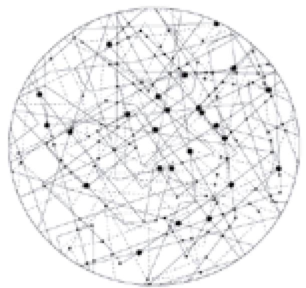
SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

A social movement is made up of three spheres:



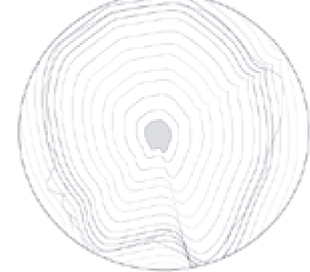


1.
NETWORK



The structure which is based on the relations of the participants in the movement.

2.
IDEATIONAL/ INTERPRETIVE



Values, beliefs, motivations, ideologies and identities that gravitate around the social movement.

3.
PERFORMATIVE

The collective actions displayed by participants, activists, protesters and, people who are part of the movement to communicate, resist and act towards its cause; it allows for dynamic relationships.

Johnston, H. (2014). *What is a social movement?*. John Wiley & Sons.

FIG. 1. Social Movements diagram

1.1.1. METHODOLOGIES DIAGRAM, POSITIONALITY

The change in academic demographics in the UK enabled the appearance of a new academic culture of inquiry since the 1990s. These shifts in academia inspired more research related to culture, race, ethnicity, gender, and class (Leavy, 2020). The production of knowledge has been shifting towards a representation of realities rather than abstract theories –placing an emphasis on activism, social justice, and applied research.

Cathy McIlwaine described, when interviewed for this research, that "as an academic I've always been very clear that I wanted to do research that was useful for people and that it will serve some purpose rather than just only academic" (2021). Bochner and Riggs suggest that "in the light of the cultural, philosophical and epistemic context in which the turn toward a narrative inquiry originated –the desire for a more human and justice-focused social science-"(2014, p201). They present eight critical steps for interpretative social research for challenging traditional forms of writing and researching to bridge relations between the site of subjectivity and the site of meaning-making to create a site for research narrative.

These are the eight steps and how this research relates to them:

VISUAL CULTURE

Rate of assimilation

LATIN AMERICAN DIASPORA
IN LONDON
1970s onwards

Gentrification in London

Visual Activism
[Visuality]

Visual Essay
Film Essay
Photo Essay

Social Movements

Mobilising Identities

TRANSCULTURALITY

FIG. 2. Methodologies Diagram

1. RESEARCHER PART OF THE DATA. Since my first approach to the community in 2015, I have felt a part of it –an aspect crucial to my everyday life. When finding Elephant and Castle and Seven Sisters as Latin American hubs, I understood that I was not only from the greenest and one of the most diverse parts of the world, Colombia but that I was a Latin American. My encounter with the Latin American identity allowed me to belong in London: to find a community where I could work and develop as a researcher, activist, artist and designer. I have worked with different community groups and have participated in several activities such as Latin Elephant, Latin Village, Diaspora Woman, LAWA, Latin American Heritage and LAWRS.

2. SOMEBODY/SOMEPLACE IN TEXT. I have conducted fieldwork where Latin Americans meet and reunite in London, particularly analysing urban change processes and how this affects the community. I also experience my everyday life as a Latin American in the capital –a subject of my research project.

3. EMOTIONS AND SUBJECTIVITY. It is important to consider the participants' and the researcher's emotions and subjectivity. Context is crucial when analysing case studies and images of certain people. It is decisive to address the construction of subjectivities when working with participants. I have approached my research as site-based and worked through the lenses of intersectionality, emphasising new ways of producing knowledge from southern epistemologies based on our trans-geographical and geopolitical context.

4. DEMOCRATIC/ RESEARCHER EQUAL PARTICIPANTS. This might not always be the case, as many Latin Americans do not have visas or legal status to be in the UK –consequently, many do not have the right to work either. As a researcher, I have an ethical commitment that my work can contribute to the recognition and visualisation of the Latin American community in London.

5. ETHICAL COMMITMENT. To give something back to the community. I encourage recognising Latin Americans as part of London's urban dynamics. I have collaborated with the community; part of this is the podcast series that I am running called Latin London: A Life in the diaspora. My profound intention is to give a voice to the stories and trajectories of Latin Americans in London.

6. IT IS NOT A DOMINANT LANGUAGE BUT IS WRITTEN FOR EVERYONE. This research encourages social change and activism. I have volunteered with LAWA and earlier with Latin Elephant, both charities working with Latin Americans in London. I also intend to produce research that is useful for the community and can benefit the battles and struggles that put the community at risk in London.

7. RESEARCH ABOUT WHAT COULD BE ASSERTIVE AND PROVOCATIVE. Based on interviews, conversations, and my experience. I focus on community plans and optimistic futures, to activate subjectivity, feelings and identification among Latin Londoners and a positive perception of others towards the Latin American community.

8. PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN THE PROCESS OF THE CREATION OF THE RESEARCH. I engaged in realistic and approachable research by many people, looking to avoid the failures of academic fantasy, reflecting the real world of diasporic people and their everyday lives in an urban realm.

Finally, I have a BA in Graphic Design and, as a result of my practice as a designer and as a Lecturer in Graphic Design, I have developed a methodology that explores ideas/thoughts/concepts through graphics. I have found it valuable to develop a Diagram illustrating my methods. The visual aspect of my thinking and research process will be crucial for my methodological approach. How I approach knowledge represents who I am as a researcher; it enhances a narrative that triggers ethnic and cultural discourses for Latin American researchers in the UK.

In the first part of this methodology chapter, I described the aims of this research project. In the proceeding section, I will describe the diagram illustrating the relationship between each concept and the following three parts of this chapter. Secondly, I will talk about transculturality, as shown in the diagram, linking it to the community of Latin Americans in London from the 1970s onwards. Finally, I will focus on Visual Culture, Visuality and the Film and Photo Essays.

1.1.2. TRANSCULTURALITY AND VISUAL CULTURE

Transculturality (shown in pink) is the main field in which my research has been cultivated, as elaborated in the Literature Review, Chapter One. It is understood as a process in which two or more cultures acquire elements of the other to create a new one (Ortiz, 1989). In his studies of transculturality, Wolfgang Welsch (1999) defines it as the pursuit of a permeable society in which local and global aspects are in constant dialogue, forming a constellation of exchange and interaction. Similarly, the Latin American theorist Mabel Moraña (2018) argues that transcultural formations respond to a reorganisation of knowledge in a postmodern society that is constantly fragmented, disillusioned and melancholic. Transculturality is a process that reflects on the formation of collective subjectivities, integrating multiple and common agendas. These include, for example, the migrant subject, governability, biopolitics, gender, inequality and difference, borders, deterritorialisation and BAME/diasporic groups within cities.

This research discusses Visual Culture as a vehicle for transcultural interactions. This is defined as the mental model that a community has of how to see how to be seen, and what can be done as a result of that process (Mirzoeff, 2015). That is to say, how a community perceives themselves

and how that is reflected in the areas and cities they inhabit. Gillian Rose in her book *Visual Methodologies* (2016) argues that visual culture refers to the study of images regarding cultural significance, social practices and power relations, embedded in ways of seeing and imaging. "Visual Culture is something we engage in as an active way to create change" (Mirzoeff, p14). It is a contextual frame which relates different social groups and their interactions through images. The discourse is fixed in the image itself, the production and circulation of the images and the social effect they can produce; this is my particular interest in relation to the Latin American community in London. The framework or sociocultural context of production, display, and circulation gives an active role to Visual Culture as a performance; in that sense, it takes part in creating a social movement. These formulations are connected to the following two concepts in yellow, which refer to Visual Activism in terms of Visuality. Both represent a particular sphere of analysis that intersects with social movements and the Latin American Diaspora in London. The sphere of Visual Activism has a small sphere embedded within, representing the field of action, the essay form. I will explain it below.

In *Vision, Race, and Modernity* (1997), Deborah Poole argues that visual images are part of a comprehensive organisation of people, ideas, and objects - a system that I call visuality, visualising. The use of Visuality -rather than a term that classifies- is an action related to what Mirzoeff calls *The Right To Look* (2011). It detonates a whole form of doing. In the work *Visuality/Materiality* (Rose & Tolia-Kelly, 2016), the authors suggest how "visuality are enabling political revolutions" (p4), particularly referencing how the visual meets the material in terms of socio-cultural spaces. The Latin American diaspora hubs in London (Seven Sisters and Elephant and Castle) offer two examples. Visuality is a process of positioning, encounter, engagement and interpretation.

Consequently, Visual Activism is a visual method to further social justice. As Mirzoeff argues, "all in the service of a vision of making change" (2015, p297). Visual Activism is a way to address how, through visuality, diaspora communities enact their cultural constructions in a host place, such as a global city, to perform a political and aesthetic experience.

1.1.3. GENTRIFICATION PANORAMA

As seen by the elements in fuchsia, I will focus on the panorama of Gentrification in London. It is a concept that intersects with the Latin American Diaspora in the city and puts the *rate of assimilation* into context (Collier, 2014). It connects with Visual Culture through Social Movements (in orange), as it is the bridge between the context of Gentrification in London and Visuality as an activist tool. Social movements represent political action-based groups that aim to defend community values from practices of the abstract systems and institutions of power that govern the city. Many diasporas create social movements to defend their right to belong in the host place. As Harvey argues:

> The construction of a broad social movement to enforce its will is imperative if the dispossessed are to take back the control, which they have for so long been denied, and if they are to institute new modes of urbanisation. Lefebvre was right to insist that the revolution has to be urban, in the broadest sense of that term, or nothing at all (2003, p40).

In *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* (2012), David Harvey describes the Occupy Wall Street movement of 2011 in the USA which, through images of protests around public parks and its circulation in social media (with the hashtag #OWS), transformed public

spaces into political commons to visualise injustice and the struggle of people. It has been proven that the city is a political landscape par excellence. Françoise Vergès in *A Decolonial Feminism* (2021) suggests that through the city, organised groups can claim for their rights and fight for a decolonised way of inhabiting, for a right to existence. Revolution is a daily activity to "fight against policies of dispossession, colonisation, extractivism, and the systematic destruction of the living" (p11). Through visual activism as a tool for social movements, Latin Americans aim to construct new modes of urbanisation to stage their revolution. As Hito Steyerl (2012) states, organised social movements produce political significance throughout the montage of representation, that is to say the performative sphere [Fig.1].

From the 1970s onwards, counter-neoliberal social movements have been growing and become especially important for BAME –Black Asian and Minority Ethnic– communities within cities. Movements such the Arab Spring, the indignados in Spain, the OWS in the USA, the #21N in Colombia, Black Live Matters, Marea Verde, Up The Elephant, Save Latin Village, 35% Campaign, Save Ridley Road, Save Brixton Arches, Women Marches, Climate Change activist and more; are demanding for The Right to the City and a proper urban dwelling as a collective right in which cities are aimed at people and not at profits. The importance of social movements is made evident by the claim of those who facilitate everyday life, particularly in urban centres. For example, people working in services such as cleaning, transport, shopkeepers, managers, hospitality, and more are the ones most vulnerable to the effects of gentrification as they are pushed to the outskirts of the city, fracturing the community's existing networks and infrastructures of care and support. Thus, social movements must seek "a unity form within an incredible diversity of fragmented social spaces and location within innumerable divisions of labour" (Harvey, 2012, p137). This cannot be achieved by development or building alone; rather, it must rebuild and re-create the city to facilitate association and community-based economies.

1.1.4. LATIN AMERICANS VISUAL ACTIVISM

With reference to the diagram once more, note that the blue and central circle represent the core of my research. From the 1970s until the 1990s, Latin America was struggling with social, political and economic problems, which left the continent with a massive number of disappearances, kidnappings, and forced displacement. “The proliferation of authoritarian regimes that constituted themselves in Latin America in the 1970s and the correlative activation of resistance and national liberation movements polarised the political scene of late capitalism in the periphery” (Moraña, 2018, p96). For those reasons, during this period, many Latin Americans started to migrate to the UK to start a new life. In the 1990s, Colombian, Ecuadorian and Venezuelan communities began to grow in London; by the turn of the twenty-first century, large communities of Latin Americans were established in the borough of Southwark - particularly in Elephant and Castle - and in the borough of Haringey - in Seven Sisters (Mcllwaine and Cock, 2011, p13). From the early 2000s, Latin Americans have been confronted with processes of urban renewal or gentrification in the city, which has threatened the places where they live and work with being dismantled to ‘give space’ to new capitalistic developments such as The Elephant Park, built by Leandlease, in Elephant and Castle (Román-Velázquez, 2016).

These kinds of projects in London are defined as Opportunity Areas –OAs– (Almeida, 2021, p16), a legacy of the 2012 Olympics urban/political project based on the displacement and fragmentation of communities and broadening the gap between the white working class and BAMEs.

To approach the struggles that this urban space shift raises, I base my enquires on the work made by the community through the uses of Visual Activism to understand how, through visual representations, the diasporic community has advocated for their cultural constructions in a host place. As I have already explained, I look at Visual Activism through the work of Mirzoeff (2011), Azoulay (2008) and Deena Chalabi (2016) as a central field of contemporary discussion in visual culture practices. The key themes within Visual Activism are political, social and economic. As Iñaki suggests (2019), visual activism through photography and film is a testimony of our changing times and how the images trigger political responses. Visual activism is a crucial aspect of the performative root of social movements.

I will be focussing on images envisioned and created with a strong political movement behind them. For instance, the work of Diaspora Women, FLAWA [Festival of Latin American Women in Arts], LAWRS [Latin American Women's Rights Service], LAWA [Latin American Women's Aid], Latin Village, Latin Elephant, MinA [Migrant in Action], Latin American Bureau, Up The Elephant, Latin American Heritage, and many more. I will focus on images that support social change and political movements: how they are produced, read, displayed and distributed, and what their effects are inside and outside the diaspora community.

Furthermore, I will be addressing the role of Latin Americans in the construction of London as a global city, a place made from diasporic communities. This brings about the *mobilising identities* element of the social moments sphere in the diagram. As explained before, Lisa García Bedolla, in her work *Fluid Borders: Latino Power, identity and politics in Los Angeles* (2005), proposes the term can be defined "as an identity that includes a particular ideology plus a sense of personal agency" (Ibid, p23). It is an identity with a clear set of values, cosmogony, and connections to place, which coherently sets a political view. Since it represents agency, there is attachment to a community, even if there is political turmoil or stigmatisation. *Mobilising identities* within a Diaspora group allows them to enhance successful adaptation, political participation, protest and action on behalf of the group. The importance of this concept is crucially related to gentrification as a significant risk that Latin American migrants are facing at the moment in London. It is important to clarify that after 1973, under Thatcher's government, economic policies on regenerative power "created Nouveux Riches in the city

and certain fields of enterprise. *Yuppies* helped to generate a property boom in gentrifying districts, employment grew in boutiques, restaurants, car showrooms and other forms of domestic and conspicuous consumption" (Porter, p463).[21] By the turn of the twenty-first century, the new generation of Millennials appeared, claiming a place in the city. Consequently, fragmentation inside local traditions and social practices increased community displacement to faraway places from the city centre, as the economic value of land became too expensive to be affordable for the middle and working classes.

That's why this relates to the next concept in the diagram: the *rate of assimilation* that intersects gentrification, social movements and the Latin American Community in London. Paul Collier, in his work *Éxodo: inmigrantes, emigrantes y países* (2014), introduces the concept *rate of assimilation,* described as the possibility for a diaspora to be absorbed or downplayed by the majority group.; that is to say, people from a host place. For that reason, the *rate of assimilation* will be low if the diaspora interacts and stays active as a community; if not, the majority group might absorb the whole diaspora. Therefore, for this research, *mobilising identities* are the ones that challenge the *rate of assimilation* within a diaspora community and help to enhance their place within the city.

[21] London experimented the closure of GLC [Greater London Council], which leads to the independent Borough Administration enhancing cold and warm spots, this political decision led to the social division in terms of racial [ethnic] facts. Thatcher's first government was from 1979-1983.

1.1.5. THE ESSAY FORM

As can be seen in the small violet sphere, my research is embedded in the Visual Culture realm, particularly in the representational dynamics of moving and still images through the essayistic form. The essay serves as an essential visual narrative to analyse thoughts, linguistics and actions, as it can reproduce a discourse through images with a persuasive element. I will look at essays as a visual form that raises political questions; the essayistic act is a fabrication that presents a point of view, particularly a political perspective of social complexities, such as the reality of Latin Americans in London.

According to J.M Catalá (2014) in *Estética del ensayo: La Forma Ensayo, de Montaigne a Godard*, the visual essay is a prolongation of complex thoughts; it is an emotional and conceptual framework that allows for a binding dynamic to appear. An essay is a didactic approximation to a particular subject, an argumentative narrative. The essayistic narrative is characterised by its capacity to be illustrative/declaratory, to create connective structures, and to produce visual thinking (Ibid, 2021).

I will be focussing on Photo and Film Essays. On the one hand, the Photo Essay is a tool to narrate a specific situation from different photographs

that can be combined with text and other media. The photographic essay is a visual anthropological narrative in the sense that it attempts to make a statement from the perspective of a particular social group, and it aims to produce memory as a document to preserve cultural practices through fieldwork observation and participation. I am looking at documentary practices related to still images, and activist approaches for my research.

On the other hand, The Film Essay is a practice very close to cinema as it is a reflection through images and sound. It is a documentary practice, which is crucial for this research, as it is close to the subject matter and to reality itself. Laura Rascaroli (2017) defines the Film Essay as a performative search of an object, which is mainly historical and related to time and history. The Film Essay has a political viewpoint; it aims to show a gap between the object and the world. "The visible result of this labour is that the Film Essay detaches objects from their background, thus introducing a gap of potentiality between object and world. This gap is its philosophy" (p189). That gap leaves space to show links between affections, perceptions, visual images, sounds, conventions, temporal layers, narrations, and discourses. This in-between relationship permits a dialogical methodology that impacts the spectator.[22]

[22] All the diagram terms are defined in Appendix A, Glossary.

1.2. ARTS BASED RESEARCH APPROACH

Patricia Leavy (2020) argues that merging social research with creative arts makes knowledge more accessible, evocative, and engaging. It brings research into everyday life and converges diverse disciplines into aesthetic experiences. I have carried out projects for this research that have helped me develop a theoretical understanding of my subject matter. By doing so, I have been conducting Arts Based Research as part of my methodological approach, based on the human understanding of the migrant condition and how empathy and positive transformation research can impact the life of diasporas.

Artistic practice as academic research is a methodologically pluralistic approach. It is embedded in a context of discovery that emphasises the subject matter, the method, the context, and the outcome of the research/practice process. As Borgdorff (2012) mentions in *The Conflict of the Faculties*, "artistic research seeks to convey and communicate content that is enclosed in aesthetic experiences, enacted in creative practices, and embodied in artistic products" (p144). By doing research as creative practice, the importance of site-specific production of knowledge has to be considered, and how that research is relevant to its surroundings, towards new paths and understandings of the subject matter. This is framed as the representation of the diasporic community

and its conflicting relationship with London's urban Dynamics.

One example is my work *Spores/Esporas* (2020-2022), an audio-visual piece and a book that interacts with the archival research I have been conducting. Spore was presented during the *Ecological Futurism Festival* (2022) as part of CREAM [Centre for Research in Education Arts and Media] at Ambika P3, University of Westminster. During the exhibition *Cloud Sediments*, Curated by Hyphen Collective, I presented it as an assemblage of illustration, collage, audio, video and archive material from the Haringey and Southwark Archives. As Chew (2022) mentions, there needs to be more in the national archives about the way BAME and diasporic communities have been portrayed or excluded. From my experience researching both local archives, there is little information about the Latin American community in Elephant and Castle and almost no information in the Haringey archives (I will expose this further in chapter five). *Spores/Esporas* is a Literary Essay written in two voices; one is talking from the poetics of being a migrant wandering in a oneiric place; the other is talking from an academic, historical, and experiential place. It tells the story of young migrant women, a narrative that analyses the urban trajectories of the Latin American Diaspora in London. The piece links memory, belonging, and migration. It reflects the impact of new urban dynamics on diaspora communities.[23]
Spores/Esporas is a visual culture production that contributes to the diffusion of knowledge about the area of Elephant and Castle and its importance for Latin Americans in London, emphasising the negative impact of urban regeneration amongst Latin American retailers and the broader community's sense of belonging. I play a role in the construction of Latin London Visual Culture working as an artist, designer and researcher to visualise social practices, dynamics of power and the cultural significance of Latin Americans in London through collage, photomontage, and illustration. I intervened in the Southwark archive material and created a discourse that highlights Latin London experiences in the city.

Furthermore, a crucial aspect of my research is decolonisation as a way of "undoing colonialism" through arts based research with diasporic communities (Mareis and Paim, 2021). This pays careful attention to the construction of Latin London through Southern epistemological approaches. I look at autonomy, independence, and self-determination within the diasporic community in a Pluriverse realm of thinking and producing knowledge, this is exposed through the four empirical chapters (three, four, five and six).

[23] Access Spores Film here https://vimeo.com/687296638 and here https://drive.google.com/file/d/16PUSrqaaxjZHEze50mkeUPPKsklcfKZc/view?usp=sharing

1.2.1. LATIN LONDON PODCAST

Latin London Podcast is a practice-based research project I have been conducting alongside my PhD Research. This sound space, discusses and highlights the life of the Latin American community in London, inviting people directly related to the construction of Latinidad in the city or topics that might affect it. It brings to light the importance of diaspora communities, the crucial role of women within them, and the urban planning policies that do not consider the home areas of minoritised communities in London. So far, I have produced twenty episodes and an introductory one. All the episode descriptions and QR codes to access them are in Appendix B, at the end of this thesis.

As a creative approach to knowledge, this podcast embodies an effective way of communicating emotional aspects and community approaches, which can broaden the stories of Latin Americans in London to a bigger audience and put academic research into unexpected realms to contribute to the creation of a research environment that is holistic and transdisciplinary. This sound space aims to stimulate conversations and inspire acts of transformation. As one of the invitees of the podcast mentioned, this approach can be characterised as "research with the community, not about the community" (Román-Velázquez, 2022) – and in doing so, uncover the hidden meanings of memory.

FIG. 3. Posada, V., (2022). Collage for Podcast Latin London. Logo image

Arts-based research often gets involved at local and neighbourhood levels. As part of my creative output and research intervention in producing this podcast, I created a narrative through conversations with key actors on the construction of Latin London. The podcast merges rigorous academic voices with community amateur practitioners. For example, in episode one: *Elephant and Castle: A Hub for Latin Londoners*, I spoke with Santiago Peluffo Soneyra, a London-based Latin American researcher, community organiser, journalist and writer, who has been a key voice in the process of fighting against unjust regeneration policies in the area of Elephant and Castle, through his involvement with the charity Latin Elephant. This is supported by episode six: *The Making of Latin London*, with Dr Patria Román-Velázquez, the founder of Latin Elephant, and episode three: *Urban Mythologies* with David McEwen, a cooperative architect. Both are significant leaders and voices in the process of community political participation to reclaim rights to the city for migrant communities. These episodes contribute to fostering a narrative highlighting the violent role of policymaking in London's urban change, underlining the negative consequences of urban planning policies in London for migrant communities, particularly for Latinx in the areas of Elephant and Castle, and Seven Sisters. Furthermore, I reclaim and foster the fundamental role of women's labour in constructing the Latin London identity, one of the key findings of my research. Latin American women, as a mobilising identity, have enhanced the construction of a transcultural Latin London through networks of support and care, community projects and the building of an identity with Latin American feminist values (which I also explore further in chapter four). This is underlined by episode two: *A Women Made Community*, with Martha Hinestroza, one of the key community organisers and figures in the process of reclaiming a right to rent and to retail in Seven Sisters Indoor Market, also in Episode Six: *Diaspora Woman* with Patricia Díaz Daza, when we discuss the crucial role of women organisations for awakening a sense of belonging in London, as well as in episode three with Professor Cathy McIlwaine, where we discussed the fundamental role of geographical research for the visibility of Latin Americans in the UK and the pivotal role of women for the construction of a Latin London community. Finally, I would emphasise that all twenty episodes (see appendix B) contribute to my argument as they are a narrative for understanding the transcultural dynamics of Latin London and the crucial role of women in the construction of a diasporic community. The podcast is innovative as it intersects theoretical debates with community practices and lived experiences.

1.3. AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY APPROACH

I will now explain my positionality and the autoethnography approach of this research. During the previous years of my PhD, I always felt part of the Latin American community in London. Nevertheless, as I gained awareness through my MA and PhD, I could profoundly understand my positionality and be clear on how researchers and research can become a burden for communities.

Since the research paradigm changed around the 1990s, and research became centred on matters of race, gender, sexuality, and disabilities (Leavy, 2020), a tendency exacerbated: the researcher using academic and institutional privileges to extract knowledge from communities in the pursuit of career improvement; that is why I want to emphasise how I intend to consider and reconcile this research with community work, particularly addressing and getting inspiration from activists, practitioners and researchers, whom I believe are aware of this conflictual relation between UK academia and communities in this country. For instance, Dr Patria Román Velázquez, Dr Catalina Ortiz, Patricia Díaz, Dr Rosa Heimer, Dr Cherilyn Elston, Claudia López, and Professor Cathy McIlwaine, all of whom I interviewed as presented in section 1.2.1.

Navigating this dichotomy became a massive challenge for me as a person, practitioner, and researcher. I often found myself asking the purpose of this, but by engaging in community spaces and via the creation of images, I went back to keep working on it. Just for the fact of presenting this evidence does not mean that I still don't have conflictual relations with it as part of the Latin American community, with the privilege of accessing knowledge and studying for a PhD in this city. Taking an autoethnographic approach inspired by Gloria Anzaldúa's *La conciencia de la mestiza: Towards a New Consciousness* (1987), part of her well-known work *Borderlands: La Frontera*, pushed me to pursue a position that fluctuates and navigates different spheres of societal divisions: "Not only does she sustain contradictions, but she also turns the ambivalence into something else" (p79). So, I decided to use a transdisciplinary path to work with projects and community members from different perspectives and disciplines, aiming to visualise the Latin American community in London to gain better access to services and integration within the city.

I initiated this challenge in Medellín-Colombia in 2018, then planned to move to London in 2019. Nevertheless, with the outbreak of COVID-19, I ended up moving to London one year and a half later; that disconnection and the fast pace of changes in London proved to be an extra obstacle. However, when I finally moved to London in 2021, I managed to nourish and activate my past relationships with community members, and the podcast Latin London helped me to get back to the community and feel a part of it, as well as gaining analytical skills to develop this thesis. With each chapter, I hope to contribute to a better understanding of the Latin American community practices of representation: from the knowledge of the term Latin American to its diasporic geographies in London, the production of a women-made community and its decolonial charitable sector, to the landscapes of memory and the challenges posed on the archival representation; indeed the power of photography and film for the representation of the migrant gaze through community-driven projects. In all these chapters, I put my activist soul into reading each of these representations and understand that the *mobilising identities* are becoming bigger and louder, and there is an urban future for Latin Londoners and those interested in the diaspora community. We have gathered forces and created manifestations of resistance to demonstrate our value as a community, with the hope of reclaiming the spaces and traditions that are at risk of disappearing due to gentrification in London. I will now move on to my visual methodological approach.

2. MEMORY, IMAGINED COMMUNITIES AND REPRESENTATION

Since ancient times, humans have created apparatuses to expand their memory capacity to narrate human activity. It is well known that humanity has been shaped and moulded by images. As addressed in the Literature Review Chapter, Erll's text, *Travelling Memory* (2011), argues that visual representation also includes cultural journeys: the power of images is circumscribed within dialogical dynamics appearing through cultural travelling processes. Memory travels through visual images; it "fundamentally means movement: traffic between individual and collective levels of remembering, circulation among social, medial and semantic dimensions" (p6). In *The Memory of Photography* (2010), Bate concurs with Erll: they suggest that visuality travels within the different kinds of memory the author proposes. First, through natural memory, a normal human capacity of recollection of certain moments/images in time; Second, artificial memory, a technical support to that human capacity, which moves between cultural and social boundaries and nourishes a sense of community. Thus, photography and photographic cameras have become mnemonic apparatuses that can locate memory in different times and spaces. In that sense, for Bate (Ibid, p7), the power of photographic practices relies on its capacity to be a Meta-archive that internalises and absorbs the pro-aesthetic values of other visual memory devices in the same visual production. Therefore, those are devices for cultural transformation as they explore changes and create action within social groups and communities.

Representation via Film and photography is crucial for diasporic experiences as they reveal patterns and layers of cultural memory. In *Archive Fever* by Enwezor (2008), the author alludes to Derrida's work, suggesting photography and film allow the creation of constellations of meaning, binding ideas from the past to understand social practices in the present, thus creating/establishing an analysis of the social future that

can be built. David Bate's (2010) view of the productive role of images leads us to Maurice Halbwachs (1992), who defines social memory as a construction made by members of several different social groups in a particular time and space. They are exposed to different stimuli, drawn on interest and impinge upon a specific society, creating permeable memories between different cultures. A permeable memory from a particular social group contributes to forming a most stable and permanent element, which enhances the creation of cultural symbolism related to a specific event or episode (Whitehead, 2009).

Nevertheless, today, the image has to be produced and displayed carefully. We exist in a time of fake news and post-truth therefore the use of images must carry a responsible background or community affiliation to support any action (Bate, 2016). From there, I argue that the changes of mind status under technological development transform the natural memory (retention and sense). As Bate frames it, "remembering also institutes a kind of forgetting" (Ibid, p4). In the age of capital, goods and human flows, that capacity of forgetting exceeds the capacity for retention, urging the need for images to be considered concerning their context and the actions they aim to produce. Bate argues that "the image is used as a space, a location of memory traces" (p6), and it is, therefore, possible to use those mnemonic devices to detonate remembrance and overcome community and social dispersion due to memory loss. So, the image can contribute to tackling dispersion instigated by other political and social factors such as gentrification. My research aims to prove this in relation to the study representations of the Latin American community in London, particularly in the areas of Elephant and Castle and Seven Sisters.

Visual culture has been defined as a field from which it is possible to analyse aspects of everyday life that will lead us to a broad understanding of cultural practices.[24] In 1965, Margaret Mead (Hocking, 1975, p5) argued about the importance of visuality in a field typically defined by words: anthropology. For Mead, visuality triggers a more accurate description, analysis, interpretation and explanation of cultural forms, values, traditions, conceptions, conditions and movements. In 1975, Paul Hocking, in the book *Principles of Visual Anthropology*, established a direct path between ethnography –in a broad sense of fieldwork– participant observation and film. Hocking highlights the importance of film for teaching, archiving, researching and fieldwork. Nowadays, it also represents an essential tool for activism. Yet film, as Hocking (1975) argues, is also problematic because it involves a whole grid of intentions and people around it to support the

[24] See Appendix A.

process. The filmmaker, the filmed and the audience are creating a stream of visual images today, changing the value of photographic practices: How do we make sense of film and photography for anthropological purposes in the hyperarchival world?

Furthermore, how do we value what is essential? These questions lead us back to Hocking, who claims that "the passage of motion and sound across the matrix of time and the viewer's emotions allow us to see or at least to feel where the filmmaker's objectivity should be called into question" (p517). With this in mind, we can gather that there was and still is a concern about how we use or approach film as a tool for visual anthropology studies, particularly those concerned with activism. These questions are the ones I am analysing by studying the practices of the Latin American community. It is important to emphasise that ethnographic film places a particular emphasis on the authenticity of community practices; I will be looking at this with particular interest as it is one of the values that gentrification takes away from geographical spaces in the city –as I have illustrated above and will explain further in the following chapter. A critical aspect about ethnographic films, within the realm of visual anthropology, is that they are consistent and functional in integrating social roles, patterns of behaviour and environmental constraints so people that filmed, and the audience, are more aware of the connections available to create a hypothesis. The data presented in different parts is knitted together easily. There has been a wide movement towards using and understanding film and photography as conventions for cultural readings in terms of description, analysis, explanation, and interpretation. More important now is that cultural readings have evolved into action. The contemporary *modus operandi* can be characterised as images leading to action towards change. For instance, images taken of a protest may allow the crowd to identify and connect with a message/problematic, therefore potentially increasing understanding, and support for protestors (or a social movement) more widely.

Moreover, in *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson (2006) interrogates the idea of Creoles (in Spanish Criollos) as "represented figuratively their emerging capacity to imagine themselves as communities *parallel* and *comparable* to those in Europe" (p192). For the time being, I would argue that parallelism and comparisons mix in the diaspora groups, putting in tension the collective and personal identity as something that is divided between the place of origin and the host place. In terms of visuality,[25] diasporic groups are "imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellows-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the

[25] See Appendix A.

minds of each lives the image of their communion" (p6). The term *imagined* is significant as members usually do know each other within a host place, yet they don't know of the stories and national territories left back home. This highlights the reality that Latin America is a massive landmass, frequently referenced or encompassed by the term Latin American, as a community that is itself imagined, and in which "*comradeship*" (p7) prevails. This imagination is nourished through artificial memories (Bate, 2010) that are mapped through photography and film re-presentations. That re-presentation speaks of diasporic identities as something that is not fixed, rather something that is always in process. In Stuart Hall's terms, "diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" (1990, p235) . A diasporic identity is not from here nor from there, resulting in a space of representation that can be interpreted as a solid place, allowing members to form a mind map of the imagined landmass, one that translates personal and collective experiences in their host place. Consequently, I will analyse how an activist action is triggered through photography and film as practices of representation to use its power as mnemonic devices and social justice makers within issues of diasporic identities through the case of Latin Londoners.

2.1. THE VISUAL AS ESSAYISTIC

Nicholas Mirzoeff (1999) argues for the importance of visual experiences in postmodern societies, describing the role of the visual itself in shaping society's way of inhabiting space. For the Latin American community in London, the role of images has been crucial in creating subjectivities and for the construction of identities, in particular as part of the struggle against urban regeneration/gentrification. Representation becomes a reality as it informs ideas and emotions in response to what is perceived as the regime of truth: it serves as a process of transformative mediation between perceptions and the political management of everyday life.

For this reason, I analysed migrant and diasporic images through the tools Gillian Rose presents as *Visual Methodologies* (2016). Rose argues that the visual is inherent in the production of social life, particularly urban life, and through the visual, one reinforces one's sense of self. Rose proposes four paths to look at images critically that have inspired my research. Firstly, she proposes giving importance to the image as a site of resistance and subversion, to look at the image itself; images serve as mechanisms to produce a reality that can become a tool for resistance – an example is found within the Latin American community where they function as strategic measures to counterbalance urban change and create a sense of common unity in processes of urban displacement.

Secondly, she argues for the identification of social differences not naturally constructed. To look at the role of representation with a critical gaze to spot the production of negative stereotypes. Rose's third path or tool comes into play because it aims to visualise power relations and analyses principles of inclusion and exclusion. Rose suggests looking at images through a wider panorama and relating them within their sociocultural context. In Rose's work, it is possible to find a critical visual methodology to investigate the importance of the aesthetic experiences of a community, one that is entrenched in different geographies. In that sense, the psychogeography of the rupture is represented in the images themselves as a process of healing and creating a new way of being in the host place. Rose emphasises slow observation and contemplation of the image, so it is not entirely reducible to its context; images are also objects, performances, and sculptures, so it is crucial to consider the site of display and its interaction with the spectator.

Rose's works proposes a methodological path to look at images as devices constructed through a discourse that can be analysed and that crucially triggers political responses. This has inspired the concept of the essayistic form that will discuss and interpret the work of professional photographers/filmmakers and community amateur practitioners in and around the Latin American community in London.

Firstly, I define the essayistic as a narrative form used as an individual or collective dissertation. It presents a way to address subjectivities with argumentations, analysis, and calls for action in a particular matter. *In The Essay Film: From Montaigne, After Marker* (2011) and in his conference *World Cinema and the Essay Film* (2016), Timothy Corrigan defines the essayistic as an inflection or practice within another primary practice: thoughts of that primary practice are disrupted and interrupted by the experience mode of the photo or film essay narrative. Usually, it is a documentary look combined with a personal perspective from the creator of the essay: "a practice that renegotiates assumptions about documentary objectivity, narrative epistemology, and authorial expressivity within the determining context of the unstable heterogeneity of time and place" (2011, p6). This suggests a need for the essay as a visual form to respond to sociocultural encounters or concepts that link subjectivities, identities, and the public domain. It is a self-questioning activity (implicit or explicit). Yet, it is performed absolutely, meaning that it is organised in a primary site –typically from a personal perspective– yet played out in the public domain. The essayistic as a social critique exposes psychological, sexual and political concerns regarding specific time and spaces. In the case of my research, the essayistic is understood as an encounter with the urban reality and social materiality of the Latin American diaspora in London. I use the essayistic within the context of visual

culture through the film essay and photo essay (I will clarify its differences in the following paragraphs) to analyse thoughts, linguistics, and actions. The essayistic constitutes a way to interrogate the capacity to reproduce a discourse through images that feature persuasive elements crucial to the struggle of diasporic communities.

I analyse how Visual Essays are used as tools of visual activism. According to Laura Rascaroli (2017) in her book *How the Essay Film Thinks*, the essay as a visual form raises political and ideological questions; the essayistic act is a fabrication that presents a particular point of view, a selection, and a political perspective of a social issue. According to J.M Catalá (2014) in *Estética del ensayo: La Forma Ensayo, de Montaigne a Godard*, the visual essay is a prolongation of complex thoughts, an emotional and conceptual framework which allows for a binding dynamic to appear. An essay is concerned with time even though not all essays are chronological: they speak about the past, and some are prospective studies of a specific idea. For this reason, I consider this type of narrative appropriate as it permits a hybrid and complex frame to understand the social reproduction of Latinidad in London.

Along with using the essayistic, I will work with the notions of still and moving images. It must be clarified that the essayistic is a form that creates a space between still and moving images: it allows for a dialogue between the two to appear. In terms of Raymond Bellour (2008), the photographic is the name for the in-between space that permits this dialogue to appear; it is the place between wandering and stillness. With the dialogic relation of stillness and motion (Guido & Lugon, 2012) in mind, I will analyse the definition of a photo essay in terms of the still image and the film essay in terms of the moving image.

2.2. PHOTO ESSAY

Patrick Sutherland (2016) argues that the Photo Essay -through still photographic images- is a valuable narrative construction for documentary practices. The power of the still image lies in its ability to focus on the narration of a specific situation. For David Green (2006), "a photograph transforms that which existed before the camera" (p6), therefore re-enforcing the activist power of visual images through the capacity to render a turbulent reality and transform it. The printed Photo Essay was more frequently used by journalists working with photographers in the 1950s and 1960s. Its use expanded throughout the 1970s to become a broader visual narrative tool in which graphic designers were directly involved; it started to operate as a collage, a fragmented piece that challenges the reader to interpret the message, fostering their visual thinking. Although the birth of the Photo-Essay can be traced back to 1936 to Life Magazine in the USA, as Graf highlights, "the term photo essay implies a vantage point: It does not show facts, but how these facts are to be seen" (2014, 10). Sometimes, text is used to help the reader fill in information gaps and put the essay together. In Sutherland's view, the essence of the photographic essay is the investigation comes from the fact that it is conducted concerning a particular subject, the immersive activity that the author has to do and the description of that through the image to call for attention

and some action, in activist approaches. The photographic essay is a visual anthropological narrative in that it makes a statement regarding a particular social group. It aims to further the production of memory as a document to preserve culture through fieldwork, observation and participation. The essay, as part of my research with the Latin American community, usually involves a participatory element; as an activist approach, this considers how people can be the ones who control the gaze and trigger actions regarding a particular social issue.

2.3. FILM ESSAY

The Film Essay is a crucial tool for this research as it has power as a didactic tool with a subversive activity. Catalá (2011) suggests that the Film Essay is very close to cinema as it is a reflection of images and sound. It is also very close to documentary practices –crucial for this research– as it is close to the subject matter and reality itself, "it is a reflection that chooses its subject and creates its own rules" (Ibid, p85). [34] Corrigan mentions the power of the Film Essay to question representational assumptions through an encounter between the self and the public domain (2011, p6); it is a piece of work that is in constant speculation; it commonly does not give an answer to a matter, but instead invites action. This is why it is essential as a dynamic and pedagogical tool: it is a piece that allows for debate to appear within the audience. The Film Essay, as opposed to the Photo Essay, can navigate within the polarity of the still-moving. It represents a reality that evolves in time through specific image movement, in terms of David Green in *Stillness and time: photography and the moving image* (2006), the Film Essay allows for a direct connection with urban life as it depicts the relentless movement of the city in terms of its fluidity and rapid spatial transformation that is possible to grasp in the process of montage. Timothy Corrigan (2011) suggests that the Film Essay is a portrait of the self; it offers the crisis of the self as a moving image between expression and representation, which engages with different dimensions of the

outside. It allows one to think about the self as a public space, "the self becomes the same self as the most extreme other, as the outside, as the world" (p97). It is the site or the place to challenge the narration and constructions of public stories through portraits of real individuals "at the centre of heroic chronologies" (p85),[26] such as the Latin Americans in Seven Sisters and Elephant and Castle. Film Essays can mix communicative resources and techniques to play with reality and fiction, creating an architecture of what can be possible or not, relating to a particular subject matter. In Catala's words, "a tension between reality and fiction, through which the real acquires a fictional persuasive force and the fictional epic power of the real" (Ibid, p90).[27] These tensions allow for the identification of the spectator as subjectivity, contributing to speculation about the future of a community or a person. In the same path, Rascaroli (2017) defines the Film Essay as a performative search for an object, which is mainly historical and relates to time and history. For this reason, as mentioned, the Film Essay has a political viewpoint aimed at showing a gap between the object and the world itself. "The visible result of this labour is that the Essay Film detaches objects from their background, thus introducing a gap of potentiality between object and world. This gap is its philosophy (p189)". By doing so, that gap leaves space to reveal links between affections, perceptions, visual images, sounds, conventions, temporal layers, narrations and discourses; an in-between relationship that reinforces the idea that history is not a product; it is an on-going critical encounter between the past and the present. This methodological approach of looking at images as essays creates spaces through the juxtaposition of practices and approaches, a principle of the production of knowledge in artistic research as I will present throughout chapters three, four, five and six.

[26] Author's translation, see quote in original language: "una reflexión que acoge su propio objeto e inventa sus propias reglas" (, 2000, p85).

[27] Author's translation, see quote in original language: " una tensión entre lo real y lo ficticio, mediante la que lo real adquiere la fuerza persuasiva de la ficción y lo ficticio el poder épico de lo real." (Catalá, 2000, p90).

3.

CONCLUSION: VISUAL RESISTANCE

In the context of visuality and resistance, it is crucial to assess the work of Ariella Azoulay (2020); the author reflects on the question of how vital the consent of people is to photography, the participation of people in its creation and the agenda the image plays in a broader social situation: "for photography to become omnipresent on a global scale, people's interference with its smooth operation had to be minimised or foreclosed" (Ibid, 2020). This analysis offers an especially instructive lens to understand photography's imperialistic role within minority ethnic communities, such as the Latin American. The author also discusses the importance of reparation within a constitutive part of academia, as elaborated in her recent book, *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism* (2020). Here, she argues that the archive symbolises a technology of violence, a suppressive force for what aimed to be forgotten or recognised. With this in mind, I look at images of the Latin American community in the local archives of Southwark and Haringey in London to highlight how diasporic communities are mainly neglected from these archives and national historical discourses in Britain. In response, this has led to community-based projects to rescue their histories such as Latinidad LDN, as I will present further in Chapter Five. As mentioned before, Azoulay (2008) argues that there is a civil contract of photography; the organisation of political relations that enlarge the scope of a gaze mediated by a sovereign "to encompass a mixed economy of gazes that continually flood the visual field with new data. It is not synchronised or controlled by a sovereign power" (Ibid, p113), photography and film are ways to make visible social injustices that go on to trigger activist resistance, bringing to the core the significance of analysis through visual empathy, a dialogical tool to approach the visual to call for social movement and positive urban change for communities. –The concept of the gaze for the migrant condition will be explored further in chapter six–.

As Stuart Hall (2013) argued, images acquire value in relation to others: in relation to text, to sound, to different discourses, to their circulation and to their context. It is important to reflect on visual culture not just through an academic approach but also as an everyday life process, understanding social complexities for diasporic communities through the notion of visuality as a path to resist. This chapter presented the methodologies and methods I have used to develop this thesis, a panorama of the academic field in the UK and my contribution to knowledge. I presented the methodology diagram, the arts based research methods, and my autoethnographic approach as an art practitioner. In the framework of inquiry about practices of representation of the Latin American community in London as a transcultural formation, placing emphasis on a feminist gaze as it is a woman-made community and on the importance of the image for activist approaches to tackle urban dispersion. In the next chapter, Diasporic Geographies, I will delve deeper into the narratives of gentrification that are directly linked to diasporic communities in the Global North, in this case, Latin Americans in London, and how *mobilising identities* challenges those dynamics.

CHAPTER 3

DIASPORIC GEOGRAPHIES, LATIN LONDONERS

CHAPTER 3

DIASPORIC GEOGRAPHIES
LATIN LONDONERS

1. THE URBAN DIASPORA
- **1.1.** Migrant Trajectories
- **1.2.** Migrants, Cities and Communities

2. THE PRODUCTION OF DIASPORIC GEOGRAPHIES
- **2.1.** The Exodus and The Arrival
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3. GENTRIFICATION HAZARDS: LATIN LONDONERS AT RISK
- **3.1.** Gentrification in Global London
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  - **3.3.1.** *Mobilising Identities* Performing Visual Resistance

4. CONCLUSION: NEW AND FEMINISED GEOGRAPHIES

1.

THE URBAN DIASPORA

London's history has always been intertwined with its colonial past, particularly in terms of migrant circulation and the many layers that the process of migration has engraved in the city (Ortiz, 2022). In contemporary London, the circulation of migrants is linked to the extremely fast pace of urban transformation, which is not always fair or inclusive for all. An urban diaspora is the creation of a community that has a place of encounter in the city; this could be retail sites, entertainment spaces, neighbourhoods, NGOs, or any gathering point. It is a political and social construct related to cultural affiliations and common grounds established through symbols and meanings. Therefore, the urban experience of a diaspora is the experience of a community that shares a common sense of being.

This chapter addresses the concept of *mobilising identities* as social movement agents who challenge the rate of assimilation. I will do this by presenting the landscape of migrants, cities and communities, delving into the geographies of Latin London and the localised work of mobilising identities, such as Latin Elephant. This links to my research questions, 1) How do the productions of representational systems create memories to enhance the sense of belonging? And 2) Which mnemonic devices do diasporas use to recreate their places of origin in the global city? I will present the work they have conducted in Elephant and Castle in the years 2015 and 2016, as catalysts for further visual culture developments in the area to claim a place in the global city, which brings to light my research questions: 4) How are transcultural processes of the Latin American diaspora in London evidenced? 5) How does representation address processes of urban change for the Latin American diaspora in London? and 6) How do the dynamics of diasporas, as a community, affect the urban landscape of London? I do this by linking the discussion with the role of Latin Americans in the tropicalization of London's urban

landscape through narratives of migration and belonging.

Diasporas in urban spaces are usually located in super-diverse neighbourhoods that allow the reproduction of values and spatial practices from diverse places of origin. The dynamics of each diasporic group are related to a vast variety of national history and their connection to the UK, not forgetting the nation's imperial past (Berg & Eckstein, 2015). An urban diaspora is a political stage for imagination, for new ways of making place, creating the city, and promoting different notions of care, belonging, retail, trade, and the production of transcultural identities. However, a huge amount of research has demonstrated that urban diasporas are usually linked to urban displacement, informality, and marginalisation within global cities (McIlwaine, 2011; McIlwaine, Cock, & Linneker, 2010; McIlwaine, Datta, Evans & Bunge, 2016; McIlwaine, Román-Velázquez, Pérez, & Peluffo, 2021; Berg, Gidley, & Krausova, 2019; Román-Velázquez & Retis, 2021; Román-Velázquez, 2014).

As stated by Richard Florida in *The New Urban Crisis* (2018), superstar cities and knowledge hubs such as London face inequality as an urban issue, where the main actors of the conflict are urban developers and local governments. Multinational property developers such as LendLease, Delancey, Grainer & Co, Barratt, Qatari Diar, Canary Wharf Group, etc., do not conduct proper consultations and often end up erasing vulnerable urban communities in the search for growth of their land's economic value. These types of urban developments are creating a *new class geography*. This is visible in places with a re-urbanisation process that has been shifting from post-industrial sites to high-tech and creativity hubs, where the materiality of the new creative neighbourhoods is evident. In response, growing inequality and segregation are part of the everyday transformations that urban diaspora communities must go through, for instance, the disappearance of the places where they used to buy groceries, long commutes to their workplaces, or the impossibility of accessing services in their native languages, as Florida asserts "inequality is a product of both poverty and racial disadvantage" (Ibid, p95). The United Kingdom, a place with a knowledge-based economy, is contradictory. According to the Gini Coefficient, Cambridge, Oxford, and London are the top three cities of The Ten Least Equal Cities in the UK (Ibid, p98). In a broader sense, we can argue that universities and knowledge-based institutions are also contributing to the perpetuation of gentrification dynamics. For example, The London College of Communication played an important role in the development of Elephant and Castle in London, as the university partnered with the council and the developer Lendlease to construct a new *cutting-edge* building (Burgoyne, 2020).

Nevertheless, there is a constant production of resistance within urban diaspora communities facing gentrification, with increasing political involvement of diasporic communities in which collective points of interest articulate to represent those whose everyday lives have been threatened by multinational urban redevelopments (Vathi & Burrell, 2021). I will expose these dynamics within this chapter in the light of Latin Americans in London.

1.1. MIGRANT TRAJECTORIES

Paul Collier (2014) states that each individual exodus is a triumph over bureaucratic barriers imposed by global economic power.[28] For some governments of the countries of origin, migration is vital due to the power of remittances within their economy and the global interaction it triggers.[37] That is why they apply migration policies to support their diasporas, so the link with the home country prevails, and they can benefit from remittances back home. The stronger and more well-established the diaspora community is in its host country, the more remittances the origin state will receive, and the stronger the cultural affiliation will be maintained.

Nonetheless, other countries try to keep migration policies as restrictive as possible. For instance, Dubai in the Arab Emirates, whose population is 95% external migrants or people that were not born there; or in Japan's case, which is one of the wealthiest societies on earth but has an exceptionally low rate of migrants (Ibid, p20). According to the IOM (International Organization of Migration) World Migration Report, there are 244 million international migrants globally, 38 million, and around 740 million internal migrants; that is to say, migration is reshaping how we relate to the world.[30] The world's population of international migrants has grown almost three times since the 1970s (Ibid, p13).

[28] In his book, *Exodus: How migration is changing our world* (2014).

[29] When migrants send to their home countries part of their incomes, as cash or goods.

The USA has been the world's meeting point for migration since the 1970s, having the biggest number of foreign-born people living there, which has led to a large number of diasporic groups. This is also evident in the number of remittances sent, which are monetary transfers made by migrants to their home countries.[31] The USA is the leading source of remittances from high-income countries; by 2015, the country presented a total outflow of 61.38 billion USD. On the other hand, India was the highest-receiving remittance destination, with 12.84 billion USD in 2016. The UK is in the top 10 countries sending and receiving remittances according to The Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford (Vargas-Silva, 2018), reaching around 16.5 billion GBP (in bilateral remittances) by 2016.

Collier (2014) argues about the importance of the diaspora for the migrant journey. The cooperation of people in the diaspora is the foundation of their interactions as foreigners since their actions can often help them cope with the fear and uncertainty they have endured when establishing themselves in another territory. For instance, the cost of a migrant's first movement decreases simultaneously as the number of people in the diaspora increases (p52). In the 1960s, the salary gap between 'third world' countries and 'first world' countries was immense. However, by the 1980s, countries such as India and China started to accelerate their economies with the expansion of global capital flows. Around the 1990s, Latin America started to expand in population, and the related economic activities, this led to an increase in population, hence the creation of more diasporic communities.

In The Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford report (2022), it can be seen that before the suspension of the International Passenger Survey in March 2020, London received 30% of the Migrants arriving by official ports such as airports or train stations. During the Covid-19 pandemic, although London experienced a decline in its workforce and migrant population, by June 2021, it is said to have recovered to pre-pandemic levels. Migrants in London are more likely to come for work or asylum, and this is one of the main reasons why diasporic communities are so important for many: the migration process is a very isolating experience.

[30] The report presents data taken from the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Bank, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

[31] The data presented in the report is taken from the World's Bank statistics and it does not consider informal or unrecorded flows, the actual flow of remittances might be larger than the information available (IOM, 2018, p30).

1.2. MIGRANTS, CITIES, AND COMMUNITIES

As a starting point, it is crucial to make a distinction between diaspora and community. As mentioned in the literature review chapter one, the word diaspora refers to a population that is scattered from their place of origin and reunites in a new host place (Gilroy, 1993). Whereas communities can manifest through several unifying factors, the nature of a community is based on integration and identification, as expressed by bell hooks (2003) in *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope*, to live with hope is to create spaces of closeness allowing a deep connection to develop with the other. Therefore, in this thesis, the Latin American community is characterised as a diasporic community, having the definitions mentioned above in mind I will go on in this chapter and explain the importance of the urban realm for the formation of such a community.

In her book *Community as Urban Practice* (2017), Talja Blokland exposes how "Community consists of practices in which we convey a shared positioning, develop shared experiences, or construct a shared narrative of belonging. This means we also draw boundaries to delineate whom we do not share with" (p59). A community is a cultural production based on the strategies and practices of experiencing everyday life activities. A community, as culture, is a relational space constantly moving and producing new meaning. It is not fixed; instead, it is movable and fluctuates. A

community is part of the circulation of cultures within cities. Therefore, communities are also political as they have proximities and points of dispersion; a political community allows dissent. It is known that communities within Global Cities are frequently framed as marginalised, poor, or ghettos. The geographies of communities in cities face many threats, as they are not directly active players in the financial system, increasing dynamics of displacement as if communities were crowds that can be easily relocated to where land is not so valuable and desirable.

The postcolonial street in Britain and the urban market have fostered migrant hubs in London. As Suzanne Hall (2015, 2021) exposes, everyday life and ordinary spaces are the basis of any migratory experience. They are the space for urban engagement that allows participation in city life, where people learn to understand how to navigate the circulation of life in the global capital. Migrant spaces move between improvisation and informality. It is through the configuration of shared objects, food, music, languages, images, and memories that the migrant street character takes shape, and communities are reinforced. As a result, migration cannot be seen as something external to urban planning policies but rather as something that reconfigures and transforms the way we inhabit cities. Corners of cities are known today as the Bangladeshi part, the Latin Quarter, the Vietnamese Street, China Town, or The African market. It is through the identification of migration patterns and the creation of subsequent communities that global cities interact on a planetary scale.

The neoliberal model has been successful in convincing us that we are only individuals within a massive urban fabric and that the notion of community, as expressed above, has been stereotyped as marginal or external to the real dynamics of a city such as finance, transport, retail, education and technology. However, for our urban future, it has to be possible to create urbanisation through the recognition of sacred knowledge, community-based built environments, and most importantly cities created for their actual inhabitants and not solely for private and luxury developments (Harvey, 2007).

Communities as common unities are developing new strategies to inhabit the city and create a new urban future, realising the importance of maintaining, repairing, transforming, and sustaining their materiality. Having spaces for growth, the community redefines the migratory experience and creates a transcultural dynamic by unifying practices and artefacts that become shared symbols. With this in mind, we can argue that emotional connections trigger social change. Therefore, creating participatory approaches to urban planning at a neighbourhood level promotes the circulation of diverse urban narratives and alternatives to share knowledge that resides in local communities (Ortiz, 2022).

New urbanism is at the basis of Community Liveability (Wagner & Caves,2012), where economy, ecology and equity must be the desire of the council and urban developers. Belonging, population diversity, and economic opportunities need to be guaranteed not only through fake schemes, usually avoidable by consultation processes and fake statistics such as section 106 of urban planning in London, but also by neighbours involved in their actual place-making (McEwen, 2019). The aforementioned is the landscape that I will present in this chapter in the case of the Latin American community facing the process of urban redevelopment in Elephant and Castle and Seven Sisters, to set up the context for the following three chapters.

2. THE PRODUCTION OF DIASPORIC GEOGRAPHIES

The first recorded date of transatlantic displacement took place when a Colombian travelled to London, in 1964 (McIlwaine, 2011). Fifty-nine years after that first registry, a vast Latin American community has grown in London's cold and grey city. In 1965, the Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre opened to revitalise the South of the River Thames, providing the southern communities with a new space for gatherings within central London (Humphrey, 2013). As stated by Santiago Peluffo (2021), an active member of the Latin American Community and an activist in relocating and retaining the traders in Elephant and Castle: "The local traders have been building community for ages, 55 years or so". Sadly, in September 2020, the dynamism of this place changed radically when The Shopping Centre closed its doors. In the last three years, a process of re-location and remaking of a home has been taking place. With that in mind, I will now present the process of arrival and place-making of Latin Londoners [Fig.1].

ELEPHANT AND CASTLE TRADERS RELOCATION

FIG.1. Latin Elephant, Elephant and Castle traders/Businesses Relocation Map

2.1. THE EXODUS AND THE ARRIVAL

As noted in the work of the scholars Cathy McIlwaine (McIlwaine & Bunge, 2016; McIlwaine, 2011), Juan Camilo Cock (2010, 2016) and Patria Román-Velázquez (1996, 2014), Latin Americans started to arrive in the UK in relatively large numbers from the 1970s onwards:

> While small numbers of political refugees who had fled Chile, Uruguay and Argentina arrived, most migrants at this time were Colombians who arrived with work permits to work primarily in hotels, restaurants, and hospitals in cleaning and catering jobs. In the 1980s, the flows comprised mainly Colombians and Ecuadorians. It was during this decade that many of the migrant organisations such as Carila, Latin American Women's Rights Service (LAWRS) and Casa Latino Americana were established and who worked on campaigning and service provision for newly arrived migrants from Latin America. During the 1990s and 2000s, Latin Americans continued to settle as students, as refugees and as economic migrants, again with many working in the low-paid, low-status sectors of the labour market. (McIlwaine & Bunge, 2016, p7)

Even though the majority of Latin Americans arrived in London after 2000, 12% of people did it before 1989. "The earliest recorded date of migration among Latin Americans surveyed was a Colombian who arrived in 1964. Early migration in the 1970s, particularly, was dominated

by Colombians and Chileans with some Ecuadorians and Peruvians" (McIlwaine, 2011, p31). It was in the decade of 1991-2000 that commercial business activities and hubs for meetings started to develop in London, such as The Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre and The Seven Sisters Indoor Market, accompanied by some Latino Newspapers and online media such as *Express News* and *Mundo Latino* (Cock, 2011; McIlwaine, 2011). Latin American migration is a consequence of the drug trafficking industry –particularly from Colombia towards the rest of Latin America–, the authoritarian governments and the shift towards neoliberal politics; violence started to become rampant in the continent, exacerbating processes of migration (Pagnotta, 2019).

Furthermore, "during the Latin American independence process, these countries contracted foreign debt, especially to buy arms from England —which had a strong effect on national economies and rose even more in the 80s" (Ibid, p4). Latin America pursued a highly successful agricultural and industrial model from the 30s until the 70s. Yet, the wealth was, and still is, very unevenly distributed, with critical gaps among incomes in the region. From the 1970s to the 1990s, urbanisation took place in main Latin American cities, so city life started to decline due to the competition for space and workplaces but also due to social turmoil already exposed in Chapter One. Then, cities around the continent developed with slums (*favelas, tugurios*) and shantytowns, which perpetuated violence. A significant cause of this was the rural exodus of people due to complex dynamics in rural locations and the outskirts of cities. An example of this is the case of Colombia, which has almost eight million people displaced in and outside the country. By the turn of the 2000s, the idea of living abroad was well-planted in many Latin American people's minds, leading to a growing number of diasporic communities and an exodus.

For Collier (2013), the relationship between diasporas and the host country is key to understanding the importance of the meeting points. Collier exposes the system of migration through the relationship between salary gaps and the construction of diaspora communities, in which the influx of migrants depends on the number of migrants that create the diaspora and the salary gap between the place of origin and the host place, which subsequently translates into the capacity of acquisition that the senders of remittances will have. To explain a bit further, Diaspora dynamics are related to what Henry Lefebvre called *The Production of Space* (1974), a social construction in a particular time and space frame, as Collier puts it:

> The appropriate concept of diaspora is not defined by the place of birth but by the behaviour: what is relevant for the immigration rate is the number of people that are building relationships with new immigrants, and with an attitude of service and fraternity. In that sense, the rate

> of departure from the diaspora is not based on the rate of death, but in the transmission of culture and values (p, 56).[32]

The formation of a diaspora is the production of a social space that gathers social and cultural values from two or more places. However, there is a massive risk for diaspora communities and that is in Collier's terms *la tasa de absorción* (*the rate of assimilation*): the relationship between community and people that inhabit the host place but who are not related to the community directly (that is the majority group). So that, *the rate of assimilation* will be low if the diaspora interacts and stays active as a community, if not the majority group might absorb the whole diaspora.

For the majority group, not to downplay the whole diaspora, it is basic to have meeting places where cultural values and shared symbolisms interact and are re-created via transcultural formations. So, the continuity of arrivals and the sustainability of diaspora communities are maintained.

[32] Translation made by Verónica Posada. See quote in the original language: "El concepto adecuado de diáspora no se define por el nacimiento, sino por el comportamiento: lo relevante para la tasa de inmigración es el número de personas que están relacionadas con los nuevos inmigrantes y dispuestas a ayudarles. En ese sentido la tasa de abandono de la diáspora no depende de la tasa de mortalidad entre los inmigrantes, sino de la transmisión de la cultura y las obligaciones" (Collier, 2013p, 56).

2.2. TROPICAL REMITTANCES

In *Beyond Remittances, Migrant Families in Latin America* (Gómez & Medina, 2009), a work created by the Federation of International Catholic Universities, they expose several case studies around different countries in the region to analyse the impact of migration through remittances from 1995 onwards, the moment in time when migration started to increase without precedent in Latin America, particularly to the USA, Spain and Japan (Ibid). The book shows how important the family is for migrants and the cultural values that change with the relocation. There are numerous adjustments in the routines and interactions within families when one of its members migrates, and this is a process that I call tropical remittances, the social value in which diasporic communities are opening spaces in different geographies through interactions between the host place and the home countries. Frances Aparicio (1994) reflects on the adjective tropical or the process of tropicalization as a counter-movement that emerged in the USA with Latin American populations, "(...) by allowing the voices and signifiers of Latinos and Latinas to reclaim our always already tropicalized 'tropics' as a cultural site of our own. In the process, we are rewriting and transforming 'American' culture with our own sub-versive signifiers" (Ibid, p796). In this section, I will present the importance of the concept of remittances to understand the tropicalization of urban space, which will be illustrated in section three via several visual essays.

Suppose there is already an established diasporic community in the location where someone is going. In that case, it is also a possibility that there are people in the town/city of origin that may support the migrant and help them with the process of relocation, and, in time, when said migrant has established themselves, they can then send remittances back home. Overall, the work addresses the importance of social remittances as the "ideas, values, attitudes, practices, habits and cosmogony that migrants develop through the transit and the struggle to survive in the host country" (p324).[33] This study is very compelling as a qualitative method, which supports the daily life situations of migrant families to create symbolic values that become a particular pattern or trend within the migrant's network. It addresses dialogical contexts, which, in Sennett's terms (2012), allows the recognition of subjectivities through the dynamics of a diaspora, highlighting the symbolic value of its interactions, a diasporic geography.

On the other hand *Beyond Remittances* (Gómez, & Medina, 2009), researchers of the FUNLAM (Fundación Universitaria Luis Amigó)[34] focused on the socio-political context, which is related to the configuration of spatiotemporal situations contributing to the analysis of subjectivities and social issues. Secondly, it presents the cultural context that relates to habits, daily life interactions, ties, and social behaviour; and finally, the relational context, which is the space of representation, expression, performance, and discussion, which aims to facilitate the creation of projects within communities. This is linked to David Harvey's understanding of space, which is my method of analysing the spatiotemporal relation of the diasporas. In *Space as a Keyword* (2006), the author alludes to the relational space as: "the relational notion of space-time implies the idea of internal relations; external influences get internalised in specific processes or things through time" (p273) so that the notion of space produces the possibility of political activities and encounters and aims to find ways of representing and promoting those internal relations, within diaspora communities.

As an example, the FUNLAM method uses the study of Colombian Families. The project in Medellín-Colombia was aimed at the analysis of the changes in family ties due to migration.

[33] Translation made by Verónica Posada. See quote in the original language: "ideas, valores, actitudes, prácticas, hábitos y cosmovisión que los migrantes desarrollan en el tránsito y en la lucha por la sobrevivencia en el país de destino" (Gómez, A., & Medina, N. 2009, p324).

[34] The name of a University in Medellín, Colombia. They conducted the case of study in Colombia, within a research group called: *Laboratorio Universitario de Estudios Sociales* (LUES). The authors of this chapter are: Alfreso Manuel Ghiso Cotos, Catalina María Tabares Ochoa, Libia Elena Ramírez Roblado and Santiago Alberto Morales Mesa.

The research focused on non-linear social interactions to analyse the different contexts of these migrations. One of the milestones was that they found how migration reframes the whole family system and enhances the nation-state values for the people abroad, which triggers the growth of the diaspora communities. The transnational or *glocal* families are crucial for the diasporas to survive in the host place as they represent the roots and the inspiration 'to do better abroad'. As stated above, the most popular destination amongst Paisa[35] migrants are the USA, with 45% living there on a regular basis (via longer term visas and so on) and 55% on irregular basis (through tourist visas or 'illegal' paths); other popular countries for Paisas are Costa Rica, México, France, and Switzerland (Ibid). The migrants reconfigure the host location through the evocation of dynamics left back home, yet they also reconfigure the family and the relationship with the place of origin through dynamics they learn in the process of migration and within the diaspora. As an example of the situation in the Latin American diaspora –also illustrated in the Literature Review Chapter– *Magical Urbanism* (Davis,2001) is a phenomenon worth exploring, Latin American migrants have changed the face of some USA cities such as Los Angeles, with the tropicalization of some urban areas like the practice of street vendors and *tiendas de barrio*; places where one can buy things from Latin America, but that are also sites of reunion. Likewise, the colour of the houses and the transformation of space that surrounds them in the *barrio*. Latin Americans have a force of redemption that has allowed them to reconfigure places around western global cities, which is a practice of inverse colonialism and has allowed the social reproduction of Latinidad.[36]

Another essential account of the debate about how Latin Americans have changed the face of the US society is within the book *Fluid Borders* by Lisa García, who works around the concept of Latino Power, Identity and Political approaches in Los Angeles (2005). García explores the impact of border crossings in geographical and psychological dimensions to analyse Latin Americans as a community and their relationship with the US idea of power, place and political action. For Latin Americans in the US, there are numerous political barriers to properly exist as citizens and that complicates the idea of being able to change and transform their context. This is due to many decades of stigma and imperialist discourses that dominated the Latin American routes as an identity that has been ruled by northern powers since 1492, when the Spanish arrived on the continent. Latin Americans have been

[35] People that come from Antioquia, a Colombian department. The capital is Medellín, and it is located in the northwest of the country.

[36] See Appendix A.

seen as “the others” in places where they migrate, particularly in Los Angeles.

Nevertheless, in recent years there have been several changes and, as I exposed above, there is a reproduction of Latinidad that allows political participation. For instance, García proposes the term *mobilising identities*, as I have detailed in Chapters One and Two; an identity that encourages agency, which means attachment to a community. *Mobilising identities* within a Diaspora group triggers political participation. These are related to the concept *rate of assimilation* (Collier, 2014) described above as the possibility for a diaspora to be absorbed or to be downplayed by the majority group: people from the host place.[37] Therefore, for this research *mobilising identities* challenge the *rate of assimilation* and help to enhance the a place in the city. I will present the case studies in the section.

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[37] See Appendix A.

3.

GENTRIFICATION HAZARDS

In the same year of the aforementioned first registered arrival of a Latin American in London, 1964, Ruth Glass, the German-British Sociologist, coined the term *gentrification*. According to the etymology of the word, *gentry* refers to people of high social status, a group with the power to transform, and *fication* means making, creating, causing. Then, is gentrification the production of clans? The production of nobles? The creation of otherness?

In Glass's publication *London: Aspects of Change* (1964), the concept is explained in sociological terms as the frequency of change experienced by an urban space. However, this is not so simple since this frequency includes an element of expulsion. Therefore, a 'zone of transition' is created on the margins of a new private development:

> Not all inhabitants of these 'zones of transition' are in fact poor. Here are people who must stay near their work in the centre, or who cannot afford to move to the suburbs. Here are families who are at the tail end of the municipal housing queue; and also those who are not eligible for such housing, or who cannot pay local authority rents- Here are immigrants from other parts of Britain or overseas who nowadays can find hardly any open doors-especially if their skin is coloured- and who have to take the left-overs of accommodation, however dingy, however expensive. (Ibid, p6)

I imagine Ruth Glass in the post-war capital. I see her as the precursor of an urban theory that would change the course of many cities and the lives of their diasporic communities. Communities that, despite being shown hospitality, continue to turn on the axis of displacement. Gentrification is the competitive process of dominance over a particular place,

the working class forced out by the white-collar workers. For Loretta Lees (2015), a fellow gentrification scholar, Glass's work foresaw the future of urban areas about profiteering from land that leads to the relocation of many communities in large global cities.

Although the term gentrification started to become widely known in the late 1990s, in the present time, 2023, it has been misunderstood as a positive dynamic for neighbours and even a global trend that must be achieved to create more lively areas. It is a process that intertwines with globalisation and, overall, with the Neoliberal economy. Gentrification studies are a contested ground. Some see gentrification dynamics as positive because people usually notice the external factors of the built environment rather than the social relations dismantled from it. It is a process in which creative hubs create a neighbourhood with access to elite services and living conditions without examining what happens in reality to the population inhabiting the places and if they will be able to access the new developments. There is also a tendency to classify *gentrifiers* as a collective social group, ignoring the local authorities' involvement in the change process. It is crucial to remember that gentrification is a process of displacement that has been commodified and used in marketing to produce terms such as regenerate, revitalise, renewal, change, or even sustainability. Also, this research aims to open a channel for discussing tools and tactics to overcome gentrification and resist it as much as possible since it is crucial to critically assess the geography of gentrification (Lees, Slater & Wyly, 2008).

Even though the term was coined in 1964 by Ruth Glass, it has been shaping the modern city since the 1950s with post-war urban planning. Loretta Lees et al. proposed different types of waves of gentrification: Firstly, Classical Gentrification or The First Wave in which inner-city neighbours are upgraded on the socio-economic scale and working-class people are displaced by middle-class people. An example of this is the process of Hackney in East London, where Polish Migrants, Fish Mongers and other traders have been displaced further away, giving way to London's Bobo's place –Bohemians Bourgeois– (Ibid, 2008, p31). As exposed earlier, in Richard's Florida *Cities and the Creative Class* (2005), the first wave of gentrifiers usually contains creative professionals such as architects, designers, photographers, and artists looking for studios and houses with cheap rents.

The Second Wave, or The New Build gentrification, is the process in which new boundaries are identified, and the Media and cultural institutions start to pay attention to the areas. Renovations and refurbishment begin flourishing, and the site is labelled under construction (Lees, Slater & Wyly, 2008, p31). One strategy I have identified during my fieldwork in London

is that councils often tend to ignore or set aside certain spots for later development by real estate developers to offer up for the so-called renovation of the area. By neglecting improvements and renovation, Councils/Local governments aimed at changing the perception of the places to frame them as *dodgy*, dangerous, or suspect places, so the revitalisation process, in partnership with multinationals, does not consider the people who live and work in the area. As Harvey (2003) suggests in *Accumulation by Dispossession*, the process of trading with urban land depends on the *residualisation* of those who inhabit the areas.

One of the main characteristics of the Third Wave is the arrival of people who see housing as an investment rather than a place to live, which leads to massive empty flats and dark urban areas in luxury developments around global cities, usually owned by the 1%. "It might also cause socio-cultural displacement as the incomers take control of the community apparatus in the area" (p140). Here, the developers have taken control of producing and promoting a type of lifestyle that is sold to the newcomers as that of a global citizen. I would suggest that there is a transition period between The Third Wave and the Forth One, where prices start to increase for goods and everyday life consumption such as coffees, beers, transport, groceries, clothes, etc. It is here when land value escalates and the built environment starts to change drastically.

Finally, The Fourth Wave, or The Super-gentrification, is when the most frustrating aspect of the gentrification process develops. Strikingly, cities begin to lose their authenticity due to the desire to achieve a certain competitive standard. The homogenisation of the environment happens as urban developers fail to recognise the process of designing for people and not for profits. Here, displacement affects owners and First and Second-wave inhabitants/gentrifiers. It is a complex process of expulsion with no clear regulations that will continue to develop if there are no clear government policies. In a super-gentrification process, there are bigger and higher economic investments on planetary scales; it is the space for the global elites. "Super-gentrification is only linked to happening in neighbourhoods in global cities that are easily commutable to global financial headquarters such as the City of London, The Golden Square Mile, or Wall Street" (Ibid, p150).

3.1. GENTRIFICATION IN GLOBAL LONDON

The global city is the representation of the post-industrial economy through its transnational financial networks. The term *global city* was first coined in socioeconomic terms by the sociologist Saskia Sassen (1991) as the post-industrial production site, which is the geographic composition of globalised capital forces. Sassen analyses the social order of the global city as the economic restructuring of classes via spatial polarization. In 1990s, cities such as London, Tokyo and New York started a new urban regime that is characterised by two forces: one that is centrifugal and attracts the major players in the global economy to financial centres such as the financial district in New York, or The City and Canary Wharf in London; the other force is centripetal and expulses the blue-collar workers from enjoying the city centres, homogenising the city through gentrification caused by the centrifugal forces of global capital flow.[38] As I have already explored, in the Literature Review Chapter, gentrification is a term that will be crucial for my research as it is the main issue Latin Americans face in London. Around 1970s onwards, London's urban fabric started to massively change, particularly with the "The death of the Docks" (Porter, 2000, p425), when many factories around East London

[38] Sassen refers to blue-collar workers as the lowest scale of the working pyramid, for instance industrial workers, drivers, cleaners, hospitality and manual workers; jobs usually occupied my immigrants (Sassen, 1991).

were closed. This action detonated the creation of the 'London Dockland Development Corporation' to reinvigorate the area. This ended up in the creation of places such as Canary Wharf, Surrey Quays and the Docklands Light Railway, which give the city a sense of homogenised global place. That process detonated and spread out the non-stoppable impetus for regeneration all over the city. Consequently, inner London communities followed a step towards polarisation. This leads us back to Sassen, who exposes this problematic as a systematic process of polarisation where the highly educated workforce is at the top of the forces that can transform the cityscape. The casual, industrial and informal workers represent the working force that produces for the needs of the educated white-collar workers, the vein of the financial centres around the globe. Those informal workers are usually migrants coming from the so-called Third World economies or the 'Global South'. London and many cities around the globe followed steps towards homogenisation as the base for contemporary urban living: "huge estates of poorer working-class and immigrant council tenants and, on the other hand, affluent owner-occupier" (Ibid, p429).

What is at stake here is that migrants coming to London from the Global South are usually blue-collar workers that participate in the small, flexible, subcontracting and low wage kind of jobs that offer services to the white-collar and knowledge-based economy of the northern global cities. As outlined before, Loretta Lees (2008; 2014) elucidates on how the neoliberal policies of urbanisation —such as aggressive urban entrepreneurialism, local government reorganisation, private investment schemes, and increasing policies that related urban space and activism itself— are in fact areas of neoliberal practices by means of individualisation focused on private property and free market exchange, all to generate capital profit. The atmosphere in processes of urban change in London has shifted into a post-political environment; protest, dissent and resistance have been part of the process of institutionalised urban regeneration. By doing so, activist communities are taking actions of resistance that are shifting part of the attention that developers want for their new schemes. The spatial governance of London's local authorities is based on silencing their communities, excluding certain voices from the sphere of influence. That type of erasure is the depolitisation of *the other* cancelling its possibilities to dissent. Nevertheless, there are practices of resistance aiming at new ways of inhabiting the urban.

In the Handbook *Gentrification Studies* edited by Loreta Lees, the geographer Patrick Rérat (2018, p103) argues about gentrification as the competition for space or place appropriation between classes. Using the term Spatial Capital to explain the importance of positioning oneself within the urban fabric and urban facilities in terms of access, competence, and

appropriation in everyday life activities within a city. Most striking is that the global elite is producing a type of urban appropriation from northern economies to third-world economies. The process of gentrification has its roots in colonialism. It is a practice of coloniality where the imposition of measures over land fosters inequality, and by doing so triggers removals, transitions, and dislocation of people. From the 1990s, inspiration and aspirational language appear, "A narrative around spatial planning as genuinely distinctive emerged, painting a simplistic and misleading image of 'old style' land use planning and contrasting it with spatial planning to emphasise the change" (Allmendinger, 2016, p125). The use of semiotics for the imaginaries of a desirable urban environment discloses what I have already exposed as Neoliberal Urban Planning, through strategies of storytelling that have enhanced a global city ethos and values.

Sharon Zukin expands on the notion of gentrification addressing the ideas of authentic urban spaces as "the look and feel of a place as well as the social connectedness that place inspires" (2010, p220), which means that an authentic urban space is based on its social relations. However, as the author explains, such authenticity of certain neighbourhoods is the main attraction for artistic and middle class gentrifiers, which detonates its capitalisation rendering it more attractive for big players in the global economy. As already highlighted, those first/second gentrifiers, which are also within the creative industries, attract what Zukin called 'supergentrifiers' (2008, p732) such as banks, multinational headquarters, international brands and so on, and as this process unfolds, it leads to the displacement of working-class and minority ethnic communities, originally dwelling in these areas, and those first gentrifies to the outskirts of the cities. Through these mechanics, it can be said that London has been losing authentic urban spaces and traditional values and practices are being replaced by a homogenised millennial lifestyle (Lees, 2010) such as design districts, white-collar factories, and trendy coffee shops in areas such as Hackney Central, Shoreditch, Borough, Clapham, Peckham, New Cross, Brixton, Clapton, Waltham, Tooting Broadway, Tottenham, Shepherds Bush, Seven Sisters and Elephant and Castle. Zukin's argument relates to what I have referred to above as the relational notion of space, which is enhanced by authenticity, proving that as the process has similar roots how it affects each particular locality is different. In Harvey's words: "a wide variety of disparate influences swirling over space in the past, present and future concentrate and congeal at a certain point (...) to define the nature of that point" (2006, p274). The impetus for regeneration in London, fostered by the 2012 Olympics and the development of Stratford City, put on the agenda of the city a revitalisation process of London and its surroundings that aims at the

attraction to the financial city centres where the regenerations are happening at the expenses of the dislocation of people.

In that landscape, it is easy to understand that at this point *mobilising identities* appear, particularly in diasporic groups, to keep the authenticity of space and try to overcome the forces of the 'supergentrifiers', via Unheroic Resistance (Hall, 2021).[39]

[39] See Appendix A.

3.2. PERIPHERIES AND MARGINS

> We looked both from the outside in and from the inside out. We focused our attention on the centre as well as on the margin. We understood both. This mode of seeing reminded us of the existence of a whole universe, a main body made up of both margin and centre (Hooks, 2000, p9).

In *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Centre*, Bell Hooks (2000) exposes the relevance of recognising the margins as a crucial part of the centre to exist; it is through the work of the margins that the centre can accumulate organic matter. Suzanne M. Hall addresses Hook's work: "Cities are composed of multiple centres and margins that resonate within and beyond recognisable city limits, emerging in dynamic and entwined relations. In this sense, the urban margin is not always a physical periphery, but it is always a structural and psychological edge territory" (2015, p59). Global migration patterns have created urban marginalisation through international and transnational interventionism. There is a constant production of a palimpsest of power via the racialisation of space and the dispossession of people and land. The migration circuit is tragic, often overwhelming, and mainly exploitative. Layers of precarity intertwined in the non-privileged migrants across the globe, and those who manage to achieve a Global North status also

experience differentiation and diminishment. Despite arduous journeys taken to settle and find a place, the new urban planning policies of the Global North are constantly threatening its migrant hubs, pushing them to the edges and triggering a constant movement between the margin and the centre that benefits global finances. As Hall M., suggests in *The Migrant's Paradox* (2021), migrants are the key force for the shaping of UK cities, so there is a spatial configuration of neo-colonialism that is represented in the constant dislocation of people and the racialised geographies of "social sorting" (p28). The base for UK Neoliberal politics, since Thatcherism, and the order for the reorganisation of cities in the last forty-five years has been segregation and exclusion. There is also an imperial legacy of enrichment at the expense of marginalisation and devaluation of certain peoples/places.

Nevertheless, a light has always brought up resistance, agency, insurgency, and visibility within the margins, a force that balances the trajectories from the margins to the centres. Arriving from the global peripheries, Latin Americans started to consolidate in London's margins or in places that had been forgotten or neglected, which fit the definition of an urban margin. The cost of bringing the margins to the centre is embedded in the migrant trajectories and the finalisation of the city. These postcolonial migrants have come to the global city to find a nest to settle. As stated in the report *Towards Visibility* (McIlwaine & Bunge, 2016), the Latin American diaspora started to be considered a community around the 1980s. Yet, around the 1990s and 2000s, they consolidated as a diaspora group with meeting points in London, with a range of commercial activities and businesses emerging in areas such as the former Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre and the Seven Sisters Indoor Market. The areas started to seem attractive for real state companies such as Lendlease and Grainger Co. However, as I have already exposed, they did not take these communities into account for their revitalisation plans. Seeking better conditions in infrastructure and transport is indeed a positive thing. Yet, it is also essential to consider the local community when regeneration plans are being considered.

London's Latin Quarter, as named by the Southwark Council in response to the term beign coined by Latin Elephant's 2016 report. That has given the area of Elephant and Castle a character that has been recognised around the city. Still, it has also downplayed some Latin American dynamics, as it is becoming a gathering place for marketing devices throughout the Latin American culture mythification –a concept that I will explore further in Chapter Six. The danger of the recognition is that it is not a place for the community that is already there, with Hairdressers, Cafés, and Beauty Salons that, through shared symbols, represent Latin American cultures and affiliation to our countries, but a marketing strategy for investment.

Communities are both inclusive and exclusive, meaning belonging to a community depends on others not belonging. It implies the marginalisation of those in the periphery and the exclusion of others outside the community. In the Latin American Hubs, there is tension and stress as the process of gentrification in London has developed in a very violent way (Román-Velázquez, 2022), where communities at the centre of the global scheme (Elephant and Castle) and communities in the margins (Seven Sisters) are struggling to overcome the forces of conspicuous urban planning. The Latin Americans created a retail community, a gathering place with a wide number of communities and members so that it fluctuates from the margins to the centres as do the processes of urban regeneration.

3.3. *MOBILISING IDENTITIES* TO CLAIM A PLACE FOR DIASPORAS IN A GLOBAL CITY (LONDON), AND REDUCE THE *RATE OF ASSIMILATION*

In this context, addressing the *mobilising identities* described in Chapter Two is crucial. It refers to the people from inside and outside the diaspora that aim at the recognition of their place and have a clear set of minds to contest with political activities and social protest. For example, Latin Elephant and Latin Village are *mobilising identities* that have been promoting and reinforcing community values through representation and visual activism (photographic practices, mapping/ cartography, film and filmmaking, participatory photography, posters, screen printing, workshops and most notably calling for Protest) in order to overcome urban displacement. Latin Elephant was registered as a Charity in Elephant and Castle around 2014 (Charity No. 1158554) but has worked there since 2013. As mentioned before, it was set up by Patria Román-Velázquez, the first Latin American scholar who worked with the Latin American diaspora in London; she coined Latin London (1996). The charity promotes participation in urban planning, urban policies, and the strengthening of communities through retail clusters and cultural activities.

Similarly, *Latin Village* is a charity that aims to recognise the Seven Sisters Indoor Market as the *Pueblito Paisa*. They are confronting the council and developers in Tottenham to make a place for the Latin American

community in the new planning development. The action of these Latin Americans *mobilising identities* has triggered some changes in the development plans, yet there is still a lot of uncertainty in the areas. The aim is to reduce the *rate of assimilation* to retain a place in the city for a diaspora group.[40] If the place of gathering disappears, the diaspora will have to reconfigure itself, and during this process, there is a high risk of losing the sense of belonging.

An example is Mapping Memories,[41] a qualitative and creative research project aimed at unifying quantitative data and qualitative approaches such as interviews, cartography, focus groups and survey analysis to catalyse visibility for the Latin American community in London. Lorena Raigoso and I created the project in 2016, in partnership with Latin Corner (now Latin Village) and Latin Elephant. The project developed different strategies for the visualisation/visibilization of Latin Americans in London.[42] It aimed to strengthen the cohesion and sense of belonging to places Latin Americans meet, reunite and work. One of the main achievements was the production of a cartographic work which reunites the places where people can feel the Latin American spirit in London [See Fig.2.]; a soundscape that reproduces the sound of the Latin American places in the city as well as visual dioramas that show how the urbanscape is at risk due to the gentrification process in Elephant and Castle. Mapping Memories was aimed at the protection and conservation of the spaces that are at risk of vanishing from the city due to the regeneration plans. The use of Cartography highlighted the fundamental role of a visual narrative that enhances geographic imagination as a tool that permits diasporas to recreate spaces in their host cities. In relation to Doreen Massey (2005) and Temanti & Escudero (2014), social cartography allows the recognition of systems that are interconnected; it permits the representation of stories that are waiting to be narrated. They are arenas of possibilities to reconstruct and recreate the city from the point of view of the diaspora.

By the end of 2016, the map was nurtured by walks, interviews, workshops, and work with the community. The Koppel Project, a gallery

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[40] See Appendix A.

[41] To visit Mapping Memories Map: https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1aT5DrgYSVr0fGtl6xNzfByyTjpA&ll=51.494109530302424%2C-0.09862882446736876&z=16

More on Mapping Memories:
https://prezi.com/p/cseblzhs1qaw/mapping-memories/

[42] Lorena Raigoso is a filmmaker, she holds an MA in Cultural Industries from Goldsmiths. Currently lives in Colombia, Lorena has an expertise in issues related to cartography and the Colombian conflict.

space in Baker Street, London, exhibited the process in the exhibition called *Mitología de la Tierra* [See Fig. 3.], an exhibition that reunited Latin American artists. Mapping Memories became the transcultural link, connecting Latin Americans who belong to the South London community with Latin Americans in the North London community.[43] From there, other manifestations flourished, such as the Salsa and Samba shutdown that aimed at stopping the eviction in Seven Sisters Indoor Market. Mapping Memories participated in The London Festival of Architecture (2017) with a walk-in Elephant and Castle and Seven Sisters to create memories related to space that people directly linked with the community in London [See Fig. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10].

Since 2016, there have been multiple manifestations in the places that are facing urban renewal. As mentioned in the Literature Review (Chapter One) and Researching Representation in Latin London (Chapter Two), Latin Elephant has managed to secure three spots for the retailers in Elephant and Castle after the Shopping Centre demolition. In addition, the Wards Corner Community Coalition, in partnership with the Latin Village Campaign

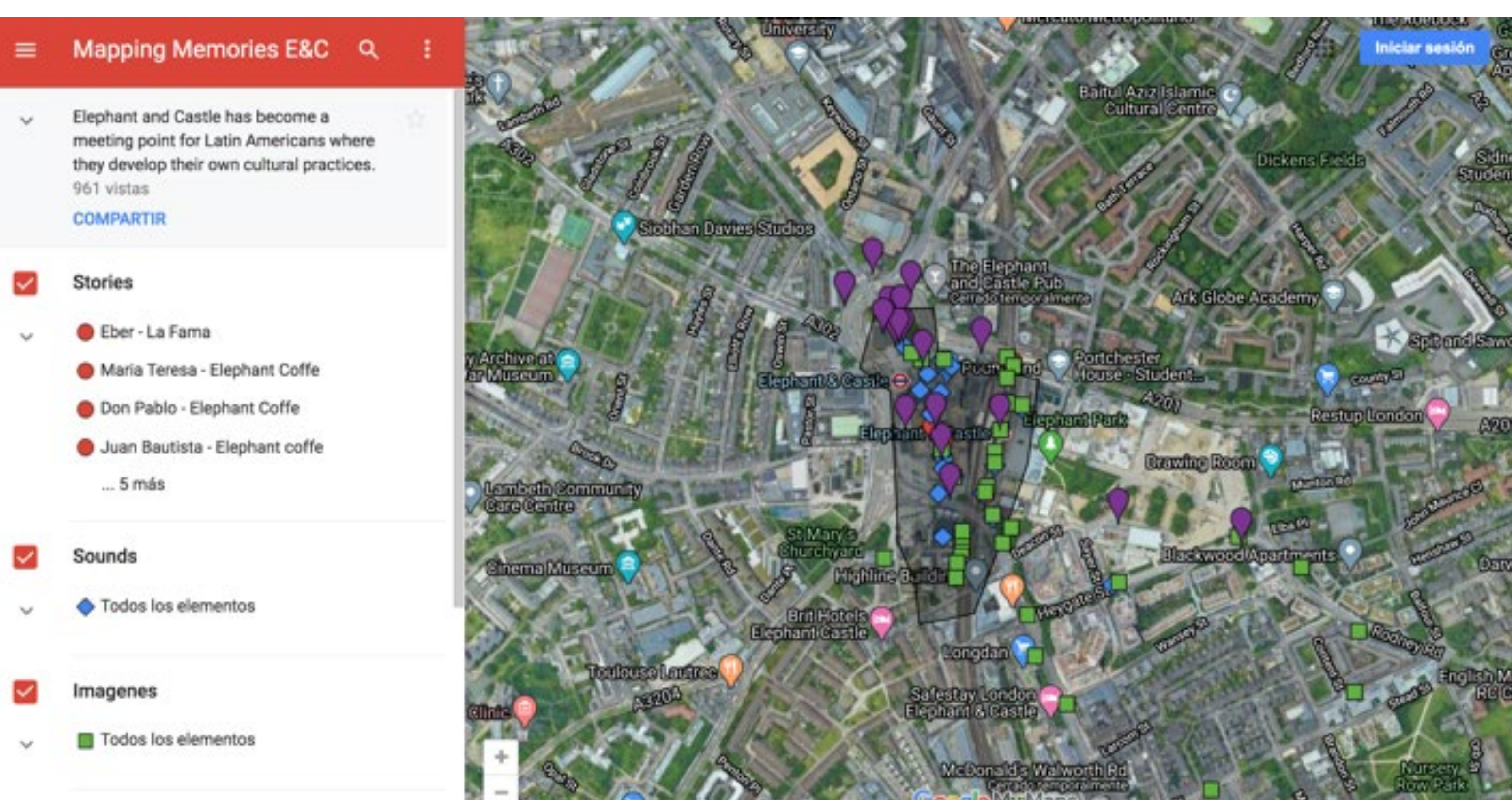


FIG.2. Mapping Memories Map of the Latin American community in Elephant and Castle, London

[43] See a video of the exhibition https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H4RKPnaqxfE&-feature=emb_title

FIG.3. Mapping Memories at The Koppel Project, London, 2016

and Unit 38 –Architectural Practice– *pulled out* the developer Grainger Co. from the Seven Sisters Redevelopment Plan. Instead, they have been working with Transport For London (TFL) to build a community-based Plan for the Market and the High Street. Nonetheless, those processes have happened because the community is loud, protests, dissent and calls for attention with important *mobilising identities*, carrying out activist work -most of it led by women.[44]

As a researcher and through the work I have conducted with Mapping Memories, Latin London Podcast, and Spores, I have travelled from fieldwork to academia regarding questioning representation and its direct impact on diasporic communities. Encounters in the city are part of the production of meaning, a process of action through visuality.[45] "Thinking of a specific place, therefore, means thinking of the place in specific images such as modern, dangerous, friendly, dynamic, exotic, or lively. The ascription of meanings to social groups and urban places directs activities in encounters with these groups and places" (Frers & Meier, 2016, p2). During this process, I have discovered the impact of *mobilising identities* on the representation of a diaspora using diverse image forms to trigger activist approaches.
As Patria Román-Velázquez mentioned "one of the things we have achieved with the campaign is that we are not here silenced... it was about to assert the right to that place; we belong here and we are part of that place, we re-built this" (2022). Latin Elephant has also worked with Tate Modern and South London Gallery and has done several mapping strategies to visualise and create a sense of acknowledgement for the Latin American community in the area, for example their project Recorriendo Elephant / Walking the Elephant, which I will explore further in chapter six. For now, it has overcome the total disappearance of the Latin American soul from the area. A collective effort that the diaspora women have led is shaping the space for the community in London, as I will discuss in the next chapter.

[44] See Wards Corner Community Plan https://www.wardscornerplan.org/ and Latin Elephant Relocation Map https://latinelephant.org/map/

[45] See Appendix A.

'ENDANGERED MEMORIES: THE SHIFTING ARCHITECTURES OF THE LATIN-AMERICAN DIASPORA IN LONDON'

Other

Fri 2 - Sat 3 June

15:00 - 19:00

by University College London - The Bartlett Development Planning Unit in collaboration with Latin Elephant, Mapping Memories and Latin Corner

UCL -The Bartlett Development Planning Unit / Seven Sisters and Elephant and Castle

34 Tavistock Square, WC1H 9EZ

GET DIRECTIONS

FIG.4. Mapping Memories Activity for the London Festival of Architecture, 2017

mapping
MEMORIES

PUEBLITO PAISA -SEVEN SISTERS-

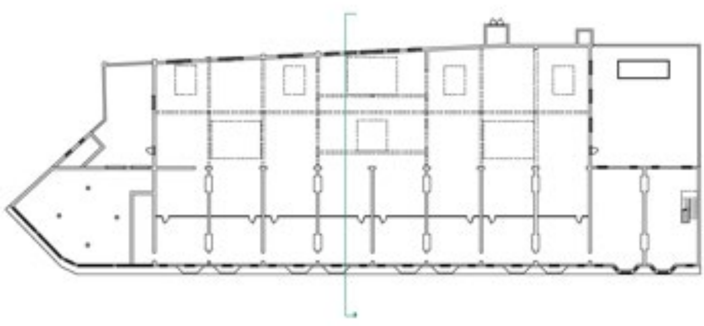
TOPIC

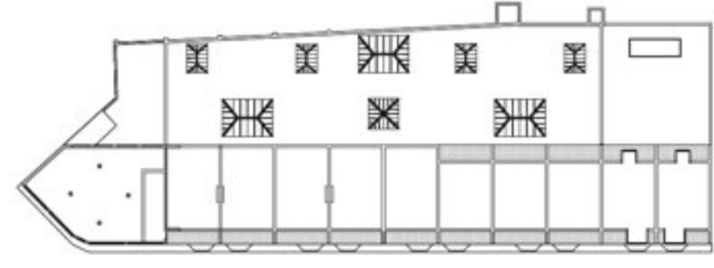
THIS MIGHT HELP YOU...

What do you see?
How do you feel?
Can you smell something?
Colours?
Languages? Can you speak any of them?
Find the name of someone, ask them something...
How do you experience movements in the area?

SHARE YOUR MEMORY WITH THE HASHTAGS
#LFA2017
#mappingmemorieslondon
#LatinElephant #LatinCorner

MAP SEVEN SISTERS INDOOR MARKET





MARK THE PLACES YOU HAVE VISITED

FIG.5. Mapping Memories Activity for the London Festival of Architecture, 2017

mapping
MEMORIES

ELEPHANT AND CASTLE

TOPIC

THIS MIGHT HELP YOU...

What do you see?
How do you feel?
Can you smell something?
Colours?
Languages? Can you speak any of them?
Find the name of someone, ask them something...
How do you experience movements in the area?

SHARE YOUR MEMORY WITH THE HASHTAGS
#LFA2017
#mappingmemorieslondon
#LatinElephant #LatinCorner

MAP ELEPHANT AND CASTLE

MARK THE PLACES YOU HAVE VISITED

FIG 6. Mapping Memories Activity for The London Festival of Architecture, 2017

FIG 7. Workshop with Seven Sisters Latin American traders and Architectural Practice Unit 38 for the New Community Plan, 2022

FIG 8. Diasporic Geographies, walking tour with Unit 38 and UCL Development Planning Unit, recent changes in the area, 2022

FIG 9. Diasporic Geographies, walking tour with Unit 38 and UCL Development Planning Unit, recent changes in the area, 2022

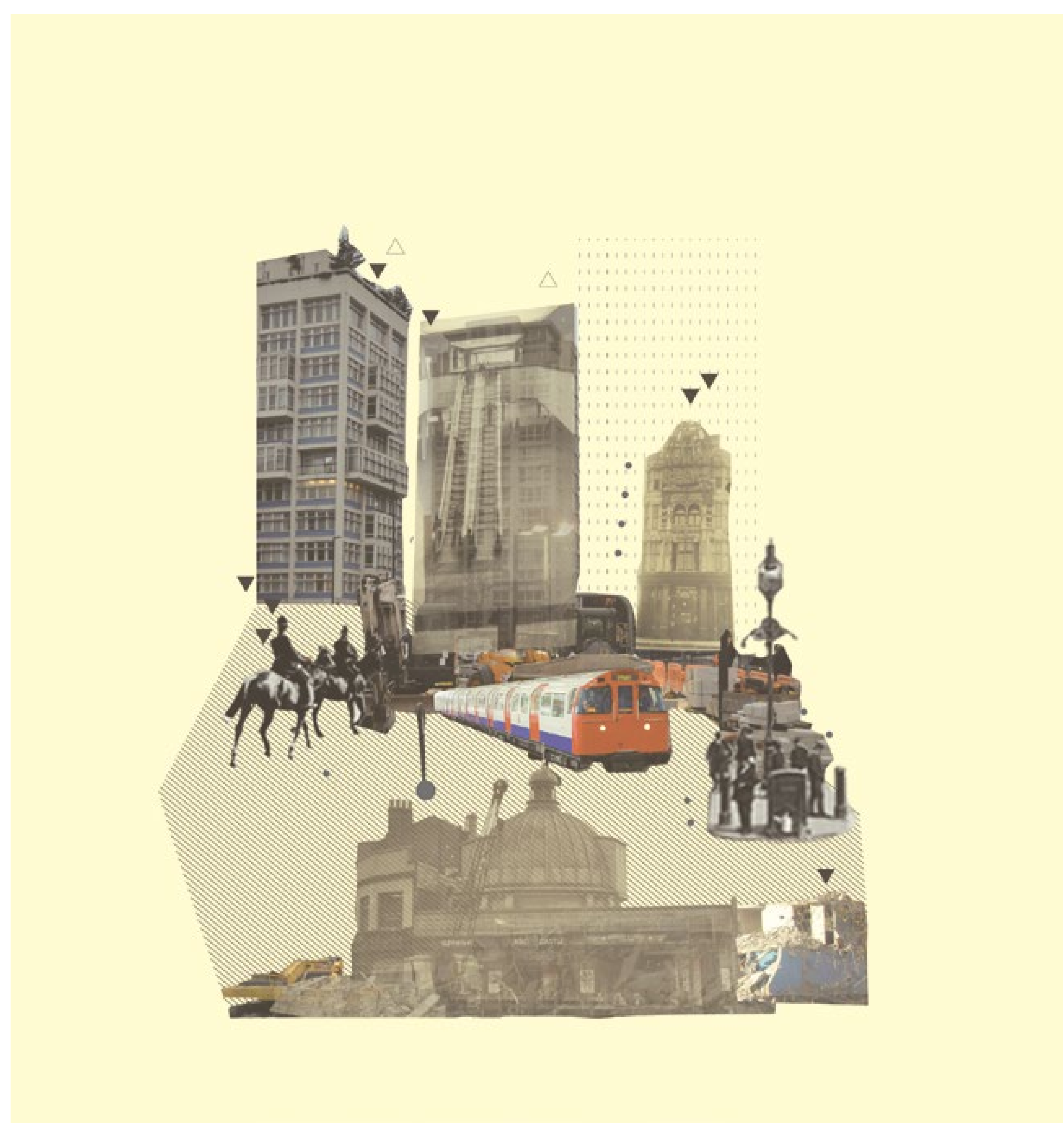


FIG 10. Mapping Memories Collage, part of the material has been taken from Southwark archives

3.3.1. *MOBILISING IDENTITIES* PERFORMING VISUAL RESISTANCE

As exposed in chapter two, one of the key themes of this thesis is how through the images resistance and community movements strengthen and get wider attention. In this section, I will present several visual essays projects that have reverberated and impacted the way Latin Americans in London are perceived, and that fit the definition of *mobilising identities.*

Firstly, Professor Catherine Davies and the photographers Pablo and Roxana Allison carried out the project *Uncovering the Invisible*. In 2012, the photographers, two siblings born in Mexico and established in Manchester, started to document Latin Americans living in the UK. The first approach was to ask people *Where do they feel at home*? and how the participants constructed a Latin American identity in London. The project also aimed to create awareness about the conditions in which the majority of Latin American migrants live; it aimed to highlight the subjective character of migrants, by presenting them with a name, a place of origin and a story to tell about their life in London. The exhibition catalogue promoted it as an attempt to put faces to figures and statistics, and to unveil hidden histories, as "each of these Londoners is Latin American but also a unique individual with an interesting story to tell" (Davies, 2014, p3). The photographs were exhibited at London's City Hall [Fig.11] in an attempt to 'legitimise' the presence of Latin Americans in the city.

As an example, I want to address a photograph included in the exhibition portraying Amy Rosario, a Boricua actress, dancer and receptionist, who came to the UK to work and study [Fig.12].[46] Amy wanted to be photographed in Elephant and Castle — at the railway station, a place that tells the story of Latin American migrants in the UK. The image talks about movement and social injustices. It evokes isolation and solitude, as only urban artefacts accompany Amy. It is also intended to show the former Heygate Estate, a social housing complex that was demolished between 2010 and 2014, evicting approximately 1300 homes. It is considered a symbol of the negative effects of gentrification on minority ethnic communities in London. Throughout the representation of the former Heygate Estate, the photograph incites reflection on London's changes, creating a space for the visualisation of movements of the global capital flow. As Pablo Allison comments, "It seems like what is and what is not Elephant and Castle. The intention was to incorporate the area in the project because we were conscious of its importance for the community" (2016). It also highlights diasporic communities in global cities, emphasised by the flag and the text accompanying the image: "Amy Rosario (Puerto Rico) Actress and Receptionist." From there, the spectator is told a story of someone coming from the global south to the global north to 'work hard', which one can assume since Amy has two jobs, transporting herself to make a place in the global city. The Colombian researcher Juan Camilo Cock defined transnationalism—regarding Latin Americans in London— as open possibilities for migrants: "Participating in the affairs of their country of origin and other countries have important effects on the range of elements migrants have access to when adapting to their new setting" (2009, p31). The Elephant and Castle area is the place where migrants find a small part of Latin America in London.

Secondly, as a strategy of resistance, Latin Elephant (mentioned above - charity that works for the right to the city of Latin American migrants in London) and Ingrid Guyón worked on a Photo-Essay (a visual narrative, a story and a statement through photography), called *Latin Quarter and Its People*, in which they contributed to social cohesion through the visualisation of people's stories, and the reflection on the dynamics of London and the importance of migrants within them, highlighting Elephant and Castle as the biggest UK Latin American retailers cluster.[46] As Patrick Sutherland argues, photography is a solid visual

[45] The term *Boricua* denotes a person from Puerto Rico.

[46] Guyón holds a degree in Social Anthropology from The London College of Communication (based in Elephant and Castle). She has worked with photography and communities at risk in the Dominican Republic, Africa, Colombia, and other places in conflict around the globe.

FIG.11. Opening of the exhibition U*ncovering the Invisible: Portraits of Latin Americans in London ,* Pablo and Roxanna Allison. London City Hall. 2014

Amy Rosario (Puerto Rico)
Actress and Receptionist

I feel happy in the UK because after three years I finally feel at home thanks to the support from the Latin American community. I also feel more connected to my roots.

FIG.12. Amy Rosario (Puerto Rico). *Uncovering the Invisible: Portraits of Latin Americans in London,* Pablo and Roxanna Allison. 2014

"I feel happy in the UK because after three years I finally feel at home thanks to the support from the Latin American community. I also feel more connected to my roots."

FIG.13. Collage 1. *Latin Quarter and its people*. Photo-essay by Latin Elephant and Ingrid Guyón. 2013-2016

MY LATIN ELEPHANT

Gana experiencia en fotografía & video
¡Y cuenta qué es para ti Elephant & Castle!

¿Deseas aprender habilidades técnicas en fotografía y video; a contar una historia con imágenes, retratos y entrevistas; y a preparar una exhibición?

Participa en el taller de fotografía y video participativo My Latin Elephant

No necesitas experiencia, ni materiales, nosotros te proveemos todo!

Solo debes asistir a 8 sesiones a partir de septiembre y traer muchas ganas de aprender.
¡Diversión garantizada!

El taller es completamente gratis y en español.
Regístrate escribiendo a silvia@latinelephant.org o llamando al 07593 098333

Financiado por

LOTTERY FUNDED

Un proyecto de:

Organizaciones Asociadas:

InsightShare FOTOSYNTHESIS

FIG.14. Flyer calling for participants

FIG.15. Photography by: Ingrid Guyon. "My Latin Elephant" workshop.Subways. Week 4, 2015

FIG. 16. Photography by: Mauricio."My Latin Elephant" workshop. Subways. Week 3, 2015

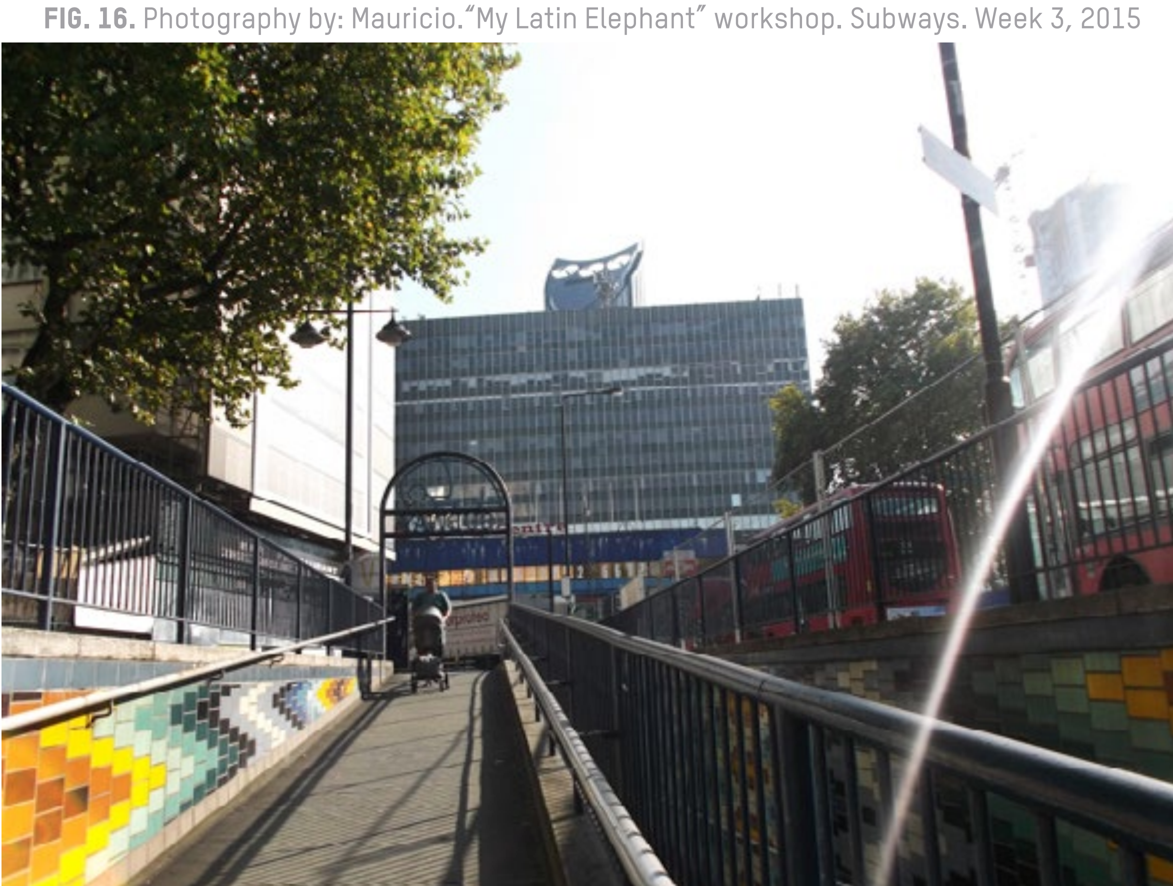


FIG.17. Photography by: Macarena. My Latin Elephant" workshop. Regeneration. Week 2, 2015

¡Sean todos Bienvenidos!
Latin Elephant y miembros de la comunidad latina lo invitan a

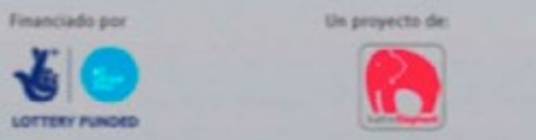
SER LATINX EN ELEPHANT

Exhibición de Fotografía y Video

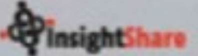
SABADO 28 de NOVIEMBRE
De 3:00 a 8:00 pm
Segundo Piso de Tesco
Centro comercial de Elephant and Castle

Una tarde para toda la familia donde descubrirás voces e historias de la comunidad latinoamericana en Elephant & Castle. Esta exhibición es el cierre de los talleres de fotografía y video participativo organizado por Latin Elephant en el cual miembros de la comunidad resaltan la contribución de los Latinxs en el contexto de revitalización del área.

Financiado por / Un proyecto de:



Organizaciones Asociadas:



FOTOSYNTHESIS

FIG.18. Invitation to the opening of the exhibition *Being Latin in Elephant* .
Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre, November 2015

field that permits recognition of the situation of the other to produce a rapid change in situations of social struggle; "photography is a passport to other people's worlds" (2016). In Collage 1 [Fig. 13], one can get a sense that it is a community of retailers: people with character, smiling, enjoying the opportunity of having a place to gather in London to speak Spanish to understand each other. As Stuart Hall argues: "culture depends on giving things meaning by assigning them to different positions within a classificatory system" (1997, p226). The photographs represent Anderson's concept of imagined communities (1983) as people that unify through an imagined reality in which the idea of a familiar land gathers them/us together, with a mental representation that links us politically. Latin London Representation will be explained and explored further in Chapter Two from my methodological approach through Arts Based Research and the construction of a sense of belonging via images that trigger political encounters of Latin American migrants in London.

Thirdly in 2015, Latin Elephant called together participants for a workshop on photography lead by Ingrid Guyón.[47] The activity was advertised in Spanish and called for people who wanted to gain photography and video experience while sharing testimonies about the importance of Elephant and Castle for its community [Fig.14]. They aimed at conducting social research through interviews and analysis of the meanings of place, involving participants in conversations about urban change in London, and creating a visual awareness beyond the framed picture.[48] As Azoulay remarks: "[t]he mutual guarantee established amongst citizens of the citizenry of photography is the basis for the formation of a political community that is not subjected to or mediated by a sovereign" (2008, p126). In the photographs of the pedestrian subways that used to connect the Elephant and Castle Market, the London College of Communication and other places surrounding Elephant's roundabout [Figs. 15 and 16], it can be seen how the area has changed, as the roundabout were closed by the end of 2015. These photos enable the spectator to go into Elephant's memory, they are tokens; through them the viewer is inhabiting the space of urban change, yet feeling disconnected from a reality that is no longer tangible. Another interesting example is the photograph taken by Macarena Gajardo showing [Fig.17] the Elephant and Castle symbol –a *Howdah*-[21] representing the working class, the social

[47] Guyón is the founder of the two organisations that facilitated the project: InsightShare and FotoSynthesis.

[48] The workshop was conducted in the Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre and its surroundings (Walworth Road, Elephant Road, Newington Butts, Heygate Street, Eagle's Yard, the tube station and the roundabout, in London).

[49] This chair is put in the back of an elephant; it comes from India.

struggle of the lower classes, whereas the building is a symbol of the forces of the global economy (Humphrey, 2013), the crane on its side is a strong symbolism of change for 'progress'. The photograph represents both the community and the developers.

To sum up, both the Photo-Essay and the participatory photography workshops were part of the exhibition *Being Latin in Elephant* [Fig.18],[50] which was curated by the participants. They presented the final outcomes of the workshops; they were able to decide which images to emphasise in order to narrate their story. Although this photographic exercise was fruitful in creating a network for the community, and recognising their significance, there still are massive regeneration changes, and the community is facing the struggle of dispersion, which I will discuss in chapter six.

[50] It took place in the Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre, London, on the 28th of November 2015. The exhibition also displayed the Photo-essay *Latin Quarter and Its People* by Ingrid Guyón and the documentary *London's Latin Quarter* by Silvia Rothlisberger.

4. CONCLUSION: NEW AND FEMINISED GEOGRAPHIES

A report called *Pushed to the Margins* (2021) has been published within the atmosphere of contested Urban Development in London. It is an analysis of gentrification in London, which evidences that when naming a place as an Opportunity Area –OAs–, gentrification waves start to develop, and real estate companies and multinational developers get their attention into the area bringing in super-gentrification. The ethos of those developments is masculine: based on profit, with careless approaches towards communities, and pursuing only land value and economic assets. "The provision of OAs allows high-density megadevelopments to be built which would not gain approval if they were located elsewhere in London and which have the potential to remarkably alter the character of a given neighbourhood" (p17). The OAs are designed via the London Plan and then instituted at local levels via the Local Authority Plans. The government was utterly divorced from life experience, dictating how communities should live and interact.

If urban planning in cities is going to change, a geographic intersectional perspective on gender must be at the basis of consultation and community-based processes. This type of vertical development erases the street's interactions and puts on the agenda the symbolism of the phallus as the icon of power and improvement whilst pulling people out of their areas (Bondi, 2017; Hayden, 1977). There is a particular characteristic of the recent campaign for saving the Latin American hubs, which I mentioned in the Literature Review and will address profoundly in the next chapter. The Latin American community is a women-led space. It is a repertoire of strong female voices, caring for the community places and aiming to construct and enhance Latinidad. Coming from areas where the ideas of justice are rough and intense, we –Latin American women– experience a fierce migration process. The journey to London is marked by the hope of creating a safe space, a sense of

belonging and freedom that, ironically, is at risk. Gaining that sense of freedom after many years, the sense of *arraigo*, enhances an activist spirit within women from the diaspora that fosters the construction of a migrant network based on the notions of warmth and love; we do not want to lose that *arraigamiento*.

In *Feminist City,* Leslie Kern states, "On a wider stage, women are leading some of the most transformative social movements of our time, ones that are shifting the kinds of conversations we can have about the future of cities" (2021, p174). From Latin America to Spain, with *Las Tesis*, or the #Metoo or the *Marea Verde*, we have been creating small changes to honour the work of our ancestors. There are big battles that must be fought. Still, we are a community led by its *mobilising* and *feminised identities*, so there is hope for the new generations as we secure a place for our transcultural interactions.

CHAPTER 4

FROM ABYA YALA TO LATIN LONDON: A WOMAN-MADE COMMUNITY

CHAPTER 4

FROM ABYA YALA TO LATIN LONDON: A WOMAN-MADE COMMUNITY

1. POSTCOLONIALISM AND DIASPORA
- **1.1.** Subaltern Site of Enunciation
- **1.2.** Mestizaje and Imagination in Abya Yala
- **1.3.** Panethnicity and Latinidad

2.SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND LATIN AMERICAN FEMINISM
- **2.1.** Feminisms from Abya Yala
- **2.2.** Latin American Feminists in London

3.FEMINISM AND REPRESENTATION
- **3.1.** The Politics of Feminist and Visual Activism
  - **3.1.1.** Artivisms, FLAWA [Festival Latin American Women in the Arts]
  - **3.1.2.** Mujer Diáspora / Diaspora Woman Collective

4. CONCLUSION: FEMINIST RESONANCE

1.

POSTCOLONIALISM AND DIASPORA

From the work of intellectuals and academics such as Homi Bhabha (1994), Stuart Hall (1996), Edward Said (1979), Kobena Mercer (1988), Paul Gilroy (1993), Gayataki Spivak (2010), Mabel Moraña (2018), and Frantz Fanon (1961, 1952), it becomes clear how the oppressing experiences that migrant communities face nowadays, in globalised cities, have their roots in the cultural and social impact of the former colonies. Post-coloniality affirms humans as subjects, rooted in the unearthing of colonial practices, focusing on the production of knowledge (Lagarde,2018). During late modernity or postmodern times, women started to embrace their part as political subjects, integrating their production of countercultural narratives, particularly in processes of decolonisation within the migratory experiences, as I will present throughout this chapter. It can also be noticed that the most read authors on colonialism have been men, which I will discuss considering that women within the postmodern/postcolonial times are reclaiming a place in the theorisation of society to tackle underrepresentation.

In this chapter I set out to present my original empirical insight into feminist Latin London via a historical account of feminisms from Latin America and its transcultural formations in London, through the analysis of questions 6) How do the dynamics of diasporas, as a community, affect the urban landscape of London? And 7) How are Latin American women challenging/resisting gentrification in London? I present two case studies of Latin American women projects in London, which emphasise the transcultural aspect of the Latin American community and the crucial role of women's labour in its maintenance. I go on to answer questions 1) How do the productions of representational systems create memories to enhance the sense of belonging? and 4) How are transcultural processes of the Latin American diaspora in London evidenced? By presenting these feminist projects as artivisms

(Deepwell, 2020) with a strong political agency that aims to develop and enhance the sense of place, to foster resistance in an urban environment hostile towards migrants.

Postcolonialism addresses two critical aspects of migration and the diasporas produced by and after the imperial era. It studies cultures and subjects that have experienced dislocation about nationalism and the creation of the Nation States. Leela Gandhi (2019) refers to *The Colonial Aftermath* as the rhetoric of self-invention, liberation and euphoria created by nationalist moments within independence fights, mainly influenced by the Indian independence in 1947. Similarly, Latin America created nation-states over 100 years before the 1900s. Postcolonialism aims to recognise what has happened and ways to remember those events to recall their impact on the contemporary transformation of cultures. In other words, postcolonialism calls for a "more pluralistic vision of the world" (ibid, p124); therefore, the pursuit of postcolonial studies is to visualise and transform the idea of ethnicity as marginal. Postcolonial Studies dismantled Europe's brutal domination, yet the freedom to act freely remains problematic because there continue to be powers of exploitation rooted in the colonial dynamics that affect mainly the global south (Jefferess, 2008).

Here, it is vital to consider the ideas of mimicry and hybridity. Homi Bhabha defines mimicry and the construction of the colonial subject as

> The desire for a reformed, recognisable Other, as a subject of a difference that *is almost the same, but not quite*. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference (...) is itself a process of disavowal (1994, p86).

Bhabha proposes that mimicry is a process of mockery in which the colonial subject is forced to acquire specific characteristics of the English to become a sort of a mix that they (colonisers) could easily understand and most effectively control. Yet, let's consider this today, in a postcolonial post-pandemic landscape. It is possible to go on and analyse these dynamics view in terms of Trinh T. Minh-ha as "not quite the same, not quite the other" (2012), as an encounter that focused on the global amalgam of cultures that due to imperialism consolidated identities formed from migration; identification is a process of dislocation and transcultural initiation. Bhabha proposed the postcolonial term Hybridity (1994) as the creation of new ways of interaction in colonial times that led to new cultural forms from the colonised and coloniser interchanges. Furthermore, the author speaks of a Third Space as an ambivalent and contradictory site of enunciation. Based on the words of Frantz Fanon (1961), the Third Space is a site for subjectivities to emerge and to acknowledge the individual experience

between past and present and the possible future.

> It is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricised and read anew
> (1994, p37).

The Third Space is where acknowledgement of the colonial influence is created; it allows the liberation of colonial heritage to develop new interactions formed firstly in that site of enunciation, which is intangible and ephemeral. It also relates to a dialogical space in terms of Sennett's politics of cooperation, "as an exchange in which the participants benefit from the encounter" (2012, p5). This concept was previously mentioned in my Literature Review. That is why hybridity and transcultural formations allow the articulation of cultures through diasporas that erase national boundaries, such as one of the Latin Americans: imagined communities of political identity that moved to a host place from a place of origin (Anderson, 2006).

Moreover, Trinh T. Minh-ha mentions in her film Reseamblange (1982) "not to speak about, but to speak nearby", colonial and postcolonial subjectivities disclose the relationship between intimacy and the public within the host place and the place of origin. The idea of being other, which can be seen as inappropriate, also sets a freedom of behaviour. Nevertheless, the subject of that postcolonial hybridity feels deterritorialised; their knowledge and actions build a dialogue framed within transcultural interactions, mixing things from *here* and from *there*. To understand profoundly the last ideas, it is important to go back to the term *hybridity* within the discourse of transcultural identities and diasporas. In terms of Dayal (1996) and Gilroy (1993), Trinh T. Minh-ha, in her work as a filmmaker, theorist and artist, has devised the idea of diaspora as a reality that is not only a double consciousness but also reproduces many spaces/locations. The diasporic identity navigates between different sites of enunciation as a consciousness that goes beyond national issues and creates new recognitions: a new social consciousness that postcolonialism studies named the pursuit of a post-national world.

Diasporic imaginations are framed within postcolonial studies, considering that "formulations of resistance as conscious or organised opposition to the colonial presence or as subtle manipulations, appropriations and subversion of colonial authority challenge colonial power and identify its limits and its complexity" (Jefferess, 2008, p180). This is highly evident in the Latin American diaspora, particularly in the work of Latin American women in the host places. As an active practitioner, I have demonstrated with my

work Spores/Esporas and the Podcast Latin London (presented in Chapter Two) the role of Latin American women in the production of a feminist Latin London narrative, through a feminised labour, migrant women enhance the diasporic landscape of Latinx in London, via the charitable sector and activist approaches. These projects (Podcast and Spores/Esporas) are contributing to existing narratives of Latin American women in London, which I will present in this chapter, focussing on the work done by FLAWA -Festival of Latin American Women in Arts- and Mujer Diáspora a collective of Latin American women in London that works in processes of peace-making. I link the production of a feminised Latin London narrative with the work of memory, and the importance of navigating the official archives and creating a counternarrative within the community. I do this via the discussions and findings of this chapter with chapter five -Landscapes of Memory- through the production of Spores/Esporas, where I present and reflect on the historical changes of the area of Elephant and Castle, and the painful process of losing the Shopping Centre, the meeting point and the place that linked me, as a practitioner, to Latin America in London. Spores/Esporas is a piece that links my key findings of Latin London as a transcultural women-made community with the visual aspect of the Latin London identity via an analysis of the Southwark archives and the creative collage, illustration and writing intervention that demonstrates the poetics of the migrant condition: emphasising memory, belonging and resistance in an urban landscape that is shaped by processes of displacement and relocation

1.1. SUBALTERN SITE OF ENUNCIATION

In the 1980s, the Subaltern Studies Group was created by scholars in the USA and the UK, adopting Antonio Gramsci's term of *subaltern groups* in society as a class that will always exist within a hegemonic power and will not be listened to or considered (Jefferess, 2008). Gayatri Spivak and Ranatij Guna (1988) redefined this concept as the group that seeks their representation within the system of Education in the global North to address the so-called Third World perspectives "a critique of modernity's epistemological strategies of subalternation in hopes of moving towards *the locus enuntiationis* (the site of enunciation) from which subaltern subjects may articulate their own representations" (Ibid, 2007, p5). The group aimed to unveil the colonial discourse that usually underrepresents cultural hybridisations and speaks of *the other* as something outside the accepted way of being in society; it was a group that aimed to recognise the third space mentioned earlier. It can be argued that Latin American subaltern groups started even before the term was coined in the work of authors such as Fernando Ortiz (1940), who internalised the aftermath of colonisation as the creation of transcultural identities. "Latin American nationalism emerged from a disciplinary logic that 'subalternised' a series of social subjects: women, the insane, Indigenous, black people, homosexuals and peasants. Literature and all other humanistic fields of study appeared

to be structurally inscribed within exclusive hegemonic systems" (Spivak and Guna,1988, p5). What is at stake here is that the site of enunciation of Latin American studies is a site of contradictions; it is not fixed, and it is crucial to consider the studies of contemporary diasporic communities to understand the cosmogony of Latin Americanism as a group of territories that undergo communal, political, social and economic struggles.

1.2. MESTIZAJE AND IMAGINATION FROM ABYA YALA

As stated in Latin London: A Life in the Diaspora –Literature Review chapter–Latin America has a fundamental relationship with the African diaspora. During colonial times, many imperial powers extended their territorial possession via inhumane practices of looting or *saqueo colonial* (De La Luz, 2023). Thus, Latin America today is the land of many Afro-descendants (mainly in the Caribbean, Central America, Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, and Bolivia). In colonial times, Indigenous and Africans were at the bottom of the social scale, but it is only now, in the postcolonial revisions, that these populations are being visualised and their heritage recognised (Freire et al., 2018; Maya & Álvarez 2015; Friedemann, N. S, 2007).

The meaning of Mestizaje has been changing in postcolonial studies and contemporary Latin America. "Mestizaje is an affirmative recognition of the mixed racial, social, linguistic, national, cultural, and ethnic legacies inherent to Latino/a cultures and identities" (Pérez-Torres, 2012, p25). In contemporary Latin American studies, there is a need to highlight the influence of the African diaspora within the postcolonial diasporas and in Latin American urban life. In that process, the recognition of Latin America as Abya Yala has taken a critical turn. It alludes to the name that the continent was given by the Kunas, an Indigenous population in the

regions known today as Panamá and Colombia. "The name, which began to be used by the late 1970s, gained political currency after 1992 through its use by a range of Indigenous community organisations across Latin America" (Salazar & Córdova, 2019, p128). That was also the year of the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus's arrival to the Americas, which marks a significant historical distance that allows these reflections and redefinitions of history to be produced and disseminated. Latinidad, like an Identity experienced in postcolonial diasporas, can be read –with a decolonial lens– as deeply intertwined with the concept of Abya Yala. For a diasporic Mestiza Latin American identity, the distance from the continent is crucial to trigger a thinking process and an awareness of being Latin American, which triggers the sense of Latinidad as the production of Mestizaje. Jenkins (2014) addresses identity as a social construction based on differences and similarities. In that sense, Latinidad is presented as a label constructed from questions of identity and authenticity about one landmass. Identity is a performance that is acted in everyday life activities. Consequently, Latinidad, for this research, refers to the daily life of Latin Americans in a host place and its relationship with the place of origin, as I will continue to explore throughout this chapter the imagination and practices of representation of Latin American Women in London.

1.3. PANETHNICITY AND LATINIDAD

In studies of Latin Americans in the USA, the impact of the Spanish language as a unifying element of identity is substantial; as the Nuyorican –label for people that live in New York and come from Puerto Rico– poet Tato Laviera mentions, "I think in Spanish / I write in English" (Caminero-Santangelo, 2012, p14). A linguistic tropicalisation of the language allows Latin Americans abroad to feel that we are part of a movement that creates socialisation spaces and re-territorialises Latin America in a new dialogue, triggering transcultural dynamics. "Latino encounters within the context of a US dominant culture have tended to lump them together, thus creating a new sense of cohesion" (Ibid, p18). It is also crucial to affirm that the notion of Latinidad or being a Latino is firmly related to a Panethnic identity:

> Panethnicity refers to the construction of a new categorical boundary through the consolidation of ethnic, tribal, religious, or national groups (...) defined by an inherent tension derived from maintaining subgroup distinctions while developing a sense of metagroup unity. The maintenance of subgroup identities is necessary for the success and longevity of broader-based panethnic groupings. Diversity is thus inherently a part of panethnicity" (Okamoto & Mora, 2014, p 220- 221).

In the light of Panethnicity, the formation of transcultural identities is crucial for creating sites of enunciation that develop into urban hubs to produce diasporic representation. For instance, Nuyorican or Chicano identities in the USA, Latin Londoners or British Latino in the UK. Panethnicity in the host territories implies movement and the recognition of many places that converge into one; it is a view of the centripetal and cen-trifugal forces characterising global migration flows –as discussed in Diasporic Geographies, chapter three. Panethnicity entails points of connection that trigger a collective identity, yet it also comprehends conflictual aspects and internalised dominations (Medden, 2023).

As already mentioned, uprooting is a condition for the formation of diasporas. As a social and cultural phenomenon, it has marked Latin America, a region in which subjectivities such as Indigenous populations, *Campesinos* (farmers), and Afrodescendants are still looking for a place (Louidor, 2016). That has also triggered in various experiences of migration after the declaration of nation-states, which has led to immense and complex migration flows. This is noticeable in the diaspora communities that aim to create spaces abroad where they can feel like their homeland. Although deeply contradictory, as the homeland may have expelled them, "it is a complex transit between here and there, the past and the now, between the lost origins and the impossible destination" (Ibid, p31).[51] From that process of uprooting and the loss of their origins, Latin American women have reunited to create communities around the globe to foster a sense of home. For uprooted Panethnic communities, the challenge is to rethink Latin America as a cosmogony that can transform territories into host places (Conciliation Resources, 2016). In the UK, several feminist projects work in alliance to serve women and the community to move forward as a diasporic collective identity, which I will explore via several examples in section three.

[51] Author tralslation see quote in Spanish "un complejo transitar entre aquí y allá, entre el antes y el ahora, entre el origen perdido y el destino imposible" (Louidor,2016, p31).

2. SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND LATIN AMERICAN FEMINISM

In the 1970s, the decade of the awakening of feminism, when the so-called second wave of the feminist movement was rising in the USA and Europe. Latin America was suffering from a period of state violence, and there were also a territorial wars starting with indigenous populations. Additionally, the stimulation of the Neoliberal project soon resulted in an increase in social exclusion and violence. The nature of the spirit of resistance and social change that we perceive today in contemporary Latin America was nurtured in that decade, and new possibilities to produce a new hegemony of the masses through modes of self-organisation and action started to develop. In the book *The Making of Social Movements in Latin America* (1992), edited by Sonia Alvarez and Arturo Escobar –an essential contribution to Social Movements studies in the continent–, the authors declared that "these collective manifestations are found in all countries of the region—in varying political regimes, 'levels of development,' cultural contexts, and traditions of protest" (p3).
Later, in the 1980s, new forms of understanding human rights led to the fight for new constitutions that included a diverse approach to marginalised populations such as LGBTIQ+ and Indigenous. The trend of social movements started to focus on the creation of agency with structure from which it is possible to produce meaning, negotiations, and decisions that trigger social change. As argued by Maria Lugones (2003) in *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes: Theorizing Coalition Against Multiple Oppressions*, social structures of oppression are visualised in the daily life negotiations and strategised through the actions that are taken day by day. Social movements must foster communities of choice rather than communities of place; communities of choice are based on trust, resistance, and the possibility to construct new identities. By doing so, they enact positive change through modes of alternative social relations against the spatiality of dominations. In *Feminisms in*

Latin America: From Bogotá to San Bernardo (1992), Sternbach, Navarro-Aranguren, Chuchryk, and & Alvarez made an important contribution following the development of Latin American Feminism since they understood the roots of the movement in the region, through their investigation of collective practices, as a process for the formation of women's identity that challenged traditional forms of practising politics, culture, and economy.

Latin Americans started to migrate in massive numbers to the UK in the decade of the 1980s, which was also the decade where the first coalition of the feminist movement in Latin America reunited in a *Encuentro* (congress), 1981, in Bogotá-Colombia –*Primer Encuentro Feminista Latinamericano y del Caribe*–. The *Encuentros* (1981-2020) started to unveil a consciousness between women in Latin America. As the authors emphasised, the feminist movement started to get recognition among the left, the 'Macho Leninist-Trotskyist' type of left in Latin America.[52] The spread of feminism in Latin America has been linked with leftist politics, and it has also led to discrimination within the same groups. A decade earlier in the 1970s Argentinians and Brazilian feminists started to try to overcome violence and dictatorships in their countries. It can also be noticed that Feminism in Latin America is oriented not only to women's rights, but to overcome conditions of class, race, violence, and displacement; it is an intersectional approach (Ibid).

Due to the political power of the *Encuentros*, feminism from Latin America started to appear in the global panorama as a strong political force for radical social change. The philosophy of the *Encuentros* aimed at establishing Latin American feminism as a practice of new voices. From its Fifth *Encuentro* in 1990, the participants and collectives created an intersectional approach that bore in mind that gender and colonialism are both systems that nurture each other through oppression and exclusionary practices, which do not allow diversity to flourish; they were systems sustained in hierarchical forces. The path to decolonisation and intersectional feminism starts with the recognition of subjects as part of the resistance and the awareness of systematic oppression. Intersectional feminism is a term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 as the pursuit for a feminism that involved black communities. For Crenshaw, intersectionality should look for a more cooperative and emphatic approach:

[52] This type of leftist stereotype assumes that women have to accompany men in the fight against the neoliberal forces of capitalism instead of creating their voice. Feminists of the 1980s in Latin America gave them the name of Macho-Leninists: "Some feminists increasingly denounced the hierarchical, Leninist or Trotskyist styles of 'doing politics' typical of male-dominated revolutionary groups in most countries, and insisted on more participatory, democratic forms of pursuing radical social change" (Sternbach, Navarro-Aranguren, Chuchryk and & Alvarez, 1992, p405).

> If their efforts instead began with addressing the needs and problems of those who are most disadvantaged and with restructuring and remaking the world where necessary, then others who are singularly disadvantaged would also benefit. In addition, it seems that placing those who currently are marginalised in the center is the most effective way to resist efforts to compartmentalise experiences and undermine potential collective action (p167).

On the whole, the idea of intersectionality is to simultaneously analyse the marginalised aspects of someone's life in order to comprehend completely someone's identity and how to approach their struggles. It highlights that there is not only one way to feel oppressed but many, and that it is through the recognition of the other that the movements can nourish.

2.1. FEMINISMS FROM ABYA YALA

With the consciousness that Latin American feminism has recognised the diversity of the region and the many classes, races, and backgrounds that Latin American feminist approaches have had to embrace, Francesca Gargallo introduced the term *Feminismos desde Abya Yala* (2014), as aforementioned, referring to feminism from a decolonial Latin America. Gargallo recompiled information from feminist organisations amongst Latin America and presented a profound view of the many pre-colonial approaches to feminism that existed in Latin America. Gargallo mentioned: "the subject of a feminist program was not 'the woman' as an abstract entity, rather as a diverse and complex universe that all woman encompasses in every social space including their social diversities that came from the racialization of American populations in the colonial times" (p176).[53] It highlights the identity of Latin American Indigenous populations, within and outside cities; the importance of the manual work for them and the ancestral knowledge they have. As identified before, the 1970s for Latin American feminism was the awakening of ethnic-national communities; moreover, it was the

[53] Translation made by Verónica Posada. See quote in Spanish: "Insistían particularmente en que el sujeto de su programa feminista no era "la mujer" como ente abstracto, sino el diverso y complejo universo que conforman las mujeres en cada espacio social, incluyendo sus diversidades sociales nacidas de la racialización de los pueblos americanos durante la colonia" (Gargallo, 2013, p176).

decade where Abya Yala started to manifest and claim a place in the politics of Capitalism and Nation States, through the formation of the Latin American feminist movement.

Contemporary Latin American feminists argue for the importance of reframing feminism from the 1970s Western stereotype perspective, which situates feminism as a middle-class bourgeois/white phenomenon of waves, and instead think of feminism as an intersectional movement that strives for a social cause in which all Latin American women struggling will have a place to feel represented and where all kinds of women can be seen as allies, as long as they have interjected the importance of feminism and a gender perspective that is political (Lagarde, 2018; Gargallo, 2014; Segato, 2011; Ruiz-Navarro, 2018; Sternbach, Navarro-Aranguren, Chuchryk and & Alvarez, 1992). It is particularly important to appoint that ethnicity or ethnic groups are understood here as the populations that have been hidden within the discourses of nationalism of the XIX and XX centuries, as populations that suffer impositions of more than 500 years of agricultural, religious, generic and corporal models sustained in the colonial and industrial times, and as those who were the bases of the exploitation of so-called *Third World* countries (Gargallo, 2014, p176). This will help us to understand why Diasporas are usually immersed in the denomination of Minority Ethnic Groups, as discussed in the previous Chapters.

Furthermore, Latin American Indigenous leaders, such as Rigoberta Menchú (Guatemala), have usually flown away from their home country in search of a radical space where they are allowed to think and are not in danger (Gargallo, 2014, p99). That is why the *Encuentros* became such an important space. It provided feminist activists with periodic forums wherein they could gain theoretical and strategic insights as well as sister support from feminists in other nations who struggle to overcome analogous organizational and theoretical predicaments. Behind the opposition of the dictatorships in Latin America, there were always women. For instance, the case of the Mirabal Sisters in Dominican Republic; they were assassinated on November 25th, 1960, for their opposition against the dictator Trujillo. That is why the 25th of November is the day to commemorate the eradication of violence against women. The commemoration of that day was established in the first Encuentro of 1981 in Bogotá, Colombia and it has become a global movement: for instance, FALA -Feminist Assembly of Latin Americans, commemorates this date annually in London, with different activities for the diaspora.

As Rita Segato (2013) argues in Latin America war is created in silence and it is written in the female body. Hence, the ways to fly away from war are created within the female realm and projected into the creation of Diasporas. As I

have already mentioned during my research, the 1970s were a mournful decade in Latin America due to the military regimes and extreme violence against citizens in the name of national security. Feminism was seen as an intrinsically oppositional movement that wanted to fight the authoritarian power of patriarchal regimes. Women were enlisted massively in oppositional movements: they were experiencing day-to-day resistance to ask for better urban services, lower cost of living, less political corruption, and health and children care. Repressive governments responded with rape, torture, kidnappings and disappearances. Sadly, that led to many feminists having to experience exile and ending up leading the diasporic communities of Latin Americans abroad.

2.2. LATIN AMERICAN FEMINISTS IN LATIN LONDON

Migration has a woman's face (ONU, 2020); between 2000 and 2015, the number of international migrants increased by 41%, around 244 million people, almost half of them women. For Latin America and the Caribbean in 2019, the percentage of female international migrants was 49.9%. Additionally, from 2000 to 2019, the number of female migrants increased more rapidly than the number of male migrants. In 2016, The Trust for London launched the report *Towards Visibility* (McIlwaine & Bunge, 2016), in which it is estimated that around 250,000 Latin Americans live in the UK, and around 60% of them live and work in London. There are slightly more Latin American women in London (53%) than men. Women in Latin American countries are aware of the stigmatisation that feminism brings to their lives, which is why the women from the diaspora feel freer to become radical and create such strong networks within the host place, putting feminism into a transatlantic agenda that can have repercussions back home since the security of being abroad allow us to think and act in a much more radical way.

Democracia Génerica (Gender Democratisation) is a concept used by the Mexican author Marcela Lagarde (2018),[54] one of the most

[54] Lagarde proposes the term Democratización génerica, which I translated as Gender Democratisation.

influential academics on gender and feminism in Latin America today. The term is used to refer to the fight for democratic freedom throughout citizenship and empowerment in Latin America; it fosters the awakening of new subjectivities through the consciousness of freedom via the symbolisms that represent our cultures and our fights. The basis of the *Democracia Génerica* is the dismantling of inequalities through a relational principle of dialogue and empathy.

As aforementioned, the Latin American diaspora in the UK is led by Women. From the diasporic condition, political and social participation of Latin American women is less dangerous than back home, where basic human needs are not so easily satisfied as in the Global North. Women face factors such as the lack of food security, sexual harassment, and difficulties in accessing health care and education as well as drastic inequalities sharply experienced throughout Latin American countries. Therefore, the establishment of a political identity with a feminist root is clear in the women of the first generation of the Latin American Diaspora in the UK. Women in the diaspora emerged as the force to maintain Latinidad as the network node. "In the United Kingdom, Latinidad as a collective identity serves as a strategic resource for individuals, who might be otherwise marginalised, to find spaces to connect, resources to thrive and meaningful ways to oppose state oppression" (Medden, 2020, p73). It is important to mention that the majority of Latin Americans in the UK identify as 'other' in the UK official forms. Identifying ourselves as 'other' is a very complex idea for our own identity, and it shows how the colonial background is deep in the roots of Latin American people. "In the absence of an ethnic categorisation specifically for them [us], it is telling that Latin Americans tend to designate themselves in some form of 'other' category" (McIlwaine & Bunge, 2016, p22). This classification is more common within the population of women, reaching 51%.

As the UK is a country with larger gender democratisation, there is more coherence between the levels of action and public participation for women (Lagarde, 2018). In terms of Latin American Gender and Feminism within women's social and political participation, it must be said that women participate in multiple realms daily. Women are involved in neighbourhood organisations, communal activities, NGO leadership, health, production, education, and other social demands. Unlike Latin America, there are more social protections in the UK, and it is easier to become an activist. The way society is organised enables/allows people to make demands, whereas, in Latin America, it usually implies a level of impunity and risk of your own life, mainly if you're fighting against institutionalised corruption and hidden powers. Significantly, Latin American

Women in London have been able to pass their knowledge on to the next generations, nourishing Latin American politics. For instance, the group of activists within the Seven Sisters Indoor Market, Wards Corner Community Coalition, Latin Village, Latin Elephant, Vicky Álvarez, Mirca Morero, Martha Hinestroza, Patricia Diaz, Patria Román-Velázquez, Carolina Velásquez, Natalia Pérez, Joselyne Contreras, amongst others, have changed the geography of power and created a movement that aims to guarantee better conditions for Latin Americans in the UK.

One of the biggest charities funded by and aimed at Latin American Women in the UK is LAWRS (Latin American Women's Rights Services), set up in 1983. It is a feminist organisation that aims to grant/give/enable personal empowerment throughout different projects to foster social change. They directly help more than 5000 women in London with psychological support and assist them to navigate practical daily life situations associated with being a migrant. They have campaigned to recognise Latin Americans in the boroughs of London, gaining official recognition in the boroughs of Lambeth, Islington, Hackney, Haringey, and Southwark. Last year, they created the program *Step Up for Migrant Women* to protect women from immigration violence and abusive controls. The campaign is now supported by more than 30 organisations, including the Major of London (LAWRS, 2019). The diaspora must have the support of feminists since most of the abuse is gender-based violence. As stated in the most recent report by LAWRS *The Unheard Workforce* (2019), 326 women reported abuse in their workplaces ranging from unlawful wages, extra shifts, night shifts, no annual leave permission, health, security and safety issues and more disturbingly sexual abuse, harassment, and background discrimination. It is evident how Latin American women from the diaspora have organised to contribute to a better understanding of the feminist movement and the conditions that we need to fight within the patriarchal system.[55]

Another example is LAWA (Latin American Women's Aid), a charity that was created in 1987 by Latin American Women that were travelling to the UK as refugees from the already mentioned troubling times in their region. They offer many social services to women such as English lessons, counselling, empowerment programs, child and care programs, and more. They have also opened their services to Black communities and other minority groups in the UK. They are politically linked to the values of sorority and intersectional feminism to enhance links between women as well as links with the concept of Abya Yala and the feminist

[55] For more information, see http://www.lawrs.org.uk/

movement as something that comes from and for a community.[56] I will explore LAWA's work further in chapter six.

As part of the agenda of feminist and women-led organisations in London, art, representation, and the use of visual culture for holistic and intersectional approaches that advocate for woman's well-being have been crucial. Feminism has been growing and so have the possibilities to narrate and create storytelling. In the next section, I will present some examples of feminism and representation for Latin American women in London.

[56] For more information see https://lawadv.org.uk/

3.

FEMINISM AND REPRESENTATION

As Angela McRobbie states in T*he Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture, and Social Change* (2009), elements of feminism have been taken and incorporated into political speech and institutional life to serve the quotas of inclusion and intersectionality. The author called it "The postfeminist masquerade" (p115) since it puts the free woman in the spotlight as the figuration and paradigm of the working girl in the global city within phallic urban development. However, recent debates and movements from Latin America have seen the rebirth of the feminist struggles and fights, the reunification of women across the continent, and the waves of resistance and movement is flourishing in the diasporas. Verónica Gago, in *La Potencia Feminista o El Deseo de Cambiarlo Todo* (2019), analyses the new ways of practising feminism with an intersectional approach; the movement becomes practical and rooted in concrete codes of solidarity. The concept of solidarity is crucial for the International Feminista, a new way to call the movement and its resonances within the planetary dynamics of women's liberation. Solidarity is the weapon against the violence that capitalism impinges upon its working class, particularly women. Gago proposes solidarity based on intersectionality as a recognition of all the factors that can make someone more vulnerable to oppression:

> At this point, the mobilisations in Argentina and the growth of the organisation from one strike to another, in relation to the internationalist scheme in which the movement unfolds, merge in a new way the relationship between masses and particular minority struggles. By this, I mean that we have conducted a displacement of the neoliberal language of recognition of minorities to immerse in a mass scale of struggles (and not the identities), who were for a long time qualified as minor to account for the leading role of their 'difference' (p207).[57]

What is at stake in Gago's work is that the difference that exists within the feminist movement has a shared goal, which is to visualise minoritised groups. In that sense, the Latin American diaspora's activist work has been aligned with this way of creating and producing a feminist approach to inhabit the global city. Feminism within the diaspora is a valid force to create political change, make a place, and reproduce a sense of belonging.

Feminism is a political movement, a representational system with various tools. Beforehand, it is essential to go back to the concept of Representation. I will address the critical contributions of Stuart Hall in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (1997). The author defines the role of the representational process of thinking as the decodification of our visual perceptions into meaning to designate the imaginary ideas that later become realities. It is through practices of representation that we create reality, "the meaning is constructed via the system of representation" (p7). A system is a complex relationship that is usually constructed by the process of similarities and differences; that process of translation between familiar or unfamiliar codes also constructs the diaspora condition. Culture is indeed a shared map of conceptual codes that governs our relationships. Images represent us and say something about our feelings and emotions in a particular period of history. They communicate our position towards and in the world. Furthermore, feminism and representation can be related to Hall's work as the production of meaning sustained by the interpretation of codes and the practices or activities that it triggers. "As meaning shift and slide, so inevitable the codes of a culture imperceptible change (...) There are concepts for our fantasies, desires and imaginings as well as for so-called 'real' objects in the material world" (Ibid, p45). Feminism is constantly producing new codes through the struggles of difference and similarity within the heteropatriarchal and binary systems that feminised bodies are fighting against. Through those processes, representation allows the production of new realities and the re-creation of new subjects that have suffered incredibly harsh situations. It is through the use of concepts and images that diasporic feminists create new perceptions of themselves, and by doing so challenge the *rate of assimilation* and foster the dissemination of *mobilising identities* to consolidate the diaspora in the global city.[58] In the next sections, I will present how this has been conducted by Latin American feminists in London.

[57] Translation made by Verónica Posada, see quote in Spanish: "En este punto, las movilizaciones en Argentina y el crecimiento de la organización de un paro a otro con relación a la trama internacionalista en que el movi-miento se despliega conjuga de modo nuevo la relación entre masividad y vectores de luchas minoritarias. Con esto quiero decir que hemos operado un desplazamiento del lenguaje neoliberal de reconocimiento de las minorías para sumergir en una escala de masas los vectores (y no las identidades) de luchas que fueron durante mucho tiempo calificadas como minoritarias para dar cuenta del protagonismo de su 'diferencia'" (Gago, 2019, p207).

[58] For more clarity with the concepts *Rate of Assimilation* and *Mobilising Identities*, see Appendix A and Chapter Three Diasporic Geographies.

3.1. THE POLITICS OF FEMINIST AND VISUAL ACTIVISM

The act of seeing fosters the construction of realities, of regimes of existence. In the work *Visuality/Materiality* (Rose & Tolia-Kelly, 2016), the authors reflect on visual culture as the production of representational grammar to understand contemporary social life, "continuing mobilisation of communicative aesthetics which refigure our encounters with space, form, time" (p4). Therefore, Visual Activism is a collective practice that inspires politically engaged encounters through the use of images. Given this, ethics of visual activism within feminism are a site-specific approach that concerns its context; feminist representation is a practice of visual activism. However, it must be self-critical, intersectionally selective and culturally situated to not reinforce patriarchal values or not subsumed in the binary western subject (Hinterberger, 2007).

Representation has a vast psychological effect on feminised bodies and women, as it is a self-image practice. "The mirror of society" as Mansbridge (1998, p154) named it, can contribute to the creation of schemes and stories that we reflect upon ourselves and believe to be the truth. The distinction of western politics is the dichotomy that divides the state and the society, the public from the private (Moller, 1991). Since the rise of feminist scholarship in the 1990s, the analy-

sis of gender has been placed on the agenda for understanding conceptions of sex, bodies, and ideological identifications. As a result, the question between the public and the private remains as one of the key conceptual enquiries around gender representation. It requires an ethical commitment to its subject. Thus, Visual Activism uses the image as a device for social movements, which is deeply rooted in the representation of feminism as a political practice. In recent years, it has been more present in the everyday life of communities, bridging the dichotomy of private/public. "The personal is political" (1969), was popularised by Carol Hanisch in the 1970s'. She mentioned, "There is only collective action for a collective solution" (p4). Therefore, feminism insists that the personal is political; it must cut across the macro-politics of governance, economies, and war and emphasise the importance of a micro-politics of everyday life: care, planning, mental health, rest, love, warmth, education, the organisation of institutions, and the social reproduction of life and health in a broader sense.

Katy Deepwell, in her recent work *Feminist Art, Activisms and Artivisms* (2020), mentions that "Feminism has demonstrated this complex dialectical relationship between art and politics many times from the Suffragists to Femen" (p12). Feminism –as a social movement– using art for activism has achieved the intense contemporary continuing battle of awareness on how society cannot be measured as a two/sexes organisation. The *Potencia Feminista* (Gago, 2018) –Feminist Potency– has achieved the introduction of new approaches, new subjectivities, new sensibilities, new ways of care, and new ways of seeing, as well as new forms to eager more collective engagement through emotional bonds.

Art has demonstrated capable of producing change and bringing about a revolution that triggers politics and creates social justice. Chantal Mouffe (2008) argues that "critical artistic practices can disrupt the smooth image that corporate capitalism is trying to spread, bringing to the fore its repressive character" (p6). Art must be a form that foments dissensus and makes visible dominant consensus that obscures the other, the difference and helps to construct new subjectivities. Feminist politics must cultivate such artistic principles through alternative imaginaries and practices that bypass the instituted power and hence exist in resistance.

Narratives of resilience and strength are at the basis of the diaspora collectives of Latin American women in London, which aim to construct discursive social images shaping new realms for inhabiting the global city. This is linked to my key findings on the centrality of visual narratives for the construction of Latin London demonstrated in chapter two through my visual contributions on the narratives of

feminised Latin London. Visual culture in Latin London unveils social formations, political participation, resistance, and power dynamics. In this chapter I will foster those arguments through the analysis of the work done by FLAWA-Festival of Latin American Women in the Arts- and Mujer Diáspora, with whom I have worked and contributed visual material that explores and communicates the experiences of these communities and which contribute to their understanding of their own representation and place in the global city.

Meanwhile, feminism is a fertile source for political change within the dichotomy of public/private for migrant lives. As Cathy McIlwaine (2022) suggests, artistic methods for engaging, communicating, and raising awareness through arts are crucial for Latin American women in London to understand and visualise the processes of gender violence experienced in the city and to draw strategies that can influence policies in the near future. Visual activism from the Diaspora is making a statement and raising awareness worldwide. It has a therapeutic angle for participants as it allows recognition and embodiments of the traumatic experiences of the migrant condition and trajectories. I will present two examples of politically feminised diasporic representations in the following two sections.

3.1.1. ARTIVISMS, FLAWA [FESTIVAL LATIN AMERICAN WOMEN IN THE ARTS]

> "Women are messed over, not messed up! We need to change the objective conditions, not adjust to them" (Hanisch, 1968).

The dilemma of political representation for women is expressed through the arts. The condition of women as subjectivities tears the fundamental structures of society and, therefore, fosters mobilisation since feminist collectives share levels of intragroup mobilisation and intergroup influence. A great example of this is FLAWA, The Festival of Latin American Women in the Arts. It was founded in 2019 by Silvia Rothlisberger, Teresa Guanique, Daniela Galán, and Karoline Pelikan as a festival that celebrates the work of Latin American women in London and of many creators that are representing the Diaspora, which is blossoming, growing in size, and creative force.[59]

FLAWA has contributed to the Latin American art scene in London questioning process of creative practices to visualise Latin American talent via the displaying of contemporary socially engaged art and art and activism. FLAWA aims to visualise the work of cisgender women, transgender, queer and non-binary creators from Latinx backgrounds in London considering a decolonial practice and approach. The first festival in 2019 gathered 63 women from 13 different countries in 5

[59] See more https://flawafestival.co.uk

FIG.1. FLAWA Festival 2022. Rich Mix, London

days in London; the 2020 edition was a FLAWA from home Festival; and the one of 2022 was carried out in May, with a diverse programme that combined different perspectives that celebrate female radical empowerment. It reunites literature, music, and performative and visual arts that represent and advocate for the representation of Latin American diversity.

Art is a constellation to produce a representation that highlights certain memories triggering cultural identification and healing processes of traumatic experiences such as those of many migrant journeys. In that process, spaces like FLAWA nourish the production of permeable memories enhancing cultural bonding and transcultural interactions. The arts are not a balanced sphere and usually diasporic and BAME communities are overlooked and neglected. Initiatives like FLAWA foster a growing representation and interest in different areas and cultures for Londoners and create dialogues that manifest in a sense of belonging and representation for Latinxs in the City. FLAWA has achieved a central dialogue around Latin American diversity and how it is reflected in its artistic production, from music that represents the Andean indigenous cultures, such as Luzmila Carpio and Lido Pimienta, to contemporary visual artists such as Tere Chad and Xavi Huxley, who fight for the recognition of Latin Americans in London and are leading campaigns against gentrification [Fig 2]; also Wara, the author of the famous song Leave to Remain which is also featured in the Film *London's Latin Quarter*. Wara's work is an important contribution to the memory of Latin spaces in the city as it shows the links between Elephant and Castle and the Seven Sisters Indoor Market. Throughout the video of *Leave to Remain*, one can grasp the Seven Sisters Market as an important place for gathering and the representation of what I have discussed in Chapter Three as Latinidad and the tropicalisation of London [See Fig 3 and 4].

Furthermore, the work of FLAWA is an extension of what I have called essayistic, as it presents visual narratives through the assembly of actions and events that reproduce persuasive elements crucial for the recognition of Latin Americans in London. The festival emphasises the vast range of complexities around transcultural Latinx identities and problematises its roles in the construction of Latin London; it is a festival that is illustrative and declaratory. Teresa, the director of FLAWA, when interviewed, said: "One of the reasons that motivated me to create FLAWA is to make Latin American diaspora visible in London" (2022). This festival is a production of women represented by women. It is a political approach to the female urban future. It is the expression of women's liberation that wants to make a home in London as a diaspora and also creates a safe space to share stories in our own language. It is a space for self-consciousness and identification.

FLAWA 2022

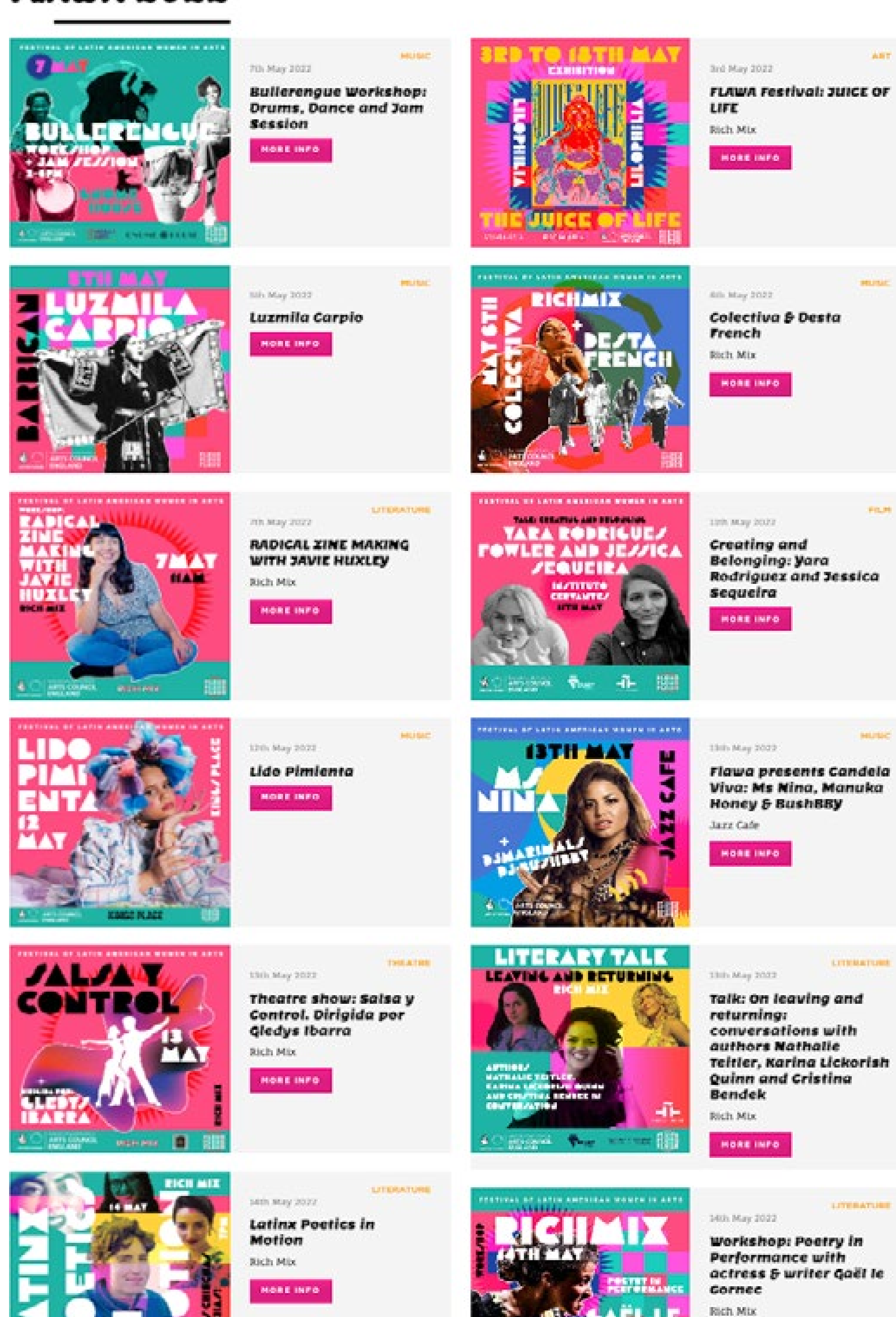


FIG.2. FLAWA 2022 Program

FIG.3. Wara's Leave to Remain. 1:32

Elephant & Castle is an area in central London facing one of Europe's most expensive regeneration initiatives.

FIG.4. Latin Elephant (2015). London's Latin Quarter. 1:08

3.1.2. MUJER DIÁSPORA/ DIASPORA WOMAN COLLECTIVE

During the 60 years of the Colombian civil conflict, at least 20% of the population has migrated to different latitudes (UNHCR, 2020). Many of these migrated to the UK, most of whom are living in London, arrived in the 1970s as migrants to work in low-skilled jobs, hotels, hospitals, and the cleaning sector. Later, in the 1980s and 1990s, many arrived through asylum-seeking, work permits, student visas, or family amnesty (McIlwaine, 2012; McIlwaine, C., Cock, J.C., and Linneker, B., 2011). TRUST for London report (2020) stated that 29,000 Colombians are Living in London. However, this does not consider second and third-generations or *informal* migrants.

During the 1980s, Colombians, as with many other people in low-skilled and low-paid jobs, started organisations to support each other during their migratory experiences and expanded the network into the wider Latin American community. "With support from the Greater London Council, several organisations were formed, some of which had their roots in former solidarity campaigns. These included the Latin American House, the Latin American Women's Rights Service, Chile Democrático, which became IRMO –Indoamerican Refugee and Migrant Organisation–, Carila, the Latin American Advisory Committee, the Latin American Workers Association and La Gaitana Housing Cooperative" (McIlwaine, 2012, p4).

The creation of The Diaspora Woman Collective started as a practice that was needed in 2014, as the Colombian Peace Treaty Process was taking place.[60] The psychologist Helga Flamtermesky decided to set up the Collective Diaspora Woman or Mujer Diáspora, through an alliance with Conciliation Resources, an International Peace Building organisation that works in different and specific contexts around the world.[61] The project with the Colombian Women from the Diaspora is called *Truth, Memory and Reconciliation*. Its objective is to invite displaced women to share their stories and traumas of the exile process. It has focussed on empowering and supporting women to reclaim dignity and rights in the process of the Clarification of Truth, Cohabitation, and Non-repetition. The Commission of Truth –*La Comisión de la Verdad*– is the official organisation that investigates what happened to the victims of the armed conflict for both those who stayed in Colombia and those who were forced into exile. The collective started to become a rooting place and a meeting point for a broader Latin American women's population in London; they met and reunited in North London, creating different activities and experiences to support each other. The stories are usually shared over a meal and in a space that reproduces warmth, empathy, and love; it is a space crafted to listen and heal [Fig.5, 6 and 7]. In 2019, the participants launched the book *Poetic Memories of Colombian Women in the Diaspora*. Angélica Quintero, one of the former active members, mentions:

> Through Art, particularly photography, the group also reach healing and empowerment. Being photographed has given displaced women a voice, a sense of freedom, and the right to be listened to; it has placed them as protagonists, has ratified their beauty and has reminded them of their own femininity (2018).

Presumably, in Colombia, the images of war and conflict have presented stupor, fear, and morbidity rather than the victim themselves and their problems. The mainstream discourse has put society into a mental state of anxiety. As Sontag stated: "The understanding of war among people who have not experienced war is now chiefly a product of the impact of these images" (2014, p19). Through the possibilities of organisation as a feminist group,

[60] The peace process in Colombia between the government and the FARC-EP (Revolutionary Forces of Colombia – Popular Army) started in 2012. It aimed to reach peace in the country, where human rights are respected under any circumstance. In October 2016, elections were held to approve the treaty in a referendum, and the Colombian people voted NO. [See more http://www.Acuerdodepaz.Gov.Co/] Later that year, the Peace Treaty was otherwise signed after a second consultation. However, the new government did not fulfil the agreements, and many guerrilla and dissent movements appeared, creating chaos and insecurity in the country.

[61] See more https://www.c-r.org/

FIG.5. Colombian Women in the Diaspora. Conciliation Resources meeting

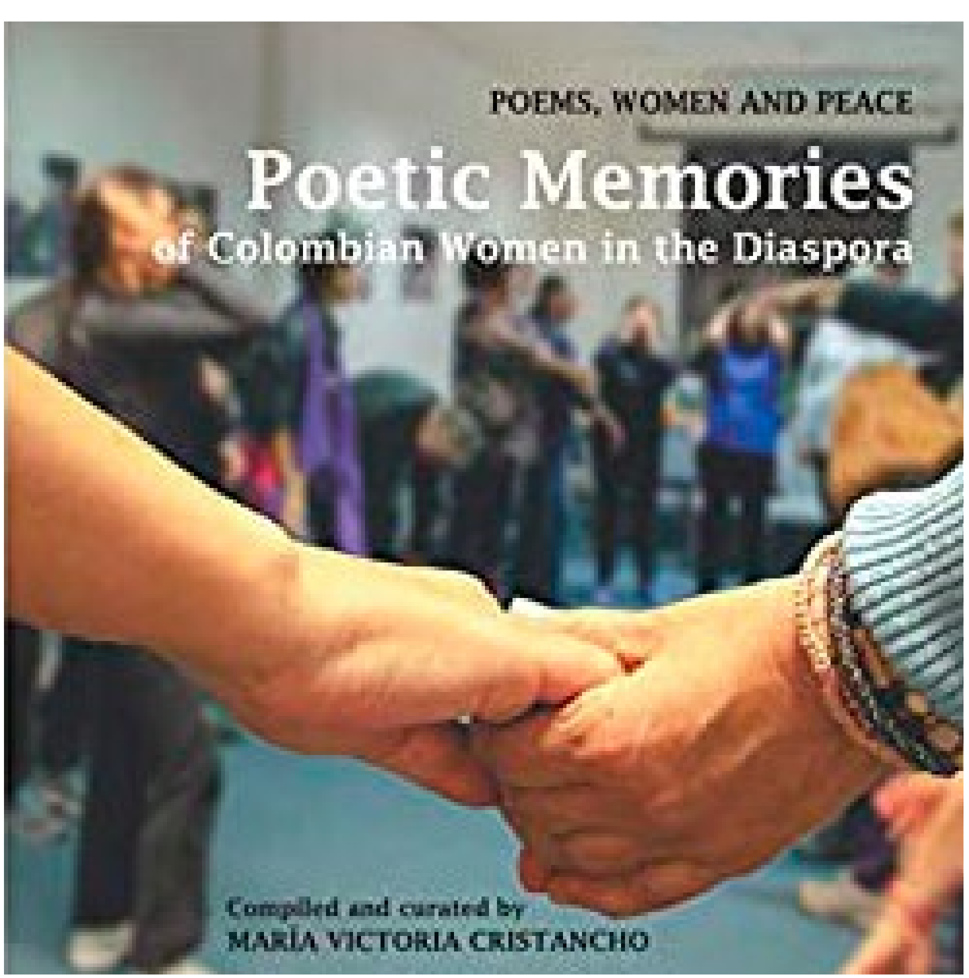


FIG.6. Poetic Memories of Colombian Women in the Diaspora. Front Cover Book

FIG.7. Helga Flamtermersky photographed by Ingrid Guyón, 2018

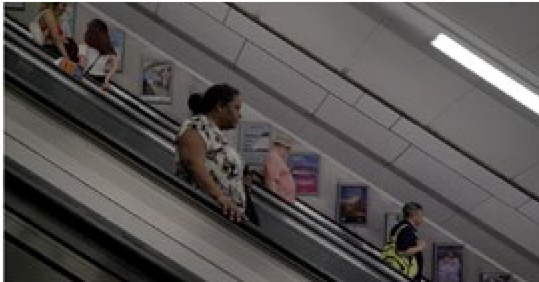


FIG.8. Victoria short-film documentary. By Juan Pablo Daza

there is an encounter of resistance, life, and a gendered process of healing within the diaspora condition that also enhances a sense of home in London as the host place. They foster new ways of portraying the women who suffer directly from these wars. This collective is a manifestation of what I have presented above as an artivistic practice, a visual activism mechanism that allows new configurations and modes of production for human rights and trauma recovery.

Another important work created in the framework of the Commission of Truth is the documentary *Victoria* (2012), written and produced by Colombians Juan Pablo Daza and Maria de Los Ángeles Reyes. Victoria is the first Colombian women priest in the UK –an active member of the Diaspora Woman group; she fled Colombia in 1997 due to a violent and traumatic experience that is represented through graphics and oneiric images in the documentary. She is a resilient and strong woman with profound wounds, and she has become an inspiration for many exiled women in the Diaspora who share their stories and support every newcomer to the group. The film *Victoria* is a love letter to Colombia as a magical and wonderful place that history has shown to be impossible to inhabit in complete peace and as a country that is leaving traces of its memories all over the globe, in its diasporic communities. Diaspora Woman is a feminist healing space in which many women have encountered transformation in their lives through processes of representation. Patricia Díaz, one of the collective members, said "this is the real meaning of the diaspora: that we can recognise in each other the woman that we are" (2022).

4.

CONCLUSION: FEMINIST RESONANCE

> Los seres modernos son seres en movimiento territorial, temporal, hacen vínculos finitos etc. Encuentran su transcendencia en sí mismos, en sus obras, en su capacidad de intervenir creativamente en el mundo" (Lagarde, 2018, p179). [62]

Throughout this chapter, I have exposed how feminists in London, as subjectivities, are creating countercultural narratives that relate to postmodern conditions. They advocate for practices of decolonisation in transcultural spaces using representation as a vehicle for social change. Feminism, as politics and as culture in the postmodern world, mirrors women as a historical subject that moves towards the recognition of otherness within its intersectional approach, and by doing so, it involves the movement of women on a planetary scale, resonating within diasporic communities.

Lagarde (2018) reflects on the importance of the encounter for the feminist movement, particularly in Latin America. Gender Identity is a modern concept that allows women to build the US, a collectivity; the re-signification of the idea in postmodern times occurs through the resemblance of the feminist movement as a global power –*Potencia Feminista*– (Gago, 2018). From the living room to the whole house to the neighbourhood, to the local area, to national and international meetings, Latin American women in London are creating processes with transcultural narratives that embed a decolonial ethos in an anti-patriarchal urban diaspora. Women have created new spaces for recognition through semiotic practices and the uses of the image that permits a reorganisation of power relations in the global north to nourish urban living.

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[62] I want to finish with this quote in Spanish to commemorate the diasporic women who are linked together through language. See author translation to English: "Modern beings are subjects that move territorially, temporarily, they create finite bonds, etc. Transcendence is found within themselves, in their work, in the ability to creatively intervene in the world" (Lagarde, 2018, p179).

Representation within diaspora women's collectives fosters self-recognition, a sense of belonging, and community building, as I have exposed throughout this Chapter. It is through a narrative that creates new ways of bringing to life ideas of feminised bodies that strength and rights are built. The constitution of women as political, through the private/public spheres, intertwines to create spaces in the city; it has woven fabrics between coalitions, which recognise the importance of structural and systematic changes that can be achieved via micro-politics in everyday life, which are deeply involved with practices of representation as I have exposed.

In the next chapter, I will look at how the production of a diasporic community is linked to memory; I will examine this via the role of archives in terms of amateur production and official narratives within the Latin American community in London—having in mind the role of women in the process of production, display, and circulation. Furthermore, in Chapter Six, I will explore more Feminist projects through analysing The Migrant Gaze.

spores

Verónica Posada Álvarez

ELEPHANT & CASTLE
DIÁSPORA
ser
e

A diaspora is like a spore, self-sustaining, fluctuating daily. It is the author of the invisible, each individual member is a word.

Frequent passage and salt water wear away at the path. Uncomfortable travels are fruitful for a wandering poet who uses discomfort to start dialogues in new places reached via migration. Taking a new direction is in itself an act of invention, what you see creates an image of yourself and in turn you create an image of what you see.

A premonition of journeys taken through urban spaces, a city formed and experienced by visceral reactions to stimulus. These reactions clash and are confused with the sensorial feelings produced by my native tropical city, this host city in the north of the globe is cold and rough. Areas of common ground are found, two cities both divided by a river and in both I live in the south. In one I identify as Latin American, in the other being a woman is a migratory force and for me, all forces of change come with an impulse for creation.

A diaspora is a spore. Geographical dispersion leads to the creation of a home made of otherness; the ability to be another, of a change in perspective coded in us by the journeys we take and the move from our place of origin to a host town.

Fig 1. Se llevan el elefante, 2010

The sound of the tube is deafening, particularly as you arrive at the final station on the Bakerloo line and there is an earthy smell of urban entrails ... *'this train terminates here. Please leave the train upon arrival'*. Disembarking amongst the multitude, finding space amongst so many spores, there is a smell of canned goods ... *'Please take all your personal belongings with you'* sounds in an upper-class British accent. To reach the street you need to take a lift as it's one of the underground's deepest stations. It is so far underground that taking the stairs would be an epic undertaking but the recompense is the breeze you feel as you emerge from the depths, it smells of coffee and the tropics and makes it all worthwhile. You hear the sound of radio stations from back home, *Olímpica Stereo*, and you see familiar signs and words on shop fronts *Fájate Medellín, Empanadas, Arepas, La Chatica, Macondo and Leños & Carbón*. Elephant and Castle is a place that represents and unites Latin Americans in London. Will it survive the force of urban change?

Spores

A spore is a tiny fragment of a living organism, a reproductive cell capable of autonomously recreating itself within an ecosystem, arriving by water or the wind. Spores are everywhere, they are formed via dispersion and create their own communities. In the tropics ferns are spores that inhabit misty woodlands and caress the mountainous lands of the south. Classified as part of the plant, fungi and protista kingdoms, these spores are rebellious and unstopped by borders or frontiers. They are adaptable, reproductive agents and create shared inhabited spaces. They transcend mountains and live in the depths of the ocean, they navigate and travel unimaginable distances, making themselves present in every corner of the planet.

Fig 2

14 de Septiembre 2020

The global city expels us.

The elephant is torn down and like a spore the flock flies in search of somewhere to make a new nest.

It was inevitable and now our meeting place is fading away, I selfishly think to myself '*now where will we get our coffee?*'.

The day we thought would never arrive was aided by the stillness and empty streets propagated by a tiny organism (Covid-19), it was unavoidable. In the words of Verónica Gerber, our defeat was carried out in silence and the defeat was not only of Latin America but of Africa too, of the south in the north.

The elephant, a mammal representing almost an entire continent, in a place where it does not originate from or exist in a natural setting is a contradiction in itself. *The howdah*, the elephant with the castle on its back symbolizes the working class and the non-western populations. Some say it was a gift for King Henry II, others that it was a gift for Queen Elizabeth I and yet others that it was created by The Worshipful Company of Cutlers who continue to use the same symbol today and have existed in the area since 1700. The image of the elephant and the castle represents otherness, pride in the British Empire of the past, the 'exotic' cultures and people so connected to the West and yet so different, never quite fitting in. It represents a diaspora that despite being enormous and diverse must, like spores, adapt, change, forget, disperse and continually move on in the face of severed ties and connections.

Fig 4. 1949. Elephant Symbol

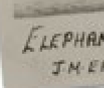
Fig 3 Elephant & Castle 1956 / The Hotel

What do memories taste of?

Finding that part of the city, full of contradiction, in the north of the globe gave me a place to put down roots. There I understood that I was not only from the greenest and most diverse part of the world but that I was part of the entire southern cone of South America and I felt sheltered. My encounter with the Latino identity happened via my taste buds, in search of a place where I could find the things I missed from home: coffee, *arepas, pandeyucas, bocadillo, frijoles, arepa de chócolo, quesito* and avocados. My taste buds became spores allowing me to recreate myself far from home in this amalgamation of smells, where you could almost feel the heat of the ground where salt water flows to frozen seas. In this place I felt I wasn't Colombian or Paisa or from Antioquia, I was Latin American and there in that sweeping landscape I found each one of my other identities.

1765, no hay un día exacto

Newington council assembled and officially named the area that today represents Latin America in London. Westminster Bridge had recently been inaugurated and the north and the south of this now global city became interconnected for the first time. The city recovered from the Great Fire of London of 1666 and pubs [Public Houses] had appeared on every corner, becoming important meeting places offering release after arduous working days. At a junction where various roads converged there was a pub called the Elephant and Castle. Some years earlier, circa 1602, Shakespeare was a famous resident of the area and various characters from the *Twelfth Night* frequented the pub "in the south suburbs, at the Elephant" and enjoyed its hospitality.



ephant & Castle theatre

Fig 2. Elephant & Castle Shopping Centre: Bus Stop. Circa 1972.

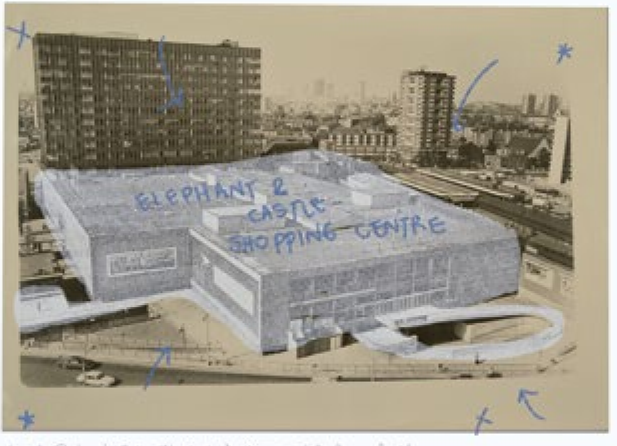
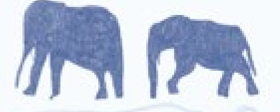


Fig 3. Elephant & Castle New Shopping Centre Circa 1965



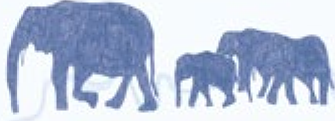


Fig 11. Inside Elephant & Castle Shopping Centre 1970

Fig 12. London Illustrated News. Elephant & Castle. 1820.

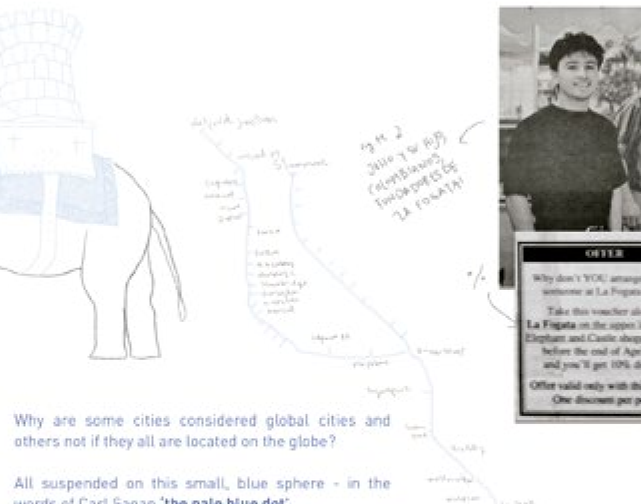
Fig 13 South London press 1960

1969 registro humano

The first registered date of transatlantic displacement, when a Colombian traveled to London. In the south of the south revolutionary ideas were growing, notions regarding how things should move forward. These ideals would later be the reason for the vast diasporic community formed far from the south, made up by those who fled a lack of understanding and human rights. The tropical, high altitude, Andean cities of the south began to grow and life within them became more and more complex. A labyrinth in an untamable land.

This same year Ruth Glass, the German-British Sociologist, coined the phrase gentrification. According to the etymology of the word, *gentry* refers to people of high social status, a group with the power to transform, and *fication* means making, creating, causing. So is gentrification the production of clans? The production of nobles? The creation of otherness? In Glass's publication **London: Aspects of Change** (1964), the concept is explained in sociological terms as the frequency of change experienced by an urban space. It is not so simple however and the frequency described above includes an element of expulsion. I imagine Ruth Glass in the postwar capital, I see her as being the precursor of an urban movement that would change the course of many cities as well as the life of their diasporic communities. Communities that despite being shown hospitality continue to turn on the axis of displacement. Gentrification is the competitive process of dominance over a particular place, the working class forced out by the white collar workers. For Loretta Lees, a fellow gentrification scholar, Glass's work foresaw the future of urban areas with regards to profiteering in land leading to the relocation of many communities in the large global cities.

What frustrates me the most about gentrification is how cities begin to lose their authenticity as a result of the desire to achieve a certain competitive standard. These standards are impulsed by super-gentrifiers, as coined by Sharon Zukin, such as Starbucks, McDonalds, Primark, H&M, Zara and all the other large multinationals found in every corner of the world. Previous connections to neighbors are lost to financial connections.



OFFER

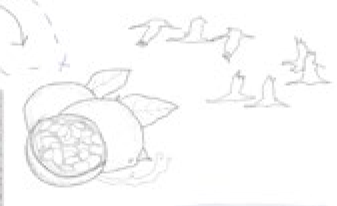
Why don't YOU arrange to meet someone at La Fogata soon?

Take this voucher along to **La Fogata** on the upper level of the Elephant and Castle shopping centre before the end of April 1993, and you'll get 10% discount.

Offer valid only with this voucher. One discount per person.

La Fogata - the place for lovers
But perhaps the speciality of La Fogata is the traditional Colombian drink Borojó made with an Amazonian fruit renowned for its aphrodisiac properties. The fruit is blended with honey, nutmeg, cinnamon, milk, and special secret ingredients.

In fact, business is going well enough for Julio to consider expanding and getting a new larger kitchen unit so that they can take on outside catering too. By trading at the Elephant and Castle shopping centre, they have been able to show people what their food is like first before trying to expand further.



WAY OUT

Why are some cities considered global cities and others not if they all are located on the globe?

All suspended on this small, blue sphere - in the words of Carl Sagan **'the pale blue dot'**.

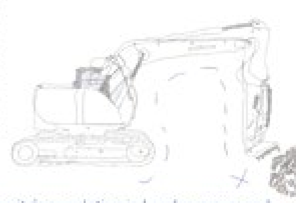
MEET YOU AT LA FOGATA

La Fogata, London's first Colombian café (according to the Southwark Archives), opens its doors.

South London - or South America?

That is the title of the article written about Julio and his family, the owners of the café, who famously imported Borojó, a tropical fruit from the Amazon region well known for its aphrodisiac properties. The south of London is an urban paradigm of colonialism, an area claimed by migrants, a live action museum in which to contemplate reformation.

Simultaneously a migrant woman is born in a southern valley. It is the beginning of a red and black era for the north of the south, in the south of the south. Its inhabitants are displaced and they claim their place in the north of the globe.



ELEPHANT & CASTLE

The Colombian community's population in London grows and in the Andes and tropical flatlands ideological turbulence rages, permanently staining the entire 1990s a dark-red. A pivotal moment impulsing the unrelenting, transcontinental movement of spores.

Restless sleep during a storm

During the day I reflect on the signs that arise in the irrational dream state, on a moment back home in the tropics when I was awoken by a heavy downpour and was surprised by a dream I had had of a vast lake. Clouds gently brushed the tips of the mountains, the silence at that altitude gave the impression of a recent departure; it was a cold place made up of various islands, a type of archipelago. At some point in the dream I realize the islands are two huge, connected continents and that the water represents the link between Latin America and Africa. In the dream I come across the Yoruba (Yorùbá) people, who are visiting Colombia. I awake and think of this ethnic group, mainly from the Southeast of Nigeria, many of whom inhabit Elephant and Castle. I reflect on Oyeronke Oyewumi, the scholar who describes the Yoruba people as ancestral thinkers, people who understand that gender and hierarchy do not exist. For them what really matters is recognising who belongs and who has been in a particular place the longest, establishing community and cultivating the land via social connections. They call this **seniority**.

Southwark, una Cartografía

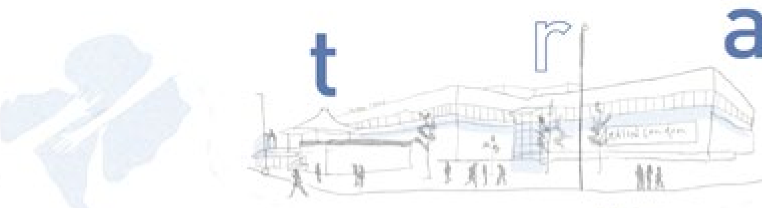
Elephant and Castle is in South London and belongs to the borough of Southwark along with Bankside, Bermondsey, Camberwell, Crystal Palace (home to the Crystal Palace exhibition building originally built to house the Great Exhibition of 1851 during Queen Victoria's reign), Borough, Denmark Hill, Deptford, Dulwich, Herne Hill, Honor Oak, Kennington, Newington, Nunhead, Peckham, Rotherhithe, Surrey Quays and Walworth. The area is connected to the City of London, the original Roman settlement today known as the financial sector, by means of various bridges including the famous *Tower Bridge*.

Southwark (pronounced 'suth-erk') is a connecting point, the place in which global dynamics ignite, where Latin America and Africa embrace. 46% of those in the area come with diasporic baggage. West Indians, Africans, Latin Americans, Poles and a few French. It is mostly the London home of Nigerians (a British colony until 1960) and Colombians.

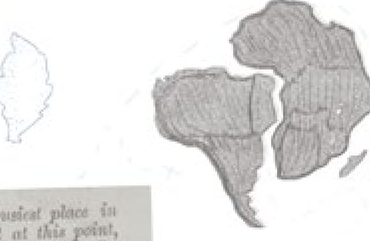
According to urban mapping of London, Elephant and Castle is in the north of Southwark but in the south of the city, in the south of the north; it lies in the north of the globe for those who arrive from the south, a scaffold in the centrifugal and centripetal force that is the global economy.

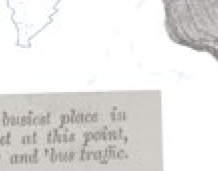
The "Elephant and Castle" is the South London. Six main arteries mo and it is a leading centre for tramcar

t r a n s



Where is the south for a diasporic movement? Is its journey always towards the north? North for who? As the meeting point of a variety of cultures it is a transitory place, everything moves through it and beyond it; every reality is possible, here all groups are permitted to reinvent themselves, a reinvention reflected in the transatlantic relationships we establish.





Transhuman,

transgender,

transcultural,

transatlantic,

transmigrate,

transhumance,

transient,

trans-substantial,

transnational,

transmundane,

transmarine,

transcontinental,

transfigurable.

Dreams are a trans-neptunian activity, an aesthetic activity that goes beyond the world we know, we distort our perspective in search of a gravity that does not exist. I travel between atmospheric layers and see the planet has numerous surfaces.

A spore is a transborder.

Fig 15. Old walkways at Elephant & Castle Circa 1963

Fig 16. November 1963 progress on Elephant & Castle 'New' Shopping Centre South London was recovering from the Blitz.

1970, 1980, 1990,
la angustia en movimiento

These were turbulent decades and produced a sea of migrants from the south of the south. In 1970 Argentines and Chileans arrived in London as a result of military dictatorships violating mental and physical rights and basic human dignity. Later in the 1980s and 90s many arrived in the UK in search of a new home and found an inexpressive but stable land, a stark difference to what they left behind in the south of the globe. People originating from many different latitudes identified here as Latin American and in this way London's first Colombian café saw its clientele grow.
The British geographer Cathy McIlwaine noticed that despite Latin America being a vast and expansive territory those of us who come from there tend to collectively put down roots within the parameters of community ... 'common-unity'.

For me, that shopping center full of Latin American retailers was above all else a social space, a place for gathering. Those in between places and areas of transit were what made the shopping center perfect for Latin American improvisation, for business meetings, get togethers and conversation. A constellation of migrants created their own space in the global capital and a far-reaching ripple effect was felt in Latin America thanks to the remittance services allowing money to reach home, money used to pay for houses, dental treatments, courses, university and school enrollment fees, medical procedures and small businesses. My formation as a feminist was an intrepid remittance received while working in Elephant and Castle.

The Urban River

I return to dreams so as not to lose the notion that cities divided by rivers share the same air, atmospheres full of micro particles of water that interconnect two hemispheres. Each drop of water contains migrant respiration.

The rivers that flow through both cities carry in their water everlasting moments, a Möbius loop. My diasporic being is a water spirit, navigating urban realms. Water creates clarity, we understand cities by looking at their rivers, their sediment carries tales that connect with urban wanderers. The water in the River Thames and the Medellín River is ancient, connected via planetary veins allowing life to flow. I think back on Ignacio Piedrahíta and his journeys through the tough mountain ranges when he said that water acts as a coordinate and tells tales on the way. And so the story of a diaspora will always be determined by its connection to water, its navigation of the globe.

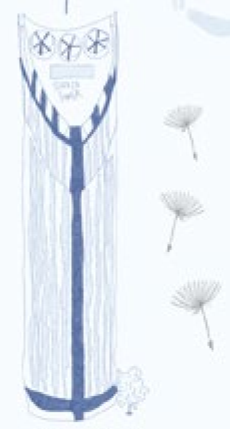
One result of this positive approach to starter businesses has been the establishment of ten South American businesses in the Shopping Centre since 1992.

The Elephant's grave

Los 2000

London was experiencing systemic regeneration. The Latin American force was based in the north and the south of the city, those in the north we will perhaps leave for another essay, but those in the south had been growing in number over almost 30 years, made up of diverse layers forming an urban palimpsest in the center of London.

Richard Sennett argues in his book The Craftsman, that "urban planning, like other technical practices, often zeroes in on needless complexity, trying to strip away tangles in a street or in public space" (2009, page 225). These projects spearheaded by large urban developers forget about the complexities of life on a smaller scale, of the universal in the microscopic, they rush in their search for verticality, generating blueprints for homogeneity all over the world. Construction work in the global capitals has focused on investing in intangible and delocalised spaces without a concern for the living beings who have created habitats. Global cities are a contradiction in that their codification and recognition as 'global' would not be possible without migration and yet they eventually expel those who are not part of the high flying financiers, this leads to cities becoming large spaces of anonymity and disappearance. An anonymous body is a body that has lost its identity.



Vientre de elefante / Elephant womb

The area was an urban womb containing magic.
The Pachamama of the north, a jungle in the middle of winter.

Elephant and Castle was the womb of Latin America in London, in the midst of the gray it offered warmth and a smell that transported you back to the south.

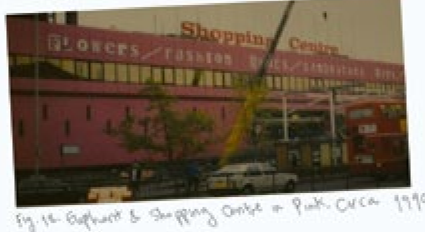


Fig 18. Elephant & Shopping Centre in Pink. Circa 1990

Where do we go now that there is no womb in which to settle?

The nest disintegrated and now there are spores everywhere; we are the fragmented spores of lives created.

End of insert

Access Spores Film here https://vimeo.com/687296638 and here to download the publication https://drive.google.com/file/d/16PUSr-qaaxjZHEze50mkeUPPKsklcfKZc/view?usp=sharing

CHAPTER 5

LANDSCAPES OF MEMORY

CHAPTER 5

LANDSCAPES OF MEMORY

1. LATIN LONDONERS' MEMORIES
- **1.1.** Transcultural Memory
- **1.2.** Mnemonic Devices for Diasporas
  - **1.2.1.** *My Elephant Story*

2. ARCHIVES: THE LEGACY OF THE EMPIRE
- **2.1.** Southwark Archives
- **2.2.** Haringey Archives

3. URBAN MEMORY: MAKING PLACE AND CREATING BELONGING
- **3.1.** Latinidad LDN
- **3.2.** *Salsa Fever*

4. CONCLUSION: ON THE IMPORTANCE OF REMEMBERING

1.

LATIN LONDONERS MEMORIES

Memories are not only reflections of past events but complex constructions constituted through the process of displacement, condensation, and substitutions within cultural affiliations. To analyse Latin Londoners' memories, it is crucial to situate the context of this research by locating instances of transmission and the researcher's site of enunciation. Subjectivity allows one to produce knowledge deeply engaged in a context; therefore, it is a process of mirroring oneself as immersed in a culture. This theoretical framework is embedded within my identity as a Colombian and Latin American in London. Having lived through the Colombian conflict and Peace Treaty, as a migrant in London and as a Latin American woman, my memory is deeply rooted in my reflections and in the campaign to recognise Latin Americans in London.

This chapter is structured around overlapping research questions: 1) How do the productions of representational systems create memories to enhance the sense of belonging? 2)Which mnemonic devices do diasporas use to recreate their places of origin in the global city? 3) How do these devices acquire value? I address this by looking at the role of transcultural interactions in the production of Latin London memories. By doing so I analyse the work produced by Latin Elephant for whom I worked in the past and which allows me to reflect on my contributions to the narratives of Latinidad in London. Later on, I analyse the role of the Southwark and Haringey archives in the construction of a sense of belonging, and the impact of archival categorisation for migrant ethnic communities, which links to the triggering of the counter-memory movements by Latin American Women in London which I address via the analysis of the film *Salsa Fever* and the work of Latinidad LDN, bringing to light answers to research question 7)How are Latin American women challenging/resisting gentrification in London? The above research questions enable me to examine the role of remembering for the communities that are experiencing a sense of loss and for imagining an urban future, and foster my argument on the role of visual culture for the

50 YEARS OF HISTORY IN THE ELEPHANT AND CASTLE SHOPPING CENTRE

FIG.1. La Bodeguita y El Costurerito (1992) by Patria Román-Velázquez. Dossier My Latin Elephant

Latin American community in London as women-made and transcultural.

Memory is an individual and collective process; it is usually related to traumatic experiences such as conflict or post-conflict realms that allow the individual to reflect on the situations. Memory studies have often been focused on Global North traumas such as the Holocaust, the First World War, and the USA and Vietnam War (Bond and Rapson, 2014; Erll, 2011). Yet, there is scope for memory to be considered an instrument that triggers a sense of belonging and construction of home within the migrant condition. Several scholars have addressed the topic of the Latin American population in the USA. For instance, Walter Mignolio's (2009) reflections on the notion of Latin American migration as a space to do *border thinking*, to accept that categories separated from European modernity allow for the reproduction of a sense of belonging outside of a colonial system, a central process to encounter the locality and create an identity from there, asserting the appearance of labels such as Latin Londoners. On the other hand, the work of Patria Román Velázquez (2017) illustrates how the complexity of Latin American studies refers to a historical, ideological, and geographical concept that cannot be reduced to one meaning. Acknowledging the complexity of the term is crucial to dig into its landscapes of memory and focus on its cultural impact on migrants in London.

Memory for Latin Americans has become an activist tool, with images used as a device to denounce human rights violations and articulate the aftermaths of political turmoil. As stated by Michael J. Lazzare in *The Memory Turn* (2017), the southern cone (Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay), before evolving into a politics of memory, "could no longer ignore the calls for memory, truth, and justice originating in activist culture and academic spaces" (p17). Therefore, approaches such as commissions of truth, reparations, diasporic-exile groups, and activism of memory started to flourish. In Latin American studies, memory is a highly political term that implies social turmoil, resistance, and reconciliation processes. Memory work travelled up from the southern cone to the north of Latin America, and countries such as Colombia are embracing processes for the construction of memory that have their basis in communities of artists and creative people. Another example is the proliferation of museums of memory in the largest Latin American cities; for instance, the Museo Casa de la Memoria in Medellín produced a vast recompilation of testimonies of people who suffered from the legacy of Pablo Escobar and the so-called drug war (CNMH, 2016).

The memory landscape in Latin America is a battleground; we struggle to produce a clear image of who we are in the global north, so our memory is a melting pot of politics, media, art, and academic research. Defining the concept of Latin London's memories is a chal-lenge as it links to conflict, violence, exile, migration, and the construction of a diasporic community. It is concerned with traumatic collective and

individual memories of repres-sion across the continent. Memory is a political tool that uses the image as a device to con-sider democracy, an instrument of the state, but also to denounce abuse and violence and trigger a commonality and conviviality amongst migrants. The production of memory in Latin American studies is linked to a subversive academic group of people mostly in exile and diasporic conditions (Lugones, 2003; Escobar, 2012; Mignolio, 2007); it means people who have had to leave their countries to be able to produce knowledge reflecting on Latin American social turmoil. This dynamic has been strengthened since the 2000s in the southern cone, whereas it is just beginning to intensify in Colombia and other tropical countries. Everyday life reflections have been recent additions to the study of Latin Amer-ican memories, as it is possible to produce knowledge and reflect on situations when the turmoil has passed or when away from it.

The first attempt will be to focus on remembering, as the narratives of the past configure where we are in the present and create alliances. As Astrid Erll describes, "´remembering´ is a process, in which ´memories´ are the result, and that ´memory´ should be conceived of as an ability. Memory itself is, however, not observable. Only through the observation of concrete acts of remembering situated in specific sociocultural contexts can we hypothesise about memory's nature and functioning" (2011, p89). So, memory is particularly linked to artistic practices, creative industries, and aesthetic experiences as evocative tools. In that process of remembering, observation of available data produces meaning through the circumstances of the present, "an expressive indication of the needs and interest of the person or group doing the remembering in the present" (Ibid). In that sense, memory studies directly produce dynamics for the present and future of contemporary societies; it is how the past knits the future as we analyse it.

One of the critical components in detaching or triggering remembrance is nostalgia. It is an emotional place that locates the mind into a frame of time that no longer exists, as a necessity of going back in time but realising that impossibility. It directly relates to the idea of home; as Susannah Radstone (2011) argues, it can reproduce the concept of home in different places, and it triggers the construction of new dynamics of the home; the feeling of nostalgia contributes to the building of companionship. Memory moves within mul-tiple fields as complex constructions via objects of remembrance or shared cultural codes, as named by Stuart Hall (1997). London offers a place where you can find spaces to over-come trauma related to memories from home and create a future for more pleasant memories.

El Costurerito y *La Bodeguita* were one of the first pop-up stores owned by Latin American migrants, which started to proliferate in Elephant and Castle in the early 1990s. These pictures [Figs.1 and 2] were taken by Patria Román-

FIG.2. La Bodeguita y El Costurerito (1994) by Patria Román-Velázquez

Velázquez in 1994, the scholar who coined the term Latin-London in her now well-known work *The Making of Latin London* (1996). The picture [Fig.1] celebrates the 50 years of the Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre and the first appearance of Latinxs in the area. The Shopping Centre –in terms of Whiteread (2007)– was a big container of *stimuli* that reawakens the sense of belonging and familiarity in the context of London. The image was taken 30 years ago. Now, there is a whole new population of second and third-generation migrants that can also relate to the area as the place where their parents took them to show them a glimpse of their homeland and their identity. It is crucial to acknowledge that within the Latin American identities, there are divisions –as exposed in Chapter One– identities measured by the impact of colonisation. Labels such as *mestizo*, *mulato*, and *afro* are a selective range of racialised identities that have had different experiences depending on their intersection with race, gender and power. As a result, the waves of migration are typified by different roles that migrants might be able to occupy within the migrant condition affected by their migrant routes taken into the Global North. Latin Americans that inhabited and inhabit the area of Elephant and Castle are usually working-class, low-income migrants who work within services, hospitality, and the cleaning sector, and of course, those running businesses in the area. Although the area is visited by diverse Latin American people/members of the community, it is usually the activists, academics, and working class that are in contact with the idea of Elephant and Castle as a Latin American hub.

The former Shopping Centre was a crucial space for generating levels of remembrance. Since its demolition, Latin American communities in London have been at risk due to the lack of representative spaces. There are places for new interactions, but certainly not a node as big as the Shopping Centre was. *Élefan* –as pronounced by Colombians in the area– is a holy and sacred space for constructing and representing the transcultural Latin Londoner's identity flourishing in the city. The community has become a sacred space; in the landscape of memory, it is a place of thoughts and remembrance. However, it is now in constant threat as it has been losing its place and has a continuous sense of instability.

Susannah Radstone's work on Transcultural memory argues how memory is located in particular geographies (2011, 2000). The construction of stories in specific sites creates a mycelium that connects migrants to their homelands, nourishing new paths for the construction of a transnational network. Memory is for the migrant to experience the lives of the past in the present; the territories and practices we left are reproduced via mnemonic scaffoldings in the places we inhabit in the present. It also allows for the possibility to think about the future; it is a transition within multiple fields, as are photographic repre-sentations, as they will enable us to travel within different geographies.

FIG.3. La Fogata (1994) by Patria Román-Velázquez

1.1. TRANSCULTURAL MEMORY

As discussed in previous Chapters, London allows for the production of transculturality as a global melting pot of different traditions, cultures, and social dynamics. This process offers a production of society, allowing fluid relations *beyond* and *across* nations. Welsch (1999) foresaw the future of the society not as isolated islands but as collective activities of interpenetration and associations, particularly within the urban realm.

As mentioned above, memory plays a crucial role in the panorama of transcultural interactions. Amongst the stimulus that awakens reactions, the act of remembering is manifested within the mindset of a diasporic community via their encounters with others, and by doing so, it produces collective memories. Transcultural memories are loaded with much more information through a sphere of thoughts connected to diverse geographies, enacted within the everyday life in the migrant condition; different nodes of events that coincide in the same geography create transcultural memory. One of the critical characteristics of transcultural memory is dislocation; where the subject is located and where they feel might not coincide, though the space where the remembering action takes place elicits the production of transcultural interactions. A key component of transcultural memories is collectivity, as it allows a dialogical dynamic

to appear within the mental condition of spatial disjunction and dislocation.

Furthermore, transcultural memory as a practice intersects power relations involved in constructing a network for meaning-making. As Brunow (2015) explains that the cultural memory of migration navigates between the national and transnational borders and goes beyond ethnicity and national identities. In the words of Astrid Erll:

> (...) 'transcultural memory' seems to me rather a certain research perspective, a focus of attention, which is directed towards mnemonic processes unfolding across and beyond cultures. It means transcending the borders of traditional 'cultural memory studies' by looking beyond established research assumptions, objects, and methodologies (2011,p9).

There are triggers in the process of remembering as migrants, impacting how the past is spoken about and how it can change the present. In this case, Stuart Hall (2014) and Paul Gilroy (1993) have discussed the impossibility of going back home, as to a place one left as that place no longer exists; it is here where transcultural memory embraces its meaning as the interweaving of times and places that create a new way of narrating human experiences in the neoliberal paradigm. For second-generation migrants, the homeland is always an imagined place that has become real through narratives representing what they have been told. The homelands are a production of the imagination.

Annette Kuhn (2005) and Astrid Erll (2011) argue about how crucial it is to go beyond methodological nationalism, not having the nation-state as a unit of analysis, but to turn memory studies as an act of unearthing shifting structures of nationalism into new ways of understanding memory as a place with no borders that suggest the personal and public spheres intersect and fold into each other. It extends beyond the personal (personal, familial, cultural, economic, social, historical), not forgetting the system we are immersed in, to consider the dialogical dimension of memory. Here, it is crucial to refer to Erll's (2011) concept of *Travelling Memory* as the circulation and the generation of memories through media and the movement of people across borders and territories. Erll draws on Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne- Atlas* in its reconstruction of European classical antiquity, the East and the Renaissance, and its cultural meanings; she focuses on the movement, migration, and symbolic travels of objects across time and space with particular attention; it is argued that it can be conceived as the first transcultural memory display, "(...) the incessant wandering of carriers, media, contents, forms, and practices of memory, their continual 'travels' and ongoing transformations through time and space, across social, linguistic and political borders" (ibid, p11). Warburg was a pioneer in exposing a tool to think about visual associations and their cultural significance.

Nevertheless, it is crucial to avoid ethnic minorities' essentialism as it has to be situated in knowledge. The cultural circulation of memory has to negotiate its border that is "more material and legal in nature" (ibid). Memory cannot be conceived without the socio-political context; there is a sense of in-betweenness in the analysis of memories that has to be addressed in the light of the freedom of movement and the political implications of a one-person's position in the world.

For community levels and experiences, local memories are nourished via neighbourhood proximity. Familiarity and conviviality allow memories to be constructed and to develop identification with new places, which permits one to feel part of the urban fabric. An urban landscape shaped by regeneration and its fast pace threatens the organic and sometimes slow production of urban memories. As a result, the output of transcultural memory fosters resistance to fragmentation within diasporic formations for meaning-making in global cities.

Indeed, stories and perceptions about neighbourhoods shape and reinforce their identity, but small changes and community-making through creative industries (as seen in Chapter Three) strengthen the sense of belonging and place-making through quotidian places and everyday interaction in neighbourhoods. It contributes to the semiotics of the urban that provides a framework for memory growth, shaping the future and the present interactions, particularly in areas of transition such as the ones that Latin Americans inhabit in contemporary London.

The focus on collective memory and radical imagination is crucial for understanding struggles in place-specific identities, such as Latin Londoners. Therefore, narratives of the local past are enacted by a diverse variety of individuals to create a representation of vernacular urban landscapes that welcome migrants. It is crucial to provide different modes to create integration, which can be achieved via work with transcultural and transnational memory material to produce, research and circulate it will provide points of reference for different groups, not only in the UK but within the whole of Europe.

1.2. MNEMONIC DEVICES FOR DIASPORAS

Memorie, memor, mnome ancient English, Latin and Greek forms to express care, remembering and mindful; to create memory is to produce care. Pierre Nora (1989) in –*Les lieux de la mémorie*- states that memory is place bond, although memory also moves constantly beyond groups. It is a term that covers the circulation of memory, transnational, transcultural and palimpsest dimensions of memory, and how it travels through different aesthetic experiences: arts, diverse media, archives, architecture, and literature. The importance is that humans carry alongside memories, family memories, and homeland memories but also experiences of unpleasant moments that shape our identities and how we act in the present. One of those experiences is migration, which unfolds to create a whole network of memories. Those memories are activated via mnemonic devices, ways of creating tools of remembrance and retention, such as visual culture manifestations. A mnemonic device creates associations that help our brain to travel back and create meaning for the present and actions for the future. Thus, image content travels represented in different media that permits one to read different cultures and social practices. Traumatic experiences become travelling memories; they reinvigorate how we think about memory as a dynamic phenomenon that permits the constant creation and recreation in how we inhabit cities, particularly in migrant capitals such as London.

Memory is crucial to understanding oneself as a social subject, as it is for diasporic communities. The role of memory is to rescue experiences from oblivion and, through reinterpretation, help to create a sense of belonging in the present and project it into the future in order to shape and theorise dynamics of remembering and forgetting. "Telling stories about the past, our past, is a key moment in the making of our selves. To the extent that memory provides their raw material, such narratives of identity are shaped as much by what is left out of the account-whether forgotten or repressed- as by what is told. Secrets haunt our memory- stories, giving them pattern and shape" (Kuhn, 2002, p231). Memory has a formative role in shaping how we remember and, by doing so, how we project into real and everyday life situations. In terms of an urban diaspora, memory helps to imagine and produce the urban future or at least to resist it.

Therefore, women are memory workers of the Latin American community as they have been pioneers in initiatives to campaign for rights and visibility. The role of memory in feminist organisations and scholarship works to bring to light the pivotal struggle of women within Latin America and to support and maintain the diasporic community. Women are at the basis of the politics of what is forgotten and what is remembered. Even though memory has been mainly theorised by white European-based men, in recent years, figures such as Astrid Erll, Lucy Bond, Jessica Rapson, Anne Rigney, Mabel Moraña, Margherita Sprio and Annette Kuhn have been changing this panorama by contributing to the analysis of everyday life, traumatic and emotional experiences. Memory permits us to develop an attitude of inquiring towards the past.

Personal and cultural documents, like those presented in this chapter, provide a repertoire of methods to make sense of the migrant condition in places like the Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre as a familiar urban archive. Through the analysis of how traumatic experiences shaped our everyday life as migrants, via mnemonic devices, we investigate the things we do not want to remember and how we do want to evocate our homeland, and via which visual codes we create shared cultural references that are translated into diasporic communities.

Within the migrant condition, particularly in places characterised as the tropicalisation of London, like Elephant and Castle and Seven Sisters, family is understood in a broader sense. It is not necessarily linked to genetics but to a community; it is an idea crucial as an abstraction for unity. Annette Kuhn (2002) provides the model of forms of belonging, which happens through the work of memory and mnemonic devices.

For any human experience, memory concerns the production of culture through *stimulus* in

the present, triggering the constant knitting of the memory web. Remembering is a collective activity that travels between individual and communal recalling. In that process, images and presentation are crucial for the work of memory; it permits the tracing of clues, signs, and journeys that patch together fragments to create a whole constellation of meaning for cultural identification and production of migrant hubs "far beyond the personal" (ibid, p232).

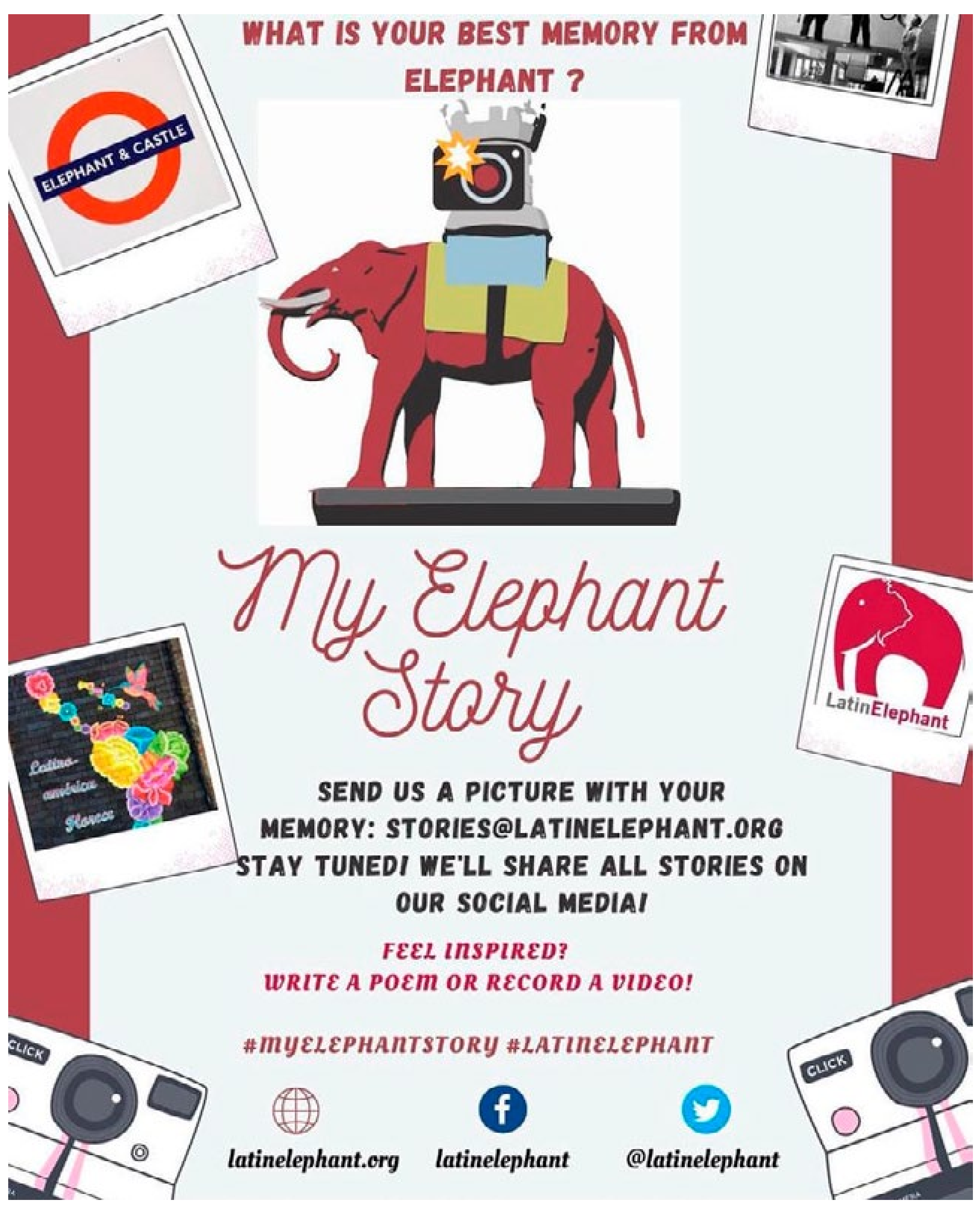


FIG.4. *My Elephant Story* Call for mest memory of Elephant, screenshot.

See more https://myelephantstory.latinelephant.org

1.2.1. *MY ELEPHANT STORY*

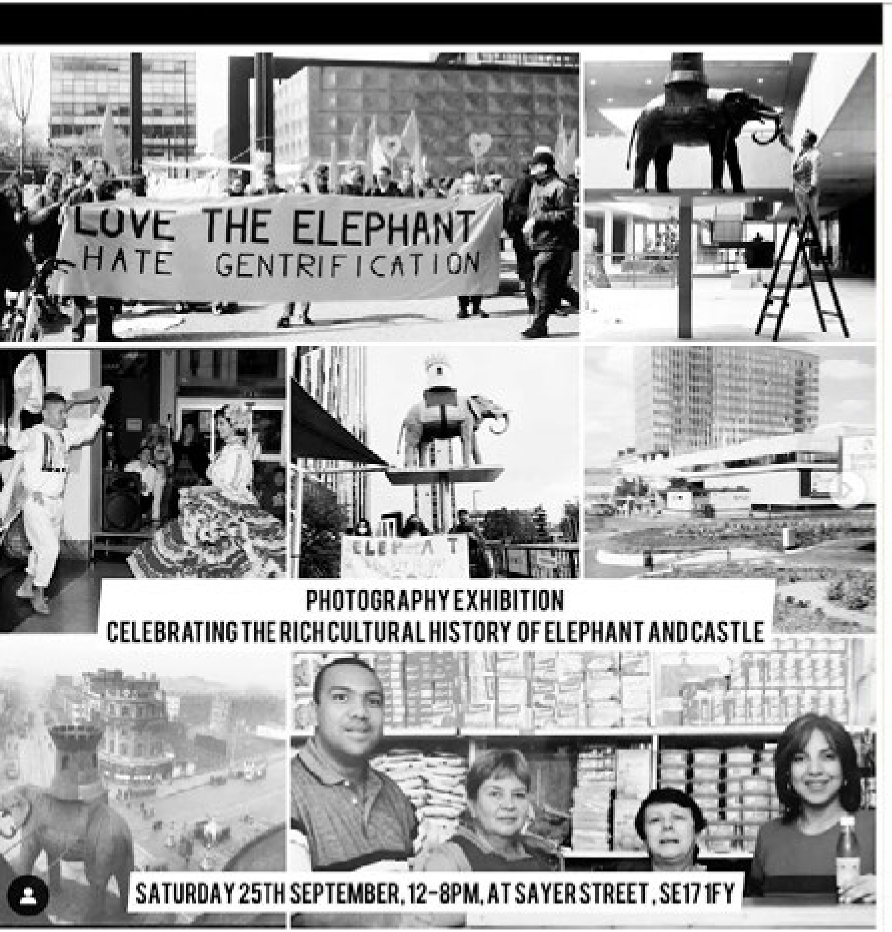
My Elephant Story is a project carried out by Latin Elephant and the community around Elephant and Castle. It started during the pandemic and called for the submission of artworks, photographs, tweets, videos, poetry and stories related to the Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre. It aimed to create an archive before the place was demolished on the 24th of September 2020. During the summer of 2021, the images and stories gathered were exhibited in FLAT 70, an art space for the Elephant and Castle community that is located on Sayer St, where the Heygate Estate used to be, as part of their advocacy work to visualise the community that lost its childhood home. The work is also available on a website curated by Latin Elephant. This project is an essential account for the community around the *Élefan* –as they call the area- as it aims to retain the character of the place as a space for migrants, as a space for gathering that is passing a phase of relocation and transformation. Latin Elephant aims to produce a positive outcome from this challenging displacement process by emphasising the process of integration and creating pedagogies that allow visualisation and appropriation of the changes in the area by the older communities. The project aimed to co-create these memories with local people, to reproduce and put on display local knowledge. They aim to challenge the narrative so people see that the community is still active there (Interview with Santiago Peluffo, 2021).

FIG.5. *My Elephant Story* Website, screenshot Intro.
See more https://myelephantstory.latinelephant.org

FIG.6. *My Elephant Story*y Website, screenshot Intro.
See more https://myelephantstory.latinelephant.org

FIG.7. My Elephant Story Website, screenshot artworks. See more https://myelephantstory.latinelephant.org

FIG.8. *My Elephant Story*, exhibited at FLAT 70 in Elephant and Castle, Sayer Street. End of Summer 2021



_flat70 ...

_flat70 We're throwing a party and you're all invited

It's almost one year since we said goodbye to Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre and to mark the occasion we've teamed up with @latinelephant & @run.dem.crew to bring the people ELEPHANT & CARNIVAL a day long FREE street festival to remember the Shopping Centre's history and celebrate the resilience of our diverse community.

Expect to see:

- 'My Elephant Story' a photography exhibition that reflects 50+ years of cultural diversity of Elephant & Castle
- A walking tour to highlight the new relocation sites and the traders that remain in the area
- Four Latin and Caribbean Dance Groups that will perform live
- Live Radio interviews, talks and speeches
- Food and drink by local traders
- Activities for children

Bring your friends and family down and celebrate &

Les gusta a **latinelephant** y **88 personas más**

SEPTIEMBRE 17, 2021

Añade un comentario... Publicar

FIG.9. *My Elephant Story*, exhibition at FLAT 70 in Elephant and Castle, Sayer Street. End of Summer 2021. https://www.instagram.com/_flat70/

The construction of the human sense of belonging is directly related to remembrance, and images are imperative for reproducing values and experience, the journeys, the arrival, the exodus and the home. The sense of space and identity is linked to photographic representations of the migrant experience. These images are an assemblage of memories and minds remembering their place of gathering to feel their homelands. It is a palimpsest of memories, layer after layer of relocation and finding belonging; it represents the collective migrant consciousness. A depiction of the migratory experience of not belonging anywhere, neither from here nor there, meaning that identity is often fragmented and pieces stay in the process of travelling between places. In London, there is usually a constant desire for the homelands, but the homelands are alive, it is a place that is also changing and transforming, and it won't be paralysed in the time since we left. So, the homeland won't be the same if we go back.

Latin Elephant's approach was to contact people close to the area and the Latin American community to share their memories and the impact of the former Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre in their lives. The stories are curated into different topics: Photos, Artwork, Tweets, Videos, Stories, and Poetry, and it also presents the project Walking the Elephant. It is a digital archive that contests many manifestations and representations of the Latin London community as a transcultural approach. Most of the work presents the importance of the Shopping Centre for the community. It reflects the uncertain situation for the community now following its demolition - as there is no clarity about the future or the present. For example, I learned how to find former shops and services such as La *Tienda Latina*, *La Bodeguita*, services provided in Spanish, or a place to gather and feel at home. The Shopping Centre was the heart of Latin Americans in London, a place for second and third-generation migrants to connect with Colombia, Ecuador and other Latin American places. There is a sense of nostalgia and hopelessness in the London urban future for the Latin Americans;

> *Elephant and Castle has always been home*
> *And the shopping centre….a second home*
> *A crumbling beauty A sanctuary for our community*
> *What will be home without its pink elephant and tower?*
> *(Munu & My Latin Elephant, 2020)*

For instance, the poem Pink Elephant by Adama Munu presented the Shopping Centre as a second home; as expressed in the poem, it was a sanctuary for the community. It facilitated the lives of many south Londoners and allowed them to be closer to the city centre. The last phrase of the poem takes me back to the fact that The Shopping Centre was painted pink around the 1990s, and that was when

Latin Americans started to reunite around the area as a community. The colour pink has become a featured symbol of the area, as seen in the Latin Elephant graphic's identity and other campaigns around the area (35%, Up the Elephant). It was strikingly used in some of the revitalise and redevelopment campaigns used by Southwark Council and the builders too [Figs. 9, 10 and 11]. What this tells about London's urban regeneration plans is that often phallocentric regeneration schemes erase the importance of protection, care, and compassion, most notably how they forget the neighbour and contribute to the creation of financial scapes that translate into massive vertical tower blocks which, become assets of offshore companies around the globe, managed from in The City of London (Oswald, 2017; Kern 2021).

My Elephant Story project collected stories representing the importance of transnational connections. I contributed with these collages [Figs.10, 11, and 12] as part of my work with Latin Elephant. This work builds on my archival research in the Southwark archives (which I will present in detail in the next two sections), and on my experiences as a Latin American woman in London, with a strong sense of attachment to Elephant and Castle. This text accompanied the collages entry for the project:

> Como lo muestra el collage, para mí Elephant es conexión, nos transporta de Los Andes al Popocatépetl y de allí hasta Tierra del Fuego. Es el lugar que me permitió conectarme con Abya Yala y entender la importancia de trabajar en comunidad (2020).

It translates: the collage depicts Elephant and Castle as a connection that transported us from the Popocatépetl to Tierra del Fuego (Mexico to Argentina); it is the place that allowed me to recognise myself, to connect with Abya Yala –as mentioned in the former chapter- and to work with the community. A collage is an assemblage of memories, a creative approach to knowledge (Klanten, 2011; Elizegi, 2019). Collages embody an effective way of communicating memories, which broadens our understanding of urban imaginations. These collages are shaped and influenced by autoethnographic research and nourish my argument on how visual culture plays a fundamental role in the community of Latin Americans in London, particularly in the context of urban planning and decision-making taking place in the area of Elephant and Castle while this project was unfolding. This visual reflection helps to navigate urban knowledge aiming to stimulate conversations and inspire acts of transformation– and, in doing so, uncover the hidden meanings of memory.

These assemblages of images and archive materials in the collages represent Latin Londoners' memories. They allude to the impact of urban dynamics in constructing the diasporic identity. It is a reinterpretation of the official

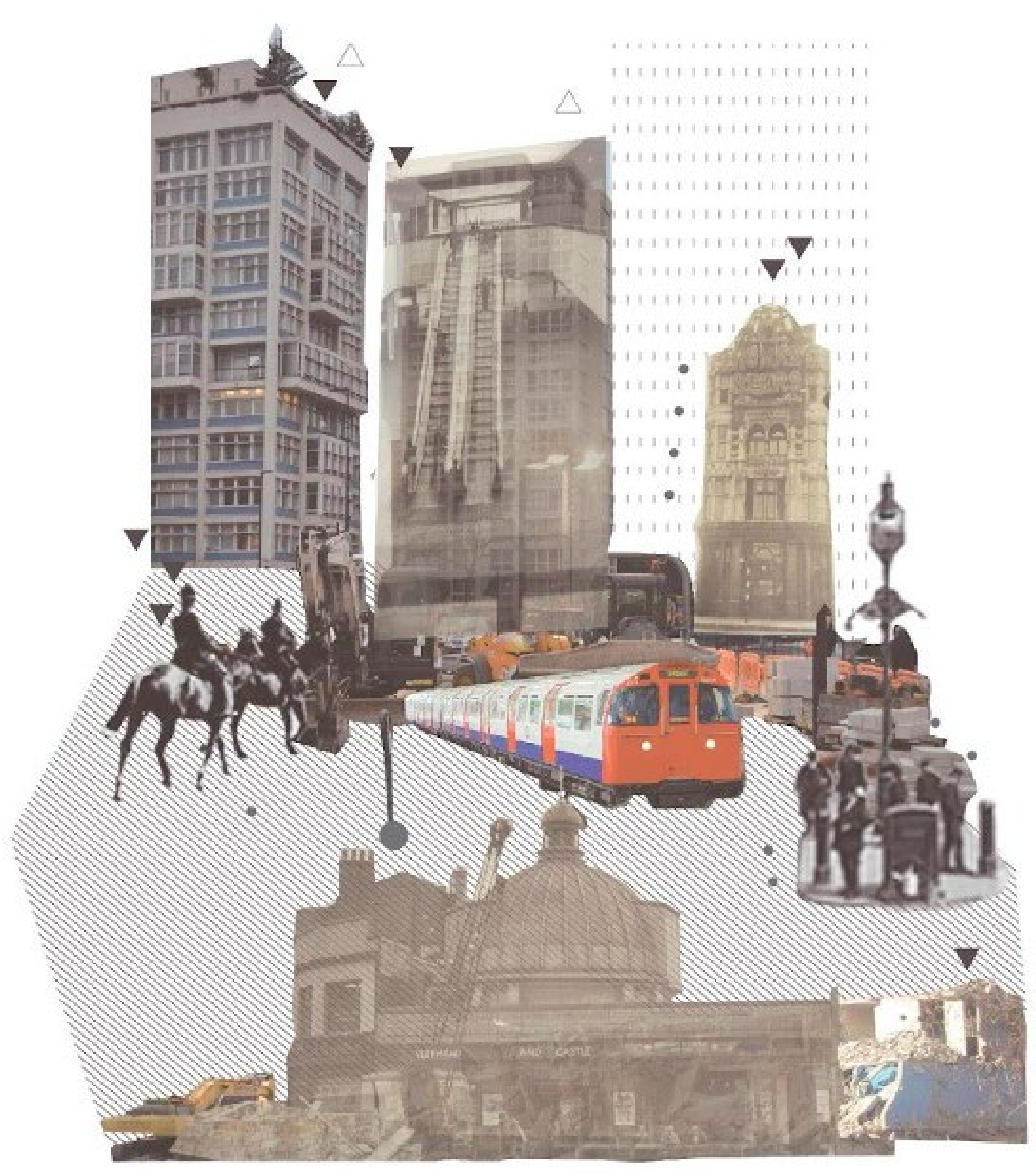


FIG.10. *My Elephant Story*. Collages Verónica Posada Álvarez

FIG.11. *My Elephant Story*. Collages Verónica Posada Álvarez

FIG.12. *My Elephant Story*. Collages Verónica Posada Álvarez

archive material that is a retelling and reproducing of new regimes of urban development that are becoming traces of dust of a community in the centre of London. Similar to other dynamics such as the Italian diaspora in Clerkenwell that have dispersed across London and feel fragmented, although there is a catholic religion issue at play with Italians in Clerkenwell, it is also an example of how London's economic urban dynamics push communities to the margins and make everyday life gatherings much more difficult (Sprio, 2013, p64).

Those images represent how memory works in subjective fragments and a superposition of encounters and realities that can be read on many different levels. For instance, in [Fig. 10] there can be seen traces of the stairs that used to connect with the Bingo Hall, an important place for the former Heygate Estate retired inhabitants, as for the older members of the Shopping Centre community; it is vanishing as The Shopping Centre did. It also depicts the constant production of urban memory in the area as it references how the area was after The Blitz, as it was deeply affected and transformed its social fabric for the years to come. In collage [Fig. 11]. There are traces directly related to the layers of Latin America, a sign saying *Macondo* can be read, and it is a direct link to Colombian Magical Realism and literature that also expresses how the urban dynamics of Latin Americans in London work, creating realities through improvisation. It can also be seen from the images of the first Colombian café, *La Fogatá*, already mentioned in this research and the first meeting point for the tropical people in this northern land. The sign of the butcher's *La Fama* can be identified too, one of the few businesses still in the same place –Elephant Road, by the arches-. This is also the case for *La Bodeguita*, which is no longer there and is waiting to be relocated into a new space. *La Bodeguita* was one of the main places that represented transculturality and the Latin Londoner Identity and used to be an essential place for gathering. Finally, [Fig. 12] is an intense representation of what is at stake with the loss of The Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre, showing the cranes constructing a homogenised city. Erasure takes place in vanishing minority ethnic groups, which are also a contested category as it is a political language that creates exclusion and categorisation. The collage [Fig. 12] also depicts trajectories and difficulties experienced in migrant communities that try to create places in the global city, particularly in super-diverse areas. That is a place shaped by complex interlace in Vectovec's (2007) words and Mette Louise Berg's (2019). It is a portrait of the diasporic dynamics that aim to create urban memory within different patterns of financial global spaces, failing to recognise its contribution to urban developments.

These collages play a role in the narrative of how gentrification affects migrant communities in

ELEPHANT & CASTLE ha sido como mi hogar acá en Reino Unido, fue en medio de sus instalaciones donde he forjado una gran historia; con mi llegada a Londres en el año 1985 sin dominar el idioma y en el proceso de mejorar mis habilidades en la profesión de la belleza, el Elephant Castle me permitió abrir un salón, que fue una de las primeras tiendas en el Centro Comercial y de todo Reino Unido. Ya son 28 años de historia, donde he vivido innumerables momentos de mi vida junto a mis dos familias, la conformada con mi hijo y la otra que llevo en mi corazón formada por todos los integrantes de este hermoso lugar. Como todo en la vida, evoluciona y cambia para progresar, nosotros no seremos la excepción LUCY'S se muda a ELEPHANT ARCADE, y solo me queda decir gracias a Dios por todos los momentos vividos y que perduraran en nuestros corazones. Gracias ELEPHANT & CASTLE.

Photo of Lucy

FIG.13 AND 14. *My Elephant Story*. Stories, Lucy

London, highlighting the sense of loss and the lack of understanding of urban policies on the meaning of place. The collages are an Arts-based research approach that contributes to the unfolding of my research question on Latin American women resisting gentrification in London, as it is a visual activism and form of resistance that liaises with Latin Elephant's project as an active player working towards a recognition of Latin Americans in Elephant and Castle. The collages are a transcultural representation, which incites the examination of visual layers, and finding of hidden meanings, such as where Latin Americans come from and which places feel closer to them in London (see for example the Colombian flag in Fig. 11); the diverse character of the city is not only a matter of its urban infrastructure but a matter of transcultural formations that as these collages reflect [Figs. 11 and 12], are at risk. The collages function as a palimpsest visualizer for the unseen migrants, the political outcome of the images (Azoulay, 2008) within this interwovenness of formal and informal worlds.

On the other hand, as individual memories, the approach of the Latin Elephant helped address subjects related to the areas and their work; they sought inhabitants who wanted to share their relations to the place, as it is a door for South America. In the Photos section, a range of activities related to the community and the construction of the place as a hub. The curatorial work included its early days, The Latin Corner, the Traders that created the history and sense of home in the area, the campaign, the farewell and finally, the Latin Elephant and the container of work and memories.
These pictures of Lucy [Figs. 13 and 14], one of the prominent women leaders representing the Latin American entrepreneur community in Elephant and Castle, make her path visible in the area. Lucy owns Lucy's hairdresser, one of London's first Latin American/Colombian Women hairdressers. Cathy McIlwaine mentions that "85 per cent used these markets in order to visit cafes or restaurants, buy food and ingredients, send money home, or use hairdressers" (2011, P197). Nowadays, with the relocation, Lucy is in the Elephant Arcade and manages to be one of the businesses that was relocated. However, she mentions that she is not doing the same and that not as many people know her since moving. In general, it was easier when she was inside the shopping centre. Lucy mentioned that for the last 28 years of her life, she has been in the Shopping Centre and is now changing. She will always be grateful to the community in Elephant and Castle.

Another example is Diana from *La Bodeguit*a, who shared these images for the My Elephant Story project [Figs. 15, 16 and 17]. Diana has been in the area since 2000 as part of the family business, although she has always been the face of the company. She used to own

FIG.15. *My Elephant Story*. Photos: Latin Corner, Diana La Bodeguita Early Days

FIG.16. *My Elephant Story.* Photos: Latin Corner, Diana La Bodeguita Early Days

FIG.17. *My Elephant Story*. Photos: Latin Corner, Diana La Bodeguita by Ingrid Guyón 2015

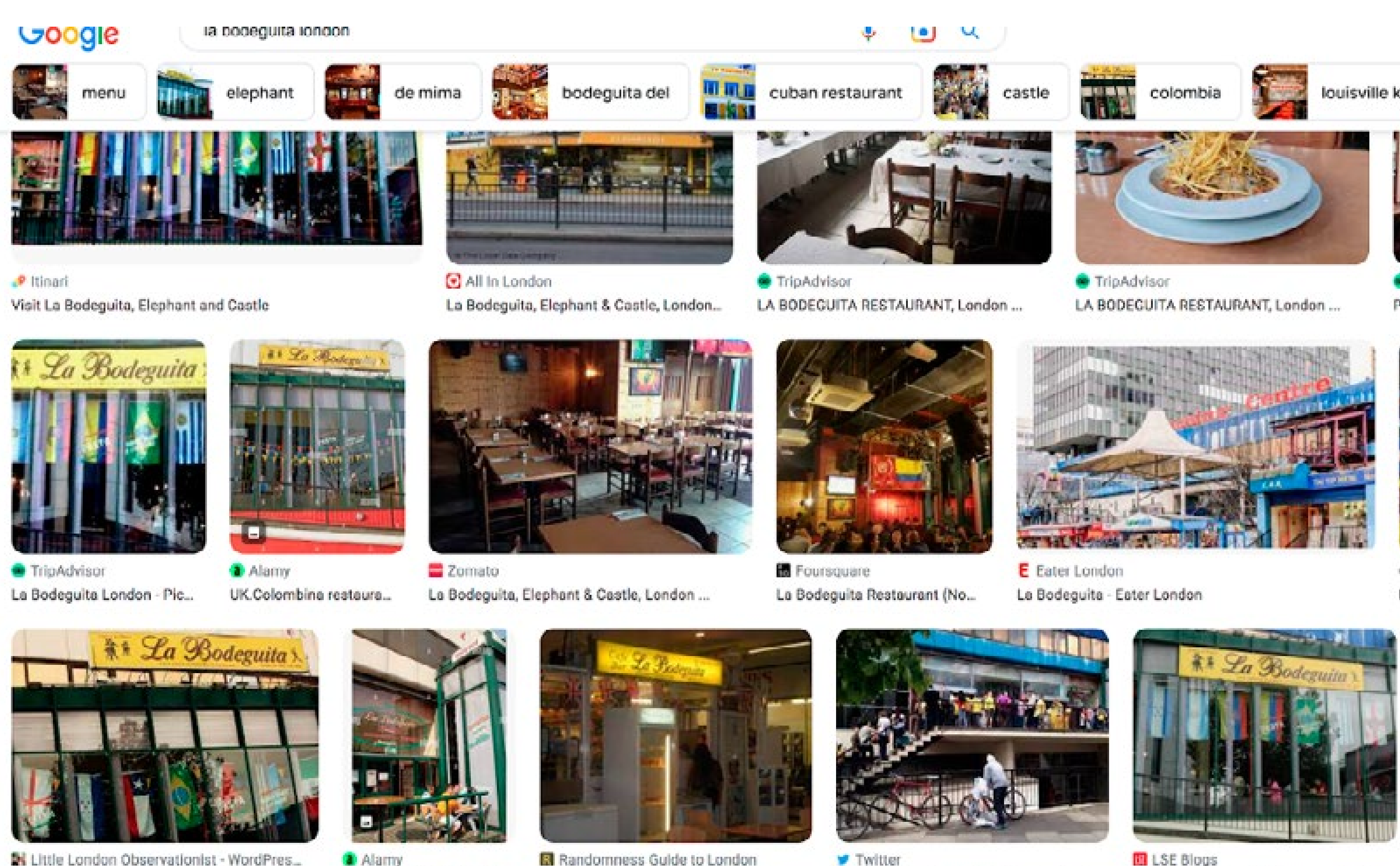


FIG.18. La Bodeguita Elephant and Castle, Google search

FIG.19. *My Elephant Story*. Photos: Latin Corner, Diana La Bodeguita Early Days

La Bodeguita Café, inside the shopping centre, and *La Bodeguita* Restaurant Bar y Café with entrance through the Shopping Centre and Walworth Road, at some point one of the principal places that Londoners used to go dancing, partying, and drinking. If you were a South Londoner between the 2000s and 2015, you would go to *La Bodeguita*. Diana has been relocated to Castle Square and changed the business name to Coma Y Beba Café, but she mentions that it has been challenging as her clients think she is gone, and she turned from being very successful with two businesses to none. So, after a while there, she decided to sublet her Unit in Castle Square and try to make an agreement with Lendlease for a bigger place for *La Bodeguita*, but as I write in 2023, an agreement has not yet been reached. In September 2023, Diana and her brothers opened *La Bodeguita Deli* on Walworth Road, a very small unit compared to what they had before. Diana also mentioned that developers did not fulfil what they promised, which has been financially challenging for them. Combined with the pandemic, they almost did not survive. As stated in Latin Elephant's recent report *Migrant and Ethnic Economies in Times of Crisis: Displacement, Brexit, COVID and Cost of Living* (2023), Castle Square is poorly designed, it does not look at the street, accessibility is not taken into account, and there are no signs that indicate where traders have been relocated, this is work that Latin Elephant has carried out.

> Notably, the planning application submitted by the Developers to Southwark Council in 2018 for the temporary relocation site Castle Square did not have lifts for people with disabilities despite having three storeys. In response to this initial plan, traders made clear that a lack of accessible infrastructure would not only make their relocation spaces prohibitive to many existing clients but that it was generally unjust and inequitable. Only after community and advocacy work by traders, residents, and local groups was the scheme amended to incorporate two lifts for disabled people and other significant improvements for traders displaced from the Shopping Centre. It is essential to highlight that Castle Square continues to fail to meet traders' needs and was never intended to (Ibid, p18).

It is striking how the local authority does not worry about preserving the memory of the area and the places that make it essential. However, they recognise the area of the London Latin Quarter as a strategy for marketing instead of caring about its communities.

The basis of memory for a diasporic community is representation; the ideas that portray a community are also their realities; representation within the realm of memory informs the process of remembering in the way that it shapes everyday acts of resistance; that is, representation creates memories. The Latin American community is very well organised and has a clear set of values for fighting against gentrification. Still, at the same time, it represents the amorphous form that is the

Latin American Identity. It is a community that organises its members into specific patterns of living in London that allow it to be shaped and have a form, too.

In this picture [Fig.19] Diana is depicted with her brother, both founders of the family business; it looks like a typical Colombian *Tienda De Barrio* –Local Shop– all the products that you expect to find, but also the spatial arrangement of the products, the wood materiality of the counter and the friendly faces behind the counter consuming their products makes one immediately relate the visual content to Colombia. For any migratory experience, it is crucial to visualise layers of meaning that allow you to connect with home and transport your familiar stories. Sadly, as new demographics arose in the area, the disconnection with Latin American spaces started to thrive. It no longer feels as familiar and welcoming as it used to, particularly in Castle Square (Latin Elephant, 2022).

The work that Latin Elephant has been conducting as an agent to preserve memory has been crucial for the community and the broader London history. It is a very complex area now as its centre has been taken out, and the wider community, not just Latin Americans, is trying to sort out how to link again and create new linear connections. Through the advocacy work the organisation does, in the report (2023) on Migrant Economies and the impact of the Covid crisis, Brexit crisis and redevelopment crisis, the charity created several policy recommendations for the inclusion of BAME communicates in regeneration processes and amplifies the voice of the traders and gathers testimonies of the declustering and fragmentation that the community of retailers faced. They advocate for policy building that needs to create resilience and create changes in partnership with local communities. The council must respond to this crisis with an intersectional approach to inequality. In the report, Latin Elephant found how regeneration is an ongoing crisis, and the work of representation does allow for remembrance and reality to reconnect and find ways to develop new urban links; they also underlined the level of instability and uncertainty the wider community is facing and how the relocation processes amplified the impact of all the on-going crisis. It is crucial to create projects that visualise the community as they have the challenge of the changing demographic in the area.

2.

ARCHIVES: THE LEGACY OF THE EMPIRE

The UK has one of the world's largest repositories and archive records, directly linked to its construction of the Nation and the colonial past of the British Empire. The circulation of information in Britain –and overseas territories– has been linked to the archives and their capacity to professionalise and organise information in a way that has shaped the landscape of collective memory. As discussed by Stoler in *Along the Archival Grain* (2010), colonial administrations were producers of damaging social categories. Papers and photographic material classified people and triggered certain sensibilities around communities; they exceeded the empire's power to reinforce imperial sovereignty. By conditioning people's ideas to intangible realities, an ontology of empire was created –the idea of the real status of things existing in a context. Besides, colonial power abuse could go on without having the tools to name it, situations that could not yet be articulated or understood by the inhabitants of a specific colonised place; how the archive was handled has allowed those realities to flourish. Stoler proposes the term *Minor History* for processes of re-writing and fixing certain degrees of unfreedom through the uses of the official archives; this practice is what I will discuss in the next section.

Small communities in global cities are often invisible. However, the use of official sources to create counter-narratives is a tool for visualisation and recognition. "Photographic archives are themselves dynamic organisms which are active in time and space, which may change their roles and character, and which must be understood in terms of their materiality and social biography" (Caraffa, 2014, p9). For the idea of a nation and the building of a sense of belonging, the photographic archives have shaped people's imaginaries and identities; they have framed the collective memories of nations around the globe, yet they remain an almost inaccessible space.

In the UK, the National Archives (TNA) are responsible for safeguarding Public Records as part of the Public Records Act 1958. The local archives

or the Record Office –part of the TNA– hold information about the local areas. In London, these offices are divided into boroughs, usually located in their local library. Those spaces gather photographic collections with a chronological theme, such as Redevelopment, BAME Communities, Families, and Cultural expressions. The power of categorisation, in many cases, is given to the archivist.

In the light of JM Schwartz (2014), photographic archives serve as a source of visual coherence and develop legitimisation for communities, in this case, diasporic ones. To find our communities as part of an archive permits us to create and foster feelings of belonging, but at the same time, it visualises a wrong idea of BAME communities and produces exoticisation through labels such as Ethnic Groups and Immigration, names that emphasise the condition of outsiders [Fig.20].

As previously expressed in this thesis, in terms of Benedict Anderson (2006), the idea of a Nation serves forms, images, and imaginaries as a group of people that will never entirely meet or reunite. The word usually refers to a massive number of people who share an imagination of the nation; it is constructed in time and space and through representation, in which the archives play a crucial role. Archives help to delimit the geography of dominion, particularly in colonial times. Nowadays, many new archival forms help to tell an alternative story of what a nation is. Yet, the geographical borders still control freedom of movement, and the colonial traces are evident in how certain representations are legitimised. Imagination helps us to reconfigure and understand the past within the present to create acts of belonging through the archive, allowing new kinds of readings to appear.

Ann Stoler (2019) refers to the archive of the avant-garde, the archive as the ruler, a role given during colonial governance. Even though Latin America does not have a colonial history with Britain, the coloniality of borders and the politics of a hostile environment against migrants problematise and re-produce colonial logic; the right to the city and the right to a space is constantly violated; that is why the need for representation, via the use of official sources such as local archives, is extremely urgent (Heimer, 2022). We might have to consider a contemporary use of the archive *elsewhere & otherwise*, that is to say, in an expanded territory and through politics of co-production of knowledge. For Stoler, an avant-garde archive transcends any classification and divisions, "resist the nomos of classification, the norm of order, transgress the restrictions and constrictions that common sense so easily imposes" (2019, 1:27). The archive holds an unexposed scaffolding that can be reinterpreted and used in favour of untold histories and local communities, contained in the layers of meaning of those processes, particular of urban change.

2.1. SOUTHWARK ARCHIVES

During this research, I visited the Southwark Archives in London several times and talked to some of their archivists. To access the archive, one must contact the archivist via email, describing the research and what you intend to find in their collection. The archives are part of the Southwark Heritage Centre, which has a brand-new Elephant and Castle redevelopment site. Nonetheless, it is essential to note that when I visited the search room, it was at Southwark Library, which is close to Borough tube station, at 211 Borough High St, London SE1 1JA. By the time you arrive, the archivist has already taken out some folders for you to look at. First, you need to sign a consent form and pay for any images you intend to photograph; this covers private studies and non-commercial uses only.

To read the archival material, I have decided to unify the images per theme in a series of three compilations –several images together– regeneration, community, and Elephant traders/retailers. I wanted to use the essayistic methodology I have used before to give the material a critical reading. It is a process that creates pieces of text regarding the political changes in the area and analyses the creation of a new built environment that is now in place for entirely new demographics; it shows a community that has been struggling. This essayistic compilation reproduces a discourse from the

COMPILATION 1, REGENERATION

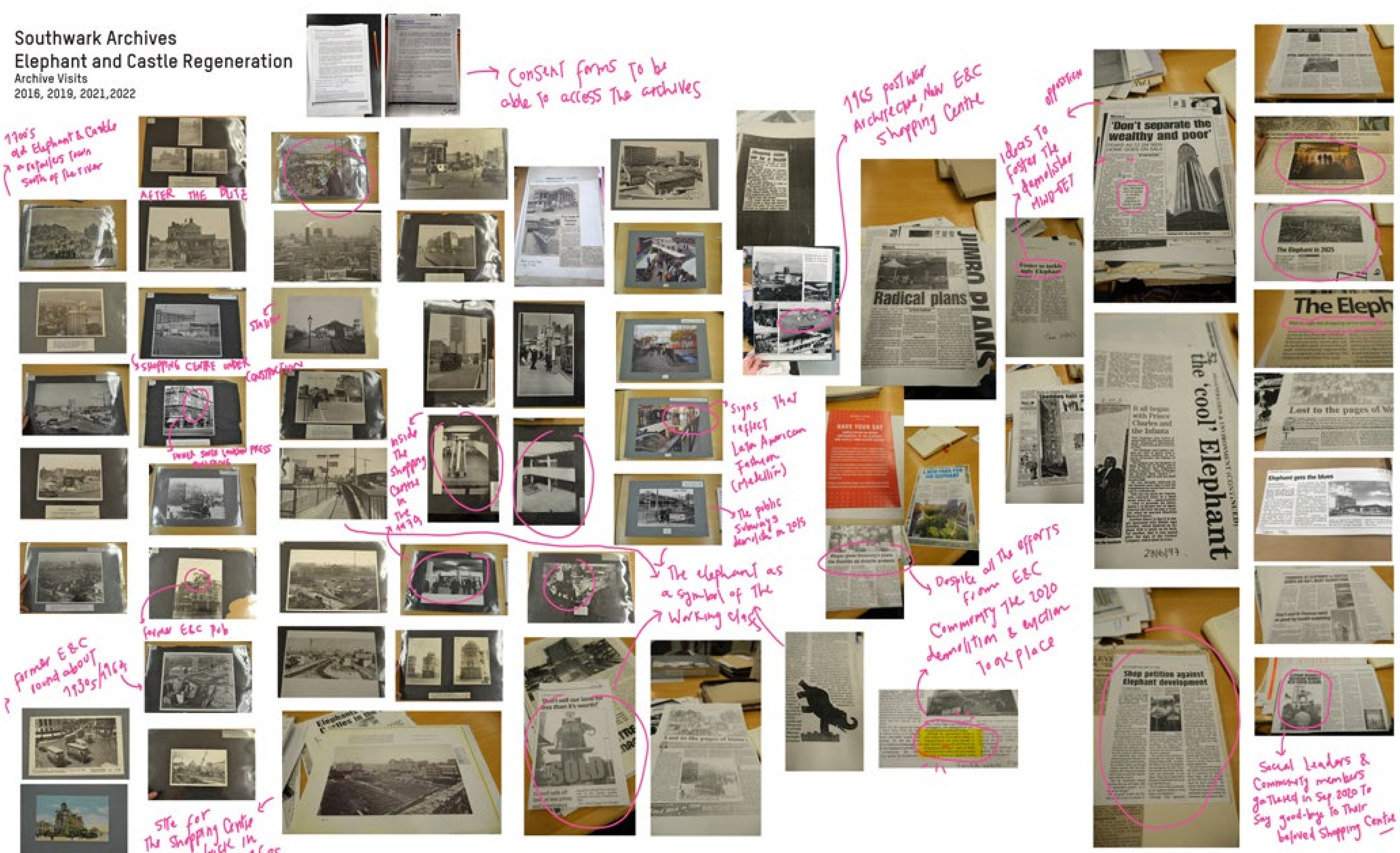


FIG.20. Compilation 1, Regeneration. Southwark Archives. Verónica Posada Álvarez

Latin American subjectivities and wider retail communities in London, exploring the use of the archive as a counter-narrative source.

This first compilation of images [Fig.20] shows visual information on urban change in the Elephant and Castle area from archival visits in 2016, 2019, 2021, and 2022. It aims to trace the beginning and the end of the Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre as the birthplace of the meeting point for Latin Americans in London. Several images show the site history of the Elephant and Castle area, from a 1786 drawing by Thomas Rowlandson, passing through the Latin American retailer's shops like Medellin/Fashion signs, and The Elephant statue with the *Howdah* to future imaginaries for the area in 2025 commissioned by the developer Lend Lease.

Many of these images show petitions and opposition from the local community to the most recent redevelopment. As can be seen in the bottom right of the compilation, one of the newspapers stated 'Foster to tackle ugly Elephant' or 'Ugly red Shopping Centre' that was the narrative constructed around the redevelopment, selling and representing the place as a rundown space that needed intense modification, terms to justify its demolition. Ultimately, the 'most financially efficient' proposal for the Council was demolishing the shopping centre (2021). That action has implied the intangible removal of demographics, changed the dynamics of an area and fragmented its communities.

Nevertheless, as the years have passed, generations of activists keep fighting, and many old inhabitants have been displaced or have come to encounter new barriers and changes; some of them assume the responsibility to keep the memory of the areas, and others may benefit from the new opportunities brought about by the radical change in landscape. Yet, as the new development has social and infrastructural effects, it also has emotional impacts, particularly for migrants and communities who lived and visited the former area. From the fragments of this archival material, this compilation represents the memory of the place, with its voids and its remains; the materiality of these images unveils the landscape of memory rooted in this regeneration process.

As the local historian Stephen Humphrey mentioned, the Elephant and Castle's importance "has been lost to the pages of history" [Fig.19]. It can be read in the newspaper where Humphrey has written that the heyday of the Elephant was between the 1880s and the pre-war era. After that, the constant reconstruction of the place and the post-war architecture that forgot human scale made the area undesirable. The area was built on a human scale that was approachable from the street and allowed integration, but the Shopping Centre was developed as an isolated space. Yet, migrants managed to make it a home to reproduce their cultural manifestations in London.

Richard Sennett argues in *The Craftsman* that "urban planning, like other technical practices, often zeroes in on needless complexity, trying to strip away tangles in the street or in public space" (2008, p225). These projects, spearheaded by large urban developers, forget about the complexities of life on a smaller scale, of the universal in the microscopic. They rush in their search for verticality, generating blueprints for homogeneity worldwide. Construction work in the global capital has focused on investing in intangible and delocalised spaces without concern for the living beings who have created habitats. Global cities are a contradiction in that their codification and recognition as 'global' would not be possible without migration, and yet they eventually expel those who are not part of the high-flying financiers; this leads to cities becoming large spaces of anonymity and disappearance. An anonymous body is a body that has lost its identity. The geographies of the archives allow for researchers and practitioners to engage with the materiality's of human geography, reimagining and resurrecting the content of the archive itself. As I have demonstrated with my work Spores –See section before this Chapter–.[63] The images on this compilation have been used to initiate a new reading into the historical sources of the Elephant and Castle area, through a visual activist approach that aims to sustain a counternarrative record on the impact of this redevelopment for Latin American migrants in London. Practising research with the archive, allows reconnection that foster *mobilised identities* to act towards recognition, as I have explained using the concept in Chapters Two and Three. In conclusion, this compilation depicts as Sarah Mills (2013) named it the 'imaginative geographies' of the archive triggering a performative dimension with a political concern.

[63] This is taken from my work Spores, exhibited at Ambika P3 for Cloud Sediments Group Lab which was part of Ecological Futurisms CREAM. March 2022.

COMPILATION 2, COMMUNITY

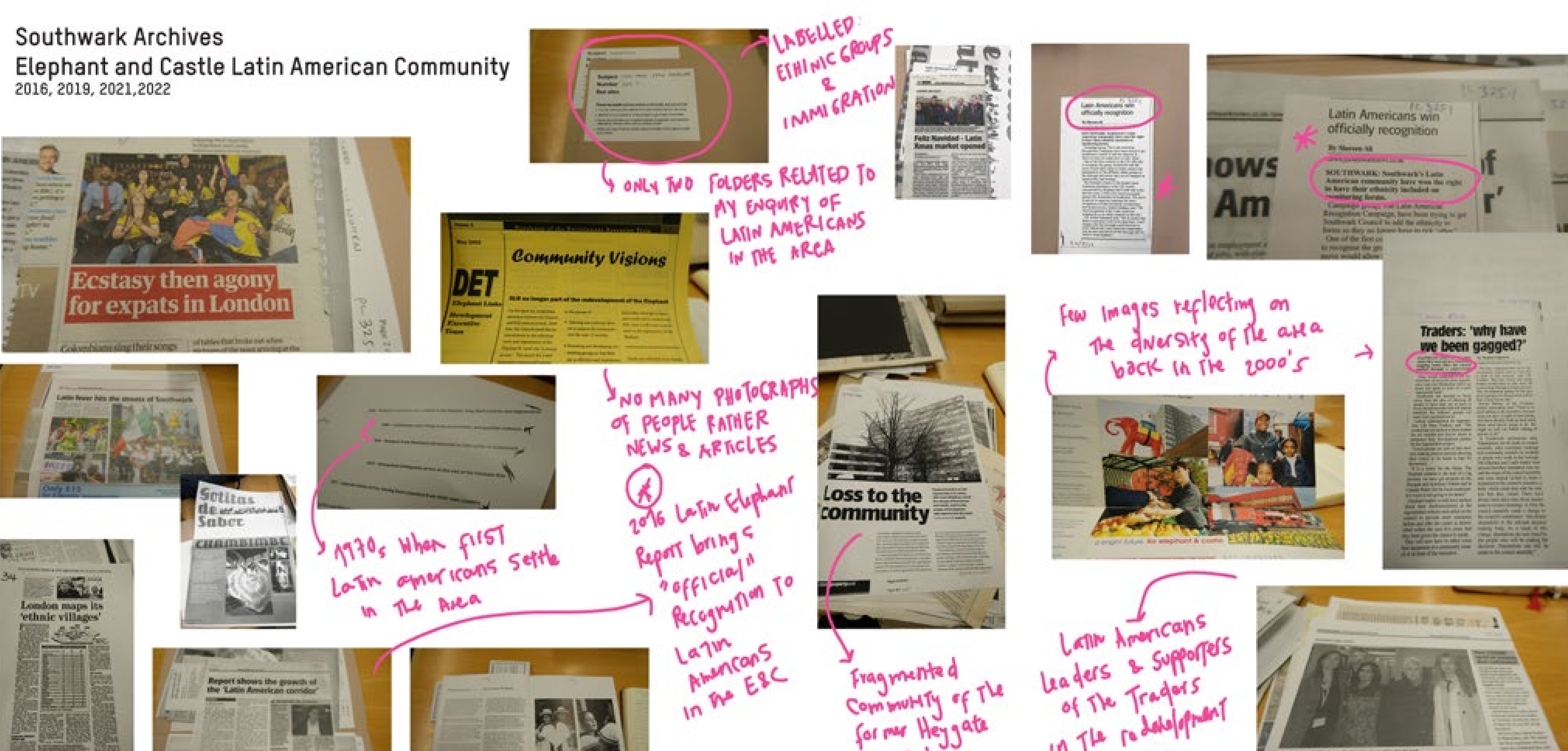


FIG.21. Compilation 2, Community. Southwark Archives. Verónica Posada Álvarez

This compilation, which I named Community, has at the top an image of the folder labelled as Ethnic Groups: Latin Americans –written with a pen, as some kind of improvisation. Community here is framed in terms of ethnicity, the term is understood to derive "from the Greek word ethnos, meaning a nation. Ethnicity is a multi-faceted quality that refers to the group to which people belong, and/or are perceived to belong, as a result of certain shared characteristics, including geographical and ancestral origins, but particularly cultural traditions and languages" (Bhopal, 2004, p443). It is crucial to emphasise that sometimes ethnicity is taken as race. Whereas ethnicity is linked to cultural and social values, race, from its scientific use, is linked to physical characteristics. In contemporary debates, the term race/ethnicity is used on most occasions, which is compelling for this research and its complexity. The UK census of 1991 was the first to include a question on ethnicity. Since then, it has been well-known how confusing the labels and categories of the National Ethnicity Statistics have become. This problem has been exposed by some scholars (McIlwaine, 2011, 2016; Roman-Velasquez 2021, 2014; Cock, 2011), and activist organisations, such as LAWRS, LAWA, CLAUK, IRMO. Many groups are not included, lacking a sense of being considered, such as Latin Americans. The use of the term in this archive re-enactive historical categorisations and allows for engagement to look critically at their collection, as this compilation.

Within the migratory experience, the categorisation into an ethnic or racial group becomes more evident. Sharing the desire to belong to the host place, some groups or communities have managed to fit in and stand out in this city, for instance, the Bangladeshi in Brick Lane, Chinese in Leicester Square, Italians in Bloomsbury, Indians in Wembley/Harrow, etc. These groups have become stronger through their identification with race and ethnicity categories. As well as counterbalancing beliefs, perceptions, or attitudes, which deliberately code a person and are anti-racist or anti-ethnic, having the possibility for a migrant to identify with a group is itself a paradox. It is possible to feel a sense of belonging and shared values from the place of one's origin, whilst simultaneously and consequently feeling alienated due to marginalising societal discourses that box us into minority groups, forcing us to have to fight for our rights, for visibility and acceptance constantly. The compilation [Fig.21] –on the left-hand side- shows London Maps and its ethnic villages, and it triggers a sense of spatial separation of geographical delimitation where migrants are the biggest population. As it is shown in the newspaper, they are segregated from 'white areas'.

It can also be seen in the recognition of Latin Americans in the South and the population growth in the area, which celebrated the community and thrived in the presence of the former shopping centre. Southwark Council bap-

tised the area as 'the London Latin Quarter', which commoditises the concept of ethnicity and attracts global financiers and multinationals to invest in the area without recognising the real Latinx community. These images and newspaper titles are contrasted with a more contemporary picture of the community: the leaders Patria Román-Velázquez and Silvia Rothlisberger are photographed with former residents of the Heygate state, and Lina Usme from Extra Media 1 at a council meeting as part of the endless battle against the expulsion of traders from the Shopping Centre carried out between 2015-2020, key figures in the ongoing struggle against the expulsion of Latin American retailers from the area. The archive, then, turns into an ethnographical source of historical events (Mills, 2013).

In conclusion, these images are a representation of a community that is struggling to create a place of belonging. For instance, the photograph of people with the Colombian football team t-shirt shows how football has always been a massive part of the national identity of Latin Americans, particularly Colombians. Even more so, in the migratory condition, football (a controversial subject due to the gender imbalances within this sport and the provocations and violence that hooligans spread throughout the world) becomes an excuse to reunite with fellow members of the diaspora. The compilation also emphasises folkloric manifestations such as dance with typical clothes and festivals like *El Carnaval del Pueblo*. These events exhibit a need to show and display how exotic and different the Latin American population is, presenting themselves as a source of entertainment, in a way to be integrated although not entirely accepted within the British culture. Unless through a transcultural label such as "British Latinx" (2023), as expressed in the Podcast Episode from this research called British Latinxs with aka La Ms Lopez, a concept that encompasses a broader understanding by expanding the identity experience via different languages and cultural backgrounds, yet with the ability to create belonging in London as a city that provides that transcultural dynamics, plus a gender political strategy to aim for a non-binary language.[64] Overall, this compilation named Community highlights the possibility to connect the archive to active realities and changes in the city, via fragmented pieces of representation that can bring to light hidden voices and discourses in the processes of urban planning.

[64] Listen to the full episode here https://open.spotify.com/episode/23Wev1AudzxR-dTPQClCEZu?si=7c55fcbdef0d4ee3 And see Appendix B

COMPILATION 3, ELEPHANT TRADERS: CASTLE SQUARE, ELEPHANT ARCADE AND ELEPHANT MAGAZINE

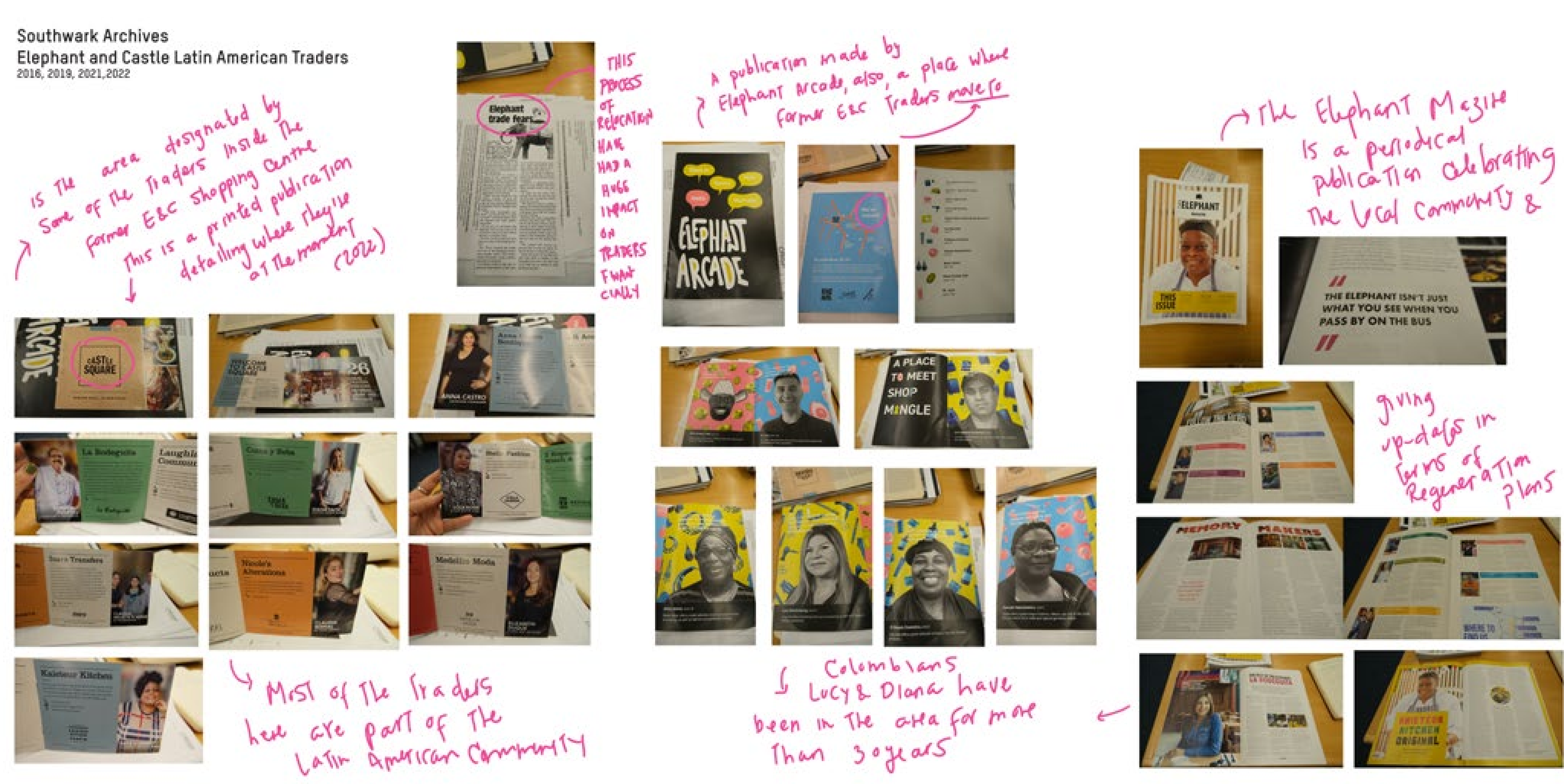


FIG.22. Compilation 3, Traders. Southwark Archives. Verónica Posada Álvarez

This third compilation collection [Fig.22] of the material found in Southwark Archives represents the impact of the process of relocation within the traders due to gentrification in the area of Elephant and Castle. As stated in *Narratives of Migration, Relocation and Belonging* (Roman-Velázquez & Retis, 2020), "Manifestations of Latin urbanisms relied on national identity markers based on sounds, smells and colours" (p152). Developers and councils in London have identified these characteristics of ethnic minorities and have re-designed them in terms of these three factors to keep galvanising the communities for more attention and to commercialise the migratory identity. This practice is not entirely a bad thing. Still, it needs to include and consult the real community, that is to say, the retailers that have inhabited the place for over 30 years, the second and third generations of migrants, and the community in general that cannot afford the prices of the new redevelopment, which is now directed to central London economies and has forgotten the importance of informal migrant economies for the authenticity of places.

As can be seen in the Compilation, in Castle Square, 26 traders from the former Shopping Centre have been relocated, but it is a temporary space. Located in Elephant Rd and Ash Avenue in the middle of the new building, it is spatially disorienting and has fragmented the community. There are no signs that indicate where the traders have been relocated or any indication around the area. From the station to Castle Square, the place is not inviting, does not face the street and has an inefficient design; in fact, the proposal for the place was even inaccessible for wheelchairs. The developers gathered the former retailers from the Shopping Centre on a printed and digital publication, which is advertised as "familiar faces... new places" on the left side of the compilation. It features some of the oldest members of the retailers' community, such as Diana and Eduardo from *La Bodeguita*, now *Coma y Beba*, Ana Castro Boutique, Elizabeth from *Medellín Moda*, and Claudia from Nicole's Alterations. It indicates their number and what they do, but most importantly, it shows their former clients and the community where they are now. Traders had to go through a very difficult time to recover from the pandemic and the relocation process, there has been a process of recognition in alliance with local charities such as Latin Elephant. For example, they have been doing walking tours with Universities, The Barlett UCL, UCL Geography, UAL Central Saint Martins; walks, open to the general public, have also been organised since 2021 to the time of writing –2023- to let people know that they are still there despite the demolition [See Figure 23].

Similarly, in the middle of the compilation, the Elephant Arcade Magazine features former traders and one of the longstanding ones such as Lucy –addressed in the My Elephant Story section–, who has been in the area for almost

30 years now. Elephant Arcade has some vacant units. The busiest places are the Cowboy Café and Lucy's; those are the only ones with a front view of the street. For the rest of the business, it is difficult as it feels very ephemeral, unfriendly, and uninviting to pedestrians. Yet, the units must remain in this place, and there is no other relocation planned. There is a unit that is allowed to be used for artistic projects. One episode of the podcast Latin London with the Latin American artist Tere Chad was recorded at the arcade as part of a two-week program of pop-up exhibitions in the area; here, we can grasp how London arts and art activation is also responsible for the process of gentrification as I have explored in chapter three.[65] As stated by Andrew Harris (2013) in his work about East London and the London's artistic scene, "It is likely that much of any new cultural activity over the next few years will again be branded and packaged as a willing partner in post-recessionary financial landscapes and new waves of economic expansion" (p33). It is clear that the Elephant and Castle redevelopment entangles the web of art, global financial spaces and London's new geographies, and that is something that can be grasped in this archive as evidence of the historical changes in the area with a particular socially constructed discourse of regeneration.

Finally, The Elephant Magazine Issue 22, Autumn 2021 with Faye from Kateuir Kitchen on the front cover, represents how Elephant and Castle is also a hub for the Caribbeans in the Global North. The Magazine aims to keep the local community informed about the re-development processes. The magazine's first issue was launched in 2013 and was made as an alliance between the Southwark Council and developers, LeanLease, UAL, and TFL. The production, part of the process of section 106 of urban planning policies in London, aims to mitigate the impact of the redevelopment within the community. However, as I have shown in chapter three, this is highly controversial. Around different redevelopment processes in London, there have been many different strategies to avoid meeting the Section 106 requirements, leading to superficial approaches to provide better infrastructure and facilities to communities that have been in place for extended periods (Latin Elephant, 2023). This magazine issue invites people to go inside, and this is also a strong statement about the fact that Elephant and Castle is not just what you see when passing by on the bus. The controversial element of this statement is that it is a place of passage for the majority of Londoners, and it is difficult to get close just by passing; people do not get the notion of the great community that hides behind each wall — before the Shopping Centre was closed entirely to the street, the

[65] See recording session of the episode https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CpD-0DkoCTf4

FIG.23. Walking tour around Elephant and Castle, February 2023, with students from MSc Urban Studies, UCL Geography, for which I am the PGTA (Postgraduate Teaching Assistant). During this walk, we analysed the Urban Memory of the area.
See more https://www.instagram.com/mscurbanstudies/

only places with a view to the outside were *La Bodeguita* and the market. To be able to appreciate the space, people must be integrated into the community and live it in depth; the superficiality of the contemporary urban rhythm is a threat to authentic interactions, much more so now that the place looks like a demolition site and that the train line has become a border that prohibits visibility, stopping the public from seeing what is behind, to the south, which represents South America in London, which is the symbol of the elephant. This archive holds repositories of the effects and memories of Latin Americans in South London. Nevertheless, it can also be read in terms of power and a site of 'selective memory' (Nicholson,2023), whereby Latin Americans have been mentioned only on a few occasions before the Southwark council launched its campaign to recognise the area as London Latin's Quarter.

2.2. HARINGEY ARCHIVES

Haringey Archives are located in Bruce Castle Museum and Archives, North London; they are available to the public by accessing the museum search room. I have been to the archive twice; each time, it has been arduous to find any relevant information about the Latin American community in the area. The compilation [Fig. 24] shows pictures from the A10 road, mainly in the 1970s and the beginning of the 2000s. The A10 is a major road in England. In London, it connects Elephant and Castle to Seven Sisters, a walk that can be done in 2-3 hours. As human bodies, streets communicate and help to build a sense of belonging and strength throughout metropolitan areas. In London, the A10 has started to be associated with a metaphor of Latin America, as it connects the Elephant and Castle area –through the A3– with the Seven Sisters Indoor Market, aka Latin Village/Pueblito Paisa, located in the corner of the A10, West Green Road, and Seven Sisters Road. The former Wards Corner Department Store can be seen in several of the images in the compilation, mainly around the 1970s. Situated on the corner of the Tottenham High Road (A10), this route was a common way out of London, a key commercial high street due to its traffic and hectic life; subsequently, it became a place for retailers to meet and develop communities. The Wards Corner building is an old Edwardian gem, opened as a department store in 1901. The local community has always been

COMPILATION 4, SEVEN SISTERS

Bruce Castle Museum and Archives, Haringey
Seven Sisters Indoor Market Area

Archive Visits
2016, 2021

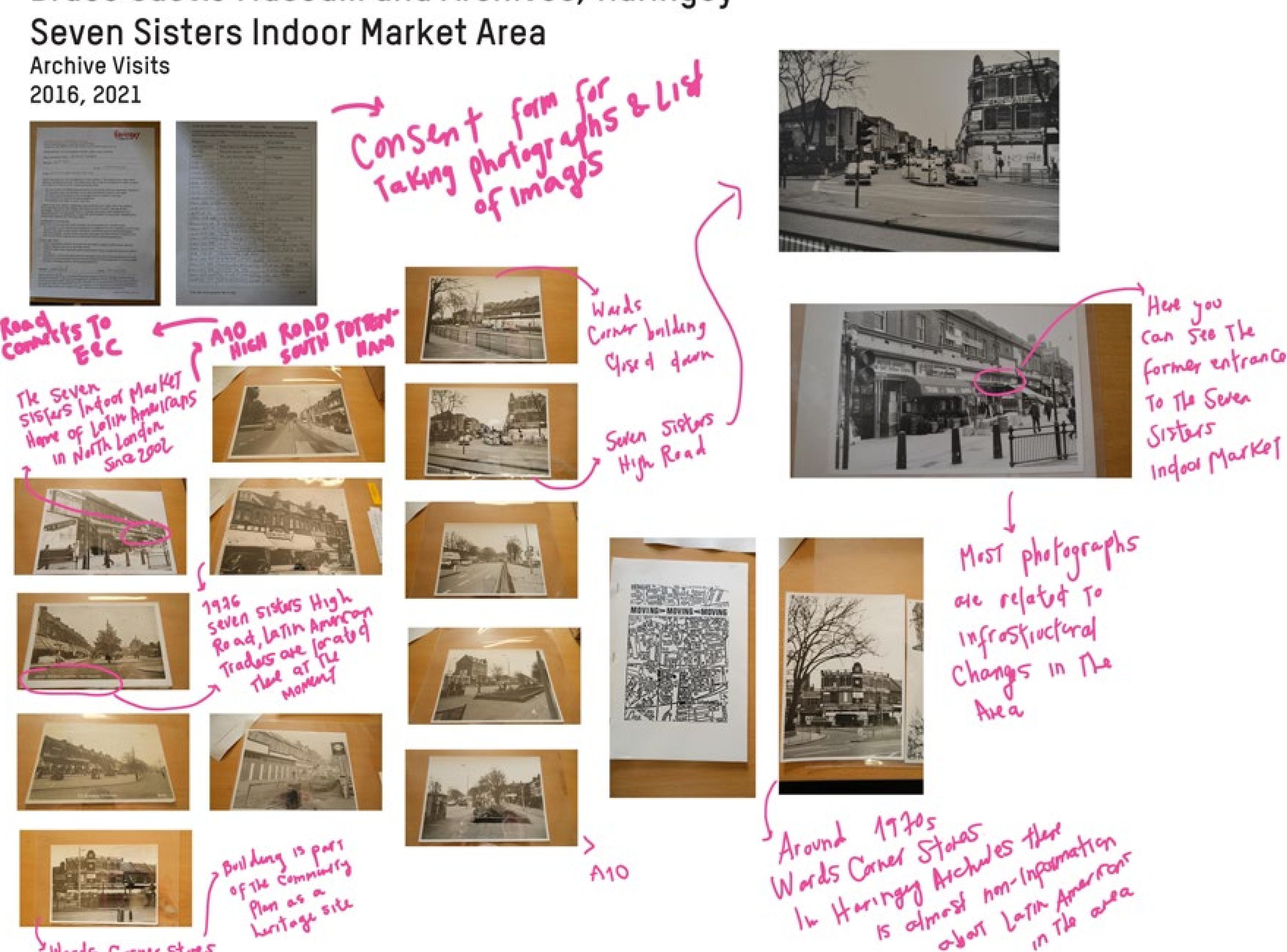


FIG.24. Compilation 4 Seven Sisters, Haringey Archives. Verónica Posada Álvarez

walking towards recognition; since 2014, Haringey Council listed the Seven Sisters Indoor market as an Asset of Community Value, and in 2019, the ONU stated that the redevelopment of the market, dislocating the community, posed a threat to Human Rights.[66]

The fact that accessing Haringey archives is not easy makes the work more complex and difficult to consider as a local resource. It is a closed space, quiet and intimidating where not everyone is allowed to enter, it is in fact a Castle and the entrance if confusing and not very well signalled. In a certain way, it sends the message that you must belong to a privileged academic position in order to be able to navigate local archives and be able to map and interpret the history of the area. As stated by Nicholson, official records are often deliberately hidden or are not interested in recording different aspects of everyday life as they might "deviate from official narratives" (2023, p140). As mentioned earlier archives are highly sensitive spaces that render powerful experiences of place and belonging, they can tell a narrative of what is recognised and what is not by the government or state.

The Haringey Archives is a repository for creating urban memory and triggering belonging. The images presented in this compilation are the traces of a community that is currently fighting to regain its place in the city. It shows how Latin Americans tend to improve derelict places and make them more habitable for communities. This has been proved by many scholars, such as McIlwaine (2011, 2016), Cock (2011), and Román-Velázquez (1996, 2014). As can be seen on the left corner of the compilation, the area of the Seven Sisters market was closed to the public, and it did not invite any kind of interaction. In 2002, when the community started to be noticed, it became a well-known area for Latin Americans and even a destination for people living in other towns around North London. Nonetheless, as highlighted in Chapter Three, global Latin American urbanism has suffered from a form of misinterpretation and marginalisation discourse that dilutes its complexity in the processes of urban planning.

> The shift to a differentiated approach to Latina/o population in urban planning is triggered by a process whereby reduction in public funding has resulted in the partnering of local governments and private developers, subsequently leading to a private sector-led community consultation that neglects the needs and aspirations of the urban poor and working-class migrant communities.
> (Román-Velázquez, 2021, p160)

The problems of urban displacements have been enhanced over the last 10 years in London's urban policies, so it is crucial to look at the importance of organised resistance to

[66] See all the activist work done by Wards Corner Community Coalition, now Community Benefit Society https://wardscorner.org/ourhistory

show alternatives to preserve places such as The Seven Sisters Indoor Market. Visual tools can be implemented to show a wider audience its importance within London. In terms of Ann Stoler (2010) archives are acts of resistance, as one can uncover silences through them. A radical approach to an urban archive can include a community and emphasise the difference between local-community-driven discourses and 'national' ones.

In this compilation, it is evident that most of the photographs in their collection represent the infrastructural changes in the area. Overall, the area is derelict and rundown, and this is a similar visual discourse to the one exposed in the Southwark archives around the Elephant and Castle area. By looking at this archive as an ethnographic exercise, it is evident that the Latin American community has been invisible from the 'official discourse', and a lot of work remains to be done to render this community an essential contributor to the borough. This has been demonstrated throughout this research and will be emphasised in the next section. The Latin American community has been creating its own amateur and community-based representations that are starting to form a community-based archive of manifestation of the Latin London experience, as the archive as a National institution legitimises and represents the invisibility that has –until recently– characterised the Latin American community in the UK. In comparison to the Southwark Archive, which holds some information that can lead you to trace and grasp some of the changes and impact the community has had locally, the Haringey Archives have almost no information about the Latin American community and its social impact on the formation of a diverse borough. I also looked at newspapers, census reports, and magazines from the area, but there was no information about Latin Americans.

An example of these counter-narratives in Haringey is *The Salsa and Samba Shut Down* and The Human Chain, an event that took place in 2017, where the community re-united, showed its cultural value and the importance of this space as a lively neighbourhood. During the event, a long chain of people held hands outside the Seven Sisters Market to call for recognition while others were dancing Salsa and Samba on the High Road. This community is very active; they have engaged with other neighbourhoods and has gained important recognition since its coalition started to work more actively in 2015. The Latin American community is "A resilient community that has organised and demonstrated its capacity to renew, renovate and reinvent itself under conditions of duress and risk of eviction from the very places it helped to revitalise" (Román-Velázquez & Retis,2020, p171). The dispute forcing informal spaces to become formal falls into the privatisation of social practices due to the growth of every space in London as a 'global

FIG.25. Salsa and Samba Shut Down, Poster, 2017. Verónica Posada Álvarez

city' (Minton, 2006). Also, this work provides a glimpse of the feelings amongst traders and residents and shows their desire to keep fighting for their urban revolution (Harvey, 2013). It acknowledges their strong sense of belonging and their fight against homogenisation. My fieldwork research on Haringey archives has proven what Nicholson has suggested as the selective memories triggered by archives as "fragmentary and partial, but also powerful" (2023, p149). The use of research and practice in activating the archives creates a sensible approach that helps to visualise and change the hidden discourses in the superficiality of the archives.

3.

URBAN MEMORY: MAKING PLACE AND CREATING BELONGING

Visual culture can enhance the sense of collectivity and triggers transcultural memories, allowing transnational communities to create an identity that travels from the place of origin to different locations, much like a remittance. As Bond and Craps (2016) mentioned, the mobility of memory is transcultural, transgenerational, transmedial, and transdisciplinary. This is something that I have explored in this chapter through the associations of the construction of Latinidad in London and the *trans*-manifestations of memory. As expressed before, migrant identities are embedded in individual and collective nostalgia that evocates homes, which is re-signified through diasporic communities for which the use of the archive in its broadest sense has been crucial. Urban memory then comes into play as Dagmar (2015) describes: "Processes of remembering are framed by regulating mechanisms which impact on the ways the past is spoken about" (p52), a process of redevelopment of a city, in which memories are multidirectional and mediated by power structures that legitimise what is to be remembered or not in the mainstream discourse, how and why. These processes impact how diasporic communities are spoken about and remembered in different places of global cities throughout the world. The concept of urban memory is a call for uncovering hidden or lost memories via local and community work. In that making, encounters and gathering occur, allowing the construction and dissemination of belonging and the making of place, of meeting points, to create transcultural dialogues where different mnemonic manifestations of life in cities arise. Nevertheless, it is crucial not to essentialise or romanticise memory; categories of gender, race, and class are deeply rooted in the migrant community of Latin Americans in London, and the work of memory must be aware of those processes of uprooting and separation in Latin America which, the diasporic community also carries.

The archives represent the things we want to hold on to and the things we don't want to let go of, but there is always power at play that negotiates that process of remembering. As an urban mechanism to create a sense of belonging, the archives operate across borders, taking place through the movement of people and the crisis of the legal statuses given to people. It reminds us of the persistence of national borders, of legality and illegality that dehumanised people. By rethinking the very concept of scale, we can rethink the experiences of the local, the global, and the regional, from the intimate to the global. The notion of transnationality allows us to negotiate different scales of expressing and connecting through archives as something that unites and bridges borders. Stories from one part of the world can provide a framework for stories from others, such as urban planning practices, providing advice and a place for those groups that do not automatically fit into the national framework. The process of urban memory allows the city inhabitants to create their representation, the way they want to be remembered, and the experiences they value.

In the report *Supporting Migrant and Ethnic Economies Through Regeneration in London: Lessons from Community Research, Activism and Campaigning with Latin Elephant* (Román-Velázquez & McIlwaine et al., 2021), the authors, activists, and community leaders argue that

> 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 among the working poor, economically disadvantaged, and ethnic and migrant groups. Strategic alliances are formed at times of extreme uncertainty (p21).

The communities that sustainably retain their businesses and livelihoods are also forms of archives and live mnemonic devices as if the community is the film or the pixel that keeps the production of images going. Public history has been told in Elephant and Castle and Seven sisters through activism and self-organisation. These elements have triggered remembrance and a trans-generational involvement in the struggle to retain the place.

That is why a counter-narrative of memory generated within the local migrant community is compelled, which I will explore in the next section. These works are testimonies of migrants who have lived in Latin London and ones that challenge the classic local archive's ideas of preserving memories and heritage, as I have exposed in the previous section. As the following two projects will highlight, imagination shapes cities, and through urban memories, towns and places retain meaning. Storytelling practices, such as amateur archives and films, create social transformation; in terms of Christoph Lindner (2018), cities are produced and written by urban practitioners, and in London, most are migrants.

3.1. LATINIDAD LDN

Latinidad LDN is a digital archive created by Lina Caicedo, a British-Colombian born in Cali. Lina came to London in the 1990s with her family. Growing up, she questioned how and why Latin Americans arrived in London. By creating this project, she aims to go beyond the fact that many Latinxs arrive in the city and must learn, adapt, and survive. Lina, as a migrant who arrived at an early age, a second-generation one, created this project with the privilege of knowing the language and having a place in the city from where to look. This project is a production of a Latin American amateur archive.

The amateur archivist could be defined as a DIY persona that aims to maintain and visualise a particular aspect of socio-cultural life. "As distinct from the professional, the amateur archivist can be classified as a pseudo-trained hobbyist who engages with archives by collecting, scrutinising, or disseminating them. There is little to no financial compensation for their work (...)" (Zeleny, 2016). That is the challenge for a project like this, even more as a migrant, it is tough to secure any funding. Lina Caicedo mentioned, "I now find myself interested in how independent, identity-based memory organisations document, shape, and provide access to the histories of minority communities" (2022). Like many Latin Americans in London, Lina realised the difficulty of accessing information about the diaspora in the city. With this project, she addresses social memory, the act of remembering as a healing process, and how to treat the archive with care so it doesn't become a reinforcement of trauma but

instead, a place that triggers a certain sense of belonging. As a Colombian, Lina is interested in how the post-conflict process influences how you see yourself as a migrant, as you can start delving into images of the place you left and reconcile with it. The connection, triggered by the pictures, looked at within safe circumstances, creates a new memory process. It helps to recognise what happened and to create a new reality that makes peace with the past.

Each of the stories is carefully curated. They talk about the lives and struggles of migrants in London, but they also celebrate their presence in the city, such as the first Colombian float taking part in the Notting Hill Carnival procession [Figs.26 and 27]. Thanks to this, two Colombians started to flourish and do carnival artwork worldwide, creating a company called Mandinga Arts.

For Caicedo, an archive is a healing place. As migrants, we are always looking to find places to fit in and expressions of our culture taken with generosity and grace in the host place. We are always finding a way to make ourselves worthy of deserving a place here, of wanting to stay, of having a possibility to do so. Through the images, we allow ourselves to reflect on them and become subjects of desire, of expression, objects to look through, whose stories are narrated from a search to belong in a place, in another language. This amateur archive also reflects on broader London demographics. As an example, see [Fig. 28] this image is from a wedding in Lambeth Town Centre in 1984. It reminds us of South London, particularly Brixton, as the place of the working classes and service providers. As the definitive number of Latin Americans in London is difficult to obtain accurately, the category of Latin population in the whole UK could be as high as double the official statistics. In the UK, there could be around 800,000 Latin Americans if undocumented migrants were included as well as EU citizens; official statistics says that there are 250,000 in the UK and around 145,000 in London (McIlwaine, 2016). Yet, they are likely to be underestimated as many undocumented migrants are living and working in the UK invisibly, and there is also a further problem of how to obtain accurate numbers for Latin Americans as they are not even recognised as an ethnic group, we as Latin Americans usually have to tick the box 'Other' in official government forms.

In the story accompanying the picture, presented by Latinidad LDN[Fig. 28], the boy getting married said he had to work at the age of 14 and had recently arrived in London to support his parents. He used to go to the Clapham Common football team, *La Cancha*, an interesting migrant spot, as stated by Patria Román-Velázquez in *The Making of Latin London* (1996). The football team in Clapham allowed many of the recently arrived migrants to feel at home: "It wasn't just for football, it was also a place where

"Notting Hill Carnival 1992 - Colombian dancers."

FIG.26. Colombians at Notting Hill Carnival 1992

"Notting Hill Carnival, 1992 - performers - Colombian float"

FIG.27. Colombians at Notting Hill Carnival 1992

you could find work, accommodation, share local foods, and also make friends". It was one of the first points of encounter for Latinxs in London as it helped many to find their place in the city. Román-Velázquez explains that the place has been an area of reunion for Latin Americans since the 1980s. "The experience of Clapham Common, thus, demonstrates how Latin Americans have created a sense of identification by transforming part of this park into a very particular venue. This park is a transitory space that Latin Americans regularly transform into a very particular cultural place but at a specific time" (1996, p59). This demonstrated how photography can trigger a sense of belonging through remembering and initiating conversations about migrant places. Representation permits groups to settle and create a network that disseminates recognition and builds community cohesion.

Suppose there is an image of Latinxs as part of an archival collection or an exhibition display. In that case, there is a sense of belonging triggered from the recognition of our trajectories which, threatens the idea that migrants are not welcome, as the hostile environment policies get tighter. In the UK since 2019, there have been increasing policies to make lives for migrants harder, which are mainly targeting undocumented migrants. They have changed restrictions to working regulations, rights to rent, and access to services and healthcare. The Home Office discourse is a narrative that praises the cleansing of 'irregular migrants to make Britain safer'.[67]

For those reasons, in September 2022, Latinidad LDN and LAWRS hosted two workshops [Fig.29] to reflect on memories of Latinidad and its archival material. The outcome of the meeting was a fanzine published in September 2023 [Fig.30 and 31], and it is the first piece ever made by a Latin American community group and donated to be included in the Southwark Archives Collection [Fig.32]. This is a massive step in the recognition process for the Latin American community in London. Currently, we will be in the database of The National Archives, and it will be easier for researchers to access other search portals or information about the community. It is one step that can take researchers and practitioners into the network of Latinxs in London.

The migratory experience is disorienting, from learning a new language to navigating a new city. The warmth that many migrants have found through community projects is highlighted in the visualisation of images that create a process of self-recognition, allowing them to bolster their ego and helping to trigger survival skills. To awaken the ego is also a process that happens through the image, and it can be a positive dynamic for the migration conditions; projects such as Latinidad LDN allow that, and the projects that I will be discussing in the next chapter expose how the self-identification is a mechanism of resistance and reclaiming for migrants rights.

[67] See more https://www.instagram.com/ukhomeoffice/?hl=en

My wedding day, Lambeth Register Office, 30 June 1984

FIG.28. Latin American Wedding, Lambeth

FIG.29. Latinidad LDN and LAWRS Weaving Community Archive and History Workshops

CHAPTER 5

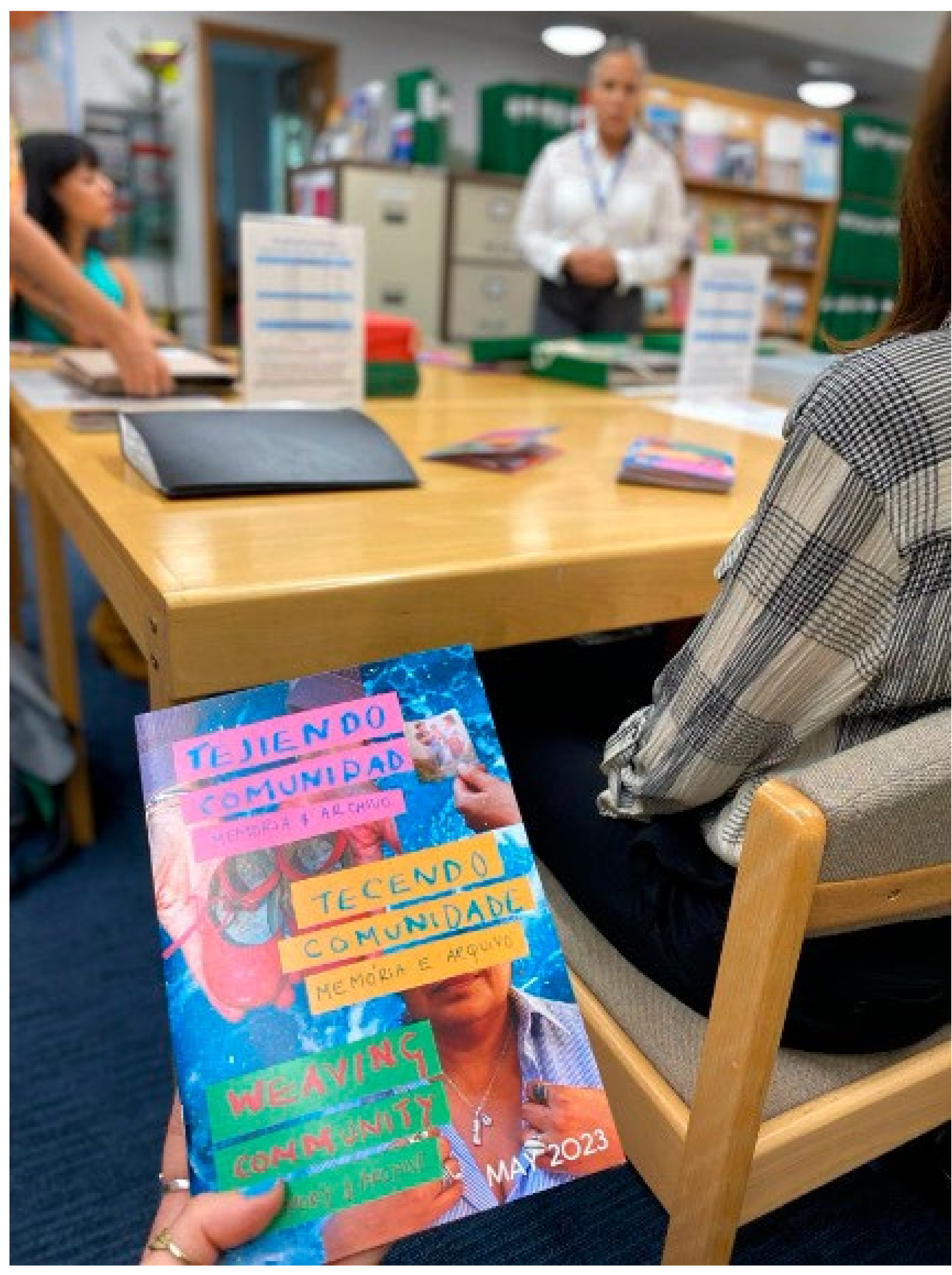


FIG.30. Latinidad LDN and LAWRS (2023). Weaving Community Archive and History Fanzine

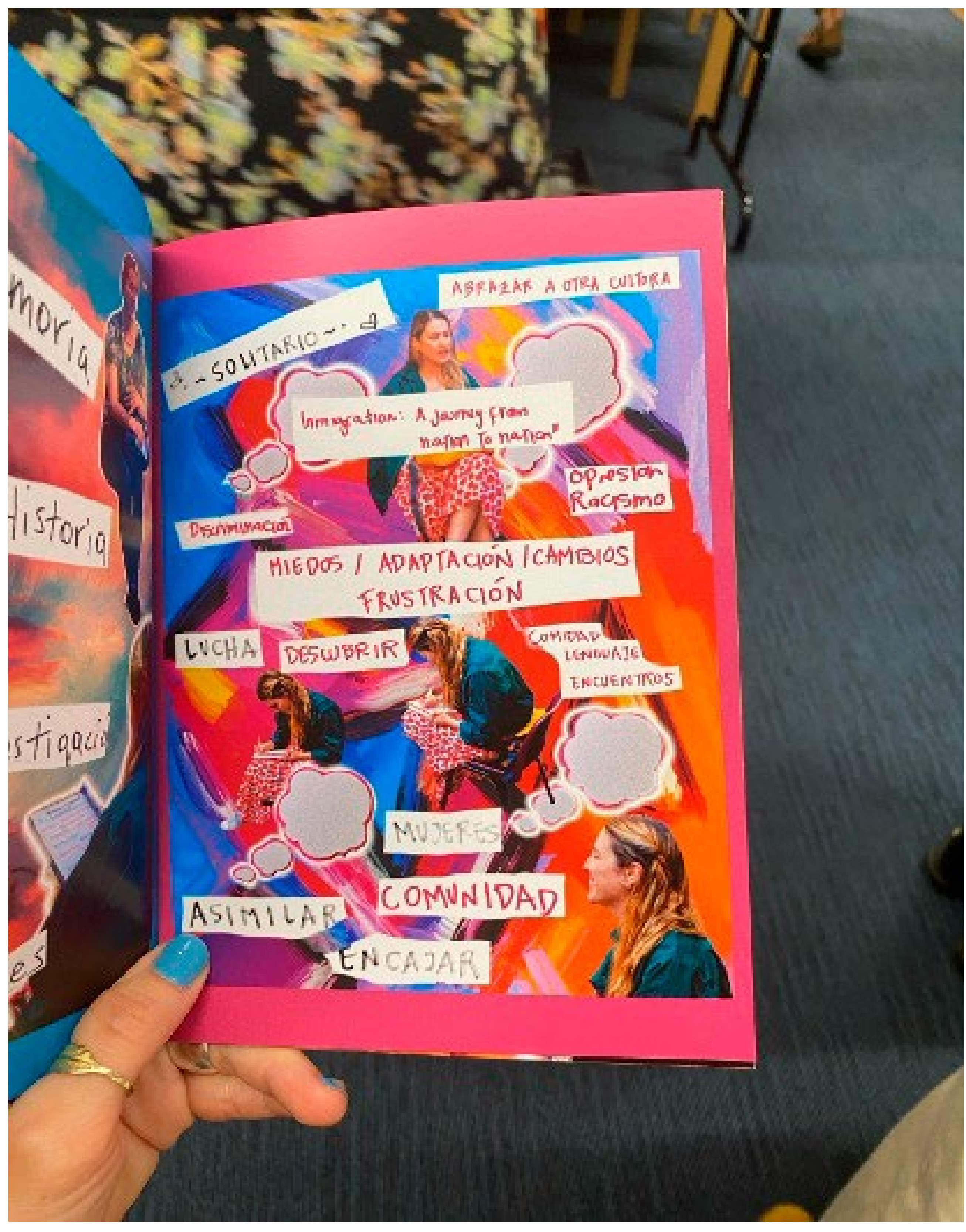


FIG.31. Latinidad LDN and LAWRS (2023). Weaving Community Archive and History Fanzine, page reflecting on Verónica Posada Álvarez's experience as a migrant woman

3.2. *SALSA FEVER*

Patricia Díaz Daza is a Latin American Feminist filmmaker born in Barranquilla, Colombia, who arrived in London in 1984 . She grew up in Bogotá in the 1970s, deeply influenced by Latin American second-wave feminists. Díaz has lived in the UK longer than in her home country, so even if she has her roots in Colombia; she also feels profoundly influenced by living in the UK for approximately 40 years; she inhabits a transcultural identity that has helped mobilise the diaspora. In her studies under the tutelage of Umberto Eco in Italy, she developed an interest in semiotics as a revealing discipline for representing the realities of migration and the politics of everyday life. Later, she moved to London and worked at the London College of Communication in Elephant and Castle for almost 20 years (Diaz, 2022). When she arrived in London, she recalls that the Male Gaze phenomenon, after Mulvey's (1973) famous essay *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, started to be disseminated, influencing social movements and film theory. For Díaz, realising the power she had as a migrant woman allowed her to tell stories from the point of view of a migrant storyteller. For her, representation shapes the way we inhabit the struggles. In the documentary *Anonymous* (Arboleda & Miles, 2022), Patricia Díaz talks about the invisible stopper to women's professions and how it is even more challenging for migrant women to succeed.

FIG.33. Screenshot from Salsa Fever (1991). Film available on https://vimeo.com/191470466

Nevertheless, creating images allows us to recognise ourselves as migrants and women because these are not stories told frequently. We all have narratives that we construct; these narratives present ourselves on the surface, and we create them with our subconscious, which is sometimes driven by pleasure or ego identification. In Mulvey's terms, the matrix of the imaginary identification is formed in terms of an invisible structure of power, a gaze, via symbolisms and representations, perpetuating certain narratives (Ibid). Yet, the counter-narratives, such as those directed by Patricia Díaz or Latin Elephant, allow the creation of new geopolitics of the cinematic imaginary to inhabit cities as migrants and enhance the work of memory as a political strategy.

Salsa Fever is a documentary film directed by Patricia Diaz. It depicts the salsa scene in London in the 1990s, featuring the famous musicians Joe Arroyo, Toto La Momposina, and Roberto Pla, and well-known salsa dancers such as Nelson Batista. It is a piece made for television, commissioned by Channel 4 and produced by Rear Window. With a voiceover, the documentary starts by telling the history of Salsa, from the traces of the African Diaspora to the exoticisation of the Latin Lovers. It shows a brief note of stories of Salsa with La Fania All-Stars in New York and the Caribbean influences in the city. As mentioned by Patria Román-Velázquez, "salsa developed from the blending of different musical practices that came into contact in New York City, and this mixture of musical patterns and rhythms is considered particularly important for enabling the later movement, development and transformation of salsa around the world" (1996, p142). Patricia Díaz takes a transcultural approach by presenting a Salsa class in London with a Cuban teacher, who comments on how teaching salsa helped him bond with London. However, Salsa dancing as a social interaction in the Global North could be framed as a highly controversial dynamic, as an inverse mockery in the light of Homi Bhabha's (1994) colonial theory, as the 'positive' features of the exotic body want to be taken and assimilated so they can be used for amusement and entertainment, an analogy to the colonial practices of land extraction. As Román-Velázquez (1996, p145) also indicates, the representation of Latin Americans through salsa music in London is embodied in the corporal movements, expressions of the dance and musical performance, it allows Latinidad to be integrated into the London scene connecting to places in the city, such as the former *La Bodeguita* inside the Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre. This film depicts a scene that started years before, in the 1980s, with bars and nightclubs in South London: Rumberos, Copacabana, or Mambo Inn, which were aimed at working-class Latin Americans. Later, "During the 1990s, most salsa clubs in London were operating under different circumstances to those of the early clubs. Most were operating in

FIG.34. Roberto Pla in the Brixton Arches, in the 1990s

rented or leased venues with proper licences" (Ibid, p81); in this sense, it can be argued that the Salsa Fever film depicts a musical scene in London which echoes the waves of migration from 1970s, which I have addressed in Chapter One, representing an urban sonic memory that nourishes from diasporic homeland nostalgia. These dynamics opened the doors to significant musical events and festivals like La Linea: The London Latin Musical Festival or *El Carnaval del Pueblo*.

Moreover, the film depicts amusing scenes of white men and women trying to follow choreography and being unable to imitate the Latino teacher's body rhythm. Additionally, classic salsa dancing is a vastly contested practice, as it is a piece of macho music. This binary dynamic is remarkably normative and gives all the decision-making power to the male, even though the teacher suggests that it works differently in the UK. In Chapter Four, I have shown how the gender dynamics in London transcend and shift as women are usually the leaders and the ones in the position of control within the Latin American community. This documentary represents what Patria Román-Velázquez, five years later, would call Latin London (1996) and how vital the dance clubs were for the formation of the British Latino or the Latin London Identity. In the moving images, you can see people enjoying classic salsa, songs that stimulated the senses, led them to dance, and felt the tropical heat throughout the body. They tried to represent a typical tropical bar from the furniture to the lights.

> (...), the recent popularity of salsa music is related to the immigration processes of the 1970s. Different groups brought with them, or asked their relatives to send them, the music they listened to in the countries they came from. They started organising house parties or getting together in community centres to share food and music with other Latin Americans (Ibid, p68).

Patricia Díaz shows us a Chilean Refugee woman, Jeanette, a Salsa singer [Fig.30]. She mentions that Salsa allowed her to stay in touch with Latin Americans, but it also helped her to create a place in Sheffield, where she lived. There were even a couple of Latin American music shops in London in the 1990s, like Mr Bongo or Latino Record, the latter one located in the former Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre. The club *La Bodeguita* in Elephant and Castle was also significant for South London's nightlife, as I have shown in the section My Elephant Story and in the diasporic geographies of Chapter Three.

The film also documented the biggest concert of Joe Arroyo in Tottenham Court Road, from the first Salsa Clubs to the biggest Salsa concerts; those spaces contributed to the manifestations of the Latin identity in some positive ways but also shaped and reinforced some stereotypes. Those places were ephemeral, usually in South London's working-class

FIG.35. Jeanette singing in Sheffield

FIG.36. This is the poster/image of the event. Featuring a shot from the film Salsa Fever

FIG.37. This is part of the Documentary Anonymous, featuring the role of women in films. The picture shows the event and the filmmaker Patricia Díaz talking about Salsa Fever

areas. As Román-Velázquez (Ibid) suggested, Salsa dance studios usually turned into bars and party-like places, leading most of them to be closed due to alcohol licensing issues. Additionally, Patricia Díaz presents the way Latin Americans inhabit the migrant struggle, interviewing the musician Roberto Pla, who describes how we migrants travel with our music, our senses, to interpret and survive in the world, how the rhythm warms our hearts, and make us feel at home. Roberto Pla was also interviewed in Román-Velázquez's research on *The Making of Latin London* (1996); he came to London in the 1970s and mentioned how the process of making music in London involved a dialogue with the new urban reality, which I called a transcultural city (Ibid, p137). The way Salsa is embodied in London through the bodies of people associated with Latin America speaks about the importance of cultural representations, such as music, for creating belonging and social meaning in a given space.

This documentary was projected in an edition of the Latinidad LDN Film Festival organised by Lina Caicedo at Peckhamplex Cinema in London on the 24th of April 2022. The theatre was packed that day, and one could feel how all the Latin American spectators were in a state of ecstasy as they were being represented. The film forms part of an amateur archive that is flourishing [Fig. 31 and 32].

4.

CONCLUSION: ON THE IMPORTANCE OF REMEMBERING

Transcultural memory is possible due to the mobilising properties of late capitalism, and in that process, there is always a transcendence of the nation-state. Migrant memories are the memories of displacement, so they create a new social affiliation beyond one nation-state, as in the case of Latin Americans. "The intersection of disparate commemorative discourses might offer an opportunity to forge empathic communities of remembrance across national, cultural, and ethnic borders" (Bond, Craps, and Vermeulen, 2016, p6). The different uses and appropriation of mnemonic objects to remember detaching and trigger the formation of communal uses of the visual to create spaces of togetherness in the urban realm.

In this respect, Urban Memory is the landscape where the diasporic memories of Latin Americans have been created in London through cultural formations and imaginations, the perceived experiences in the city, the cognitive image we carry as migrants, and the tools and shapes that inform how we act in the urban fabric. As highlighted in this Chapter, navigating the system through improvised practices created by migrants fosters the development of narratives such as music, sports, and the possibilities of the image as film, as well as archival footage of personal approaches, which have shaped Latin London memories. The urban imaginary that has forged the memories and experiences of Latin London has moulded and created an urban form via activist approaches. The interpretative grid to those approaches appears embodied in everyday life practices, such as the definition of themselves as British Latino or Latin Londoners. For Latin diasporic members, it is vital to have roots in the past, in the homeland, to reproduce reverberations of those memories in the present and to create a transcultural place to belong in London.

In this chapter, I have demonstrated how the archive is a source that assumes a type of authority, a figure of power that decides, with a mark of a beginning or end, how why, or where someone has access to it. There, you find explorations, sources, and explanations. As Derrida (1996) explains about the relations between psychoanalysis and archive, the latter is a map of the human mind. Some memories are organised, stored, indexed, and forgotten. Amateur or community archives aim to unveil forgotten memories that help us understand our inner experiences around the globe. It is a chain of synaptic connections that allows us to follow a trace of facts, interpret reality and finally generate a sense of belonging. In the next chapter, I will analyse The Migrant Gaze and the importance of remembering the formation of an idea of Latin London. Both chapters interlink the work of memory as an activist tool for diasporic communities.

CHAPTER 6

THE MIGRANT GAZE

CHAPTER 6

THE MIGRANT GAZE

1. THE LATIN AMERICAN GAZE
- **1.1.** Latinidad as a Myth
- **1.2.** Visual Resistances
  - **1.2.1.** LATINAS LAWA
  - **1.2.2.** ESPACIO LATINO

2. THE URBAN MARKET CITIZENSHIP
- **2.1.** Walking the Elephant
- **2.2.** Seven Sister's Indoor Market Film
- **2.3.** *Élefan*

3. STORYTELLING OF FEMINISED RESISTANCE IN LATIN LONDON
- **3.1.** Super-diversity and the politics of hostile environment for Latin Londoners
  - **3.1.2.** MinA Theatre: Geographies of Migrant Resistance

4. CONCLUSION: THE FEMINIST MIGRANT GAZE

1.

THE LATIN AMERICAN GAZE

Latinidad, as a verb, noun and adjective, has always been a subject of the gaze of being looked at. As a name derived from Bolivar's dreams, Spanish America was called Latin America.[68] It emerged around the 1850s, after the independence wars in the region, between 1810s and 1830s, and was used as "a way to map a new geography for the postcolonial global order" (Gutiérrez, 2016, p24). Later, Latinidad appears as a collective identity when referring to people from Latin America in overseas territories, such as the USA. Latinidad is a concept that has been shaped by the gaze. "By the late 1850s, *californios* were writing in newspapers about their membership in *América Latina* (Latin America) and *latinoamerica*, calling themselves *latinos* as the shortened name for their hemispheric membership in *la raza latina* (the Latin race)" (Ibid). Latinidad gained strength as a strong communal tie in the 1960s when the term passed from a marginalised and inferior race to a membership of groups that came together in cities like Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York to challenge representation and advance political agendas.

In this chapter I analyse the Migrant Gaze in the light of Latinidad by the investigation of feminised Latin London through the work of several charities. I look at LAWA's (Latin American Women's Aid) role in the representation of women's body politics and the work they do with Latin American women in London. I go on to develop my argument about the role of representation for the Latin American community in London through the work Espacio Latino and the crucial role of the image for developing a sense of belonging, which links to my research question 4) How are transcultural processes of the Latin American diaspora in

[68] Simón Bolívar is known as the leader of independence in Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Perú, Panamá and Bolivia from the Spanish Empire; he helped and influenced many liberation movements in the Caribbean and across what we know today as Latin America. Bolívar lived in London for six months in 1810 (Lynch, 2007).

London evidenced? I move on to analyse the role of Latin Elephant via community-based projects and two films around Elephant and Castle, and Seven Sisters, highlighting my questions: 5) How does representation address processes of urban change for the Latin American diaspora in London? 6) How do the dynamics of diasporas, as a community, affect the urban landscape of London , and 7) How are Latin American women challenging/resisting gentrification in London? These are answered by my analysis of storytelling as a strategy of feminised resistance which provides an activist visual narrative to influence the charitable sector's work and challenge the notion of the gaze as an invisible power structure that can be tackled through visualization and community work.

It is the gaze that permits this kind of mutual affiliation. However, the gaze has two sides, one of invisibility and one that allows for visible forces of the global city to appear. The gaze as a representational channel is embodied in someone looking and having something to look at, but either way, both sides of the equation have an agency. According to the UN (2022), the population of cities will rise by three-quarters by 2050. The scale and complexities of cities in the current state of mobilisation and displacement globally are deeply connected to migratory experiences. Mediated through visuality, migration appears in the city and takes forms in the human body experience; the body tells stories to those staring at it.

Laura Mulvey coined the term the Male Gaze in the 1970s. Afterwards, the concept was popularised and used in different forms to refer to complex social dynamics of representation and visibility. The author describes it when referring to cinema dynamics as:

> The scopophilic instinct (pleasure in looking at another person as an erotic object) and, in contradistinction, ego libido (forming identification processes) act as formations, mechanisms (...) The image of woman as (passive) raw material for the (active) gaze of man takes the argument a step further into the structure of representation, adding a further layer demanded by the ideology of the patriarchal order. (1989, p815)

In Mulvey's terms, the male gaze takes people as subjects and objectifies them, subjecting them to control and curiosity from another person's point of view. The gaze triggers a radical weapon: the destruction of the pleasure of the subject being looked at. The gaze, in terms of migration, is also a paradoxical concept. It is subjected to negative stereotypes and falls into Mulvey's description of voyeurism and exoticisation of the other as a passive subject that is there only to be looked at. This is related to Said's work on *Orientalism* (1979), the postcolonial gaze as a critical view of the coloniser's power in the formation of a postcolonial world, which

in the case of this research is embedded in the Latin American migrant experience, as the subject of former colonies (as shown in the Literature Review Chapter).

Nevertheless, the awareness of the gaze also allows for the development of a more humanitarian perspective as a process of identification that supports migrants to be recognised and to acknowledge where we come from and the process we have been through to gain space in the host place. Latinidad is a vast and complex term embedded in contradictions and paradoxes. It is associated with histories of migration to the USA, where it embodies a history of colonisation. Therefore, this is reflected in the Latin American migratory experience in constructing the diaspora. Latinidad as an identity is also the subject of marketing, entertainment, and distortions of Latin American cultures, which undeniably have met resistance as a tendency against the homogenisation of identities and experiences (Colón & Archer, 2021).

Yet, there are articulations of Latinidad that allow for an awakening of "collective resistance, intergroup cooperation, and dialogue" (Mendible, 2007, p4). It has a place in particular situations and for developing certain tactics, as I have demonstrated throughout this research, for example, the film *Salsa Fever* or the initiative *Latinidad LDN*. Keeping in mind how problematic the term is, I claim a use for it within a communal panorama, to open up possibilities for an agency, to create a political will over the definition of who we are, how we want to be represented, and to what extend how we create communities, that nourishes from transcultural *mobilising identities* and challenge the *rate of assimilation* in London urban planning.

1.1. LATINIDAD AS A MYTH

As stated by the well-known Latin American scholar Frances Aparicio (2017), Latinidad has emerged from the diasporic conditions and triggered transcultural formations as it rejects the use as a label that homogenises the diverse space that is Latin America and its people. Latinidad has been embedded with an element of performance, implying a choreography of everyday life in the Global North (Caminero-Santangelo, 2012). Latinidad as a concept performed in the city, in this case in London, is also embedded within Global South studies, a space created, imagined, invented, maintained and recreated by the figures at play, such as government, economics, institutions, and social actors. The Global South is a geopolitical term that embraces decolonial dynamics and creates a political consciousness that mobilises and activates social labels, such as the Latino/Latina. Latinidad is a concept of in-betweenness that does not manifest as much in Latin America but flourishes in the migrant condition and "signals an identity in limbo" (Colón & Archer, p8).

Latinidad is also a myth, an imaginary formation, a grand narrative from ordinary human experience. Barthes developed the concept of the myth in 1952, as reading through consumption in culture: "Myth is a system of communication, that it is a message. This allows one to perceive that

myth cannot possibly be an object, a concept, or an idea; it is a mode of signification, a form" (p107). The myth is a concept that created its meaning via a constant movement that is changing and deforming its significance in alteration with the context where it is produced. Latinidad as a myth echoes Barthes as it is constituted by a signifier expressed in the Global North's space. This also sustains the capitalist model of the Western world as it relies on a form of representation; here, the mythology of Latinidad is personified in the representation of the everyday migrant experience and being a migrant itself.

Latin America is a place that has been fragmented by centuries of violence, genocides, colonisation and exploitation. The importance of recreating ourselves as a myth of unification and a land of resistance has become rooted in our cultural memory. Individual memories have informed collective memories and, by doing so, have created an entwined history of Latin America as a political site for memory. This narrative is present in many Latin American individuals and manifests in everyday life. These myths, experiences and mechanisms for existing in the Global North reinforce order and hegemony. Yet, it also resists those forces in the same mythological space of Latin Americanness in limbo.

Latinidad is a myth composed of different narratives. I am particularly interested in the embodiment of it within the female body, which is political and performed in social movements and related to the migrant condition. The construction of Latinidad as a myth is directly connected to the body as the site of performativity. In Butler's (2011) terms, political action takes place on the condition that the body appears, which is also related to the gaze as female. In terms of political functioning as a marketing device for the commodification of the Latina/o body. But also as a tool for reclaiming and resisting the configurations, representations and visualisations that assert and reinforce negative stereotypes which minimise the role of certain bodies in society, such as the Latin American as marginal, sexy, domestic or criminal. Barthes said, "Myth is a pure ideographic system, where the forms are still motivated by the concept which they represent while not yet, by a long way, covering the sum of its possibilities for representation" (1972, p126). That form is embodied in the corporal experience of the migrant, who is constantly facing stereotypes. The myths in the migratory experience of ambiguity and otherness, surrounded by imagined ideas –*clichés* or delirious narratives – are embodied in representational practices.

Therefore, Latinidad understood as an imagined community moves between processes of rejection and promotion of the myth that allow for the reproduction of it; the ambivalent feelings of repulsion and attraction towards

its difference from the main group (Mendible, 2007). Latinidad is constantly navigating its construction and meaning by stereotypes, a fiction that is at stake in the social construction of society, and nourished mythologies of certain social groups. Dyer (1999) considers that "The consensus invoked by stereotypes is more apparent than real; rather, stereotypes express particular definitions of reality, with concomitant evaluations, which in turn relate to the disposition of power within society" (p14). Stereotypes usually carry an implicit narrative, which can be either positive or negative for the social groups. Stereotypes produce the illusion that a phenomenon can be controlled once a source has been identified. The term is associated with the birth of typography and how the page was ready to be reproduced in thousands of copies (Feldman, 2002). Stereotypes nourish myths as consistent, repeated ideas, autonomous, and resistant to time and material limitations.

On the other hand, some stereotypes also allow or reinforce community ties, for example, Latina Bodies as bodily excess, sexuality and indulgence (Mendible, 2007, p3), marked for cultural and commodities circulation. Nevertheless, it also authorises a Latina to claim the use of self-tropicalisation as a strategy of embracing and reclaiming beauty as a body that matters and as a political experience. This is also evident in the way Latin Americans name us. There are terms such as Latin, Latina, Latino and Latinx, each of them carrying a political background and self and collective identification process. Self-naming is political and ideological, and it carries resistance within. That is why it became so important to visualise self-naming in the creation of Latin London and the performative sphere of its social movement.

The use of Latino corresponds to the relationship between the USA with Latin America, from academic programmes named Latino/a studies starting on the East Coast in the 1980s and later on moved to the West Coast and popularised the term amongst university staff and students. Recent uses of the "X" are an intersectional approach to claim for differences in gender, class, sexuality and ethnicity. "The X has been seen as a more inclusive term; it signifies fluidity and mobility, setting aside the conventions of ideological, philosophical, and medical binaries that assign humans to one gender identity out of two when they are born" (Vargas & Contreras, 2017, p15). It aims for an uncategorised identity that goes beyond cultural constructions towards a human understanding of the other. There are a variety of options to identify as Latin American that carry political views, self-identification and personal traumas; other options such as Latine, Latin@ and Latin are attempts to broaden the scope of the understanding of the Latin American identity as a complex, huge and underestimated panorama.

Overall, we all have narratives that we construct; those narratives present ourselves on the surface, and we create them with our subconscious, which is sometimes driven by pleasure or ego identification. In Mulvey's words, the matrix of imaginary identification, which is formed in terms of an invisible structure of power, a gaze, via symbolisms and representations, perpetuates certain narratives (1989). Those structures are powered by mythologies that nourish the collective narrative of stereotypes. Latinidad as a myth is a container and producer of signifiers and signs that are in constant conversation with the context, particularly in the representation of the migrant condition. In London, the practical engagement with a community opens the doors to belonging in the city and therefore triggers attempts to consider mythologies of self and communal definitions concerning the main cultural group. "Britain's current political-economical context under Brexit and its changing relationship with Europe might strengthen such political attempts at self-definition" (Román-Velázquez & Retis, 2020, p200), this will be addressed in the next case of study.

1.2. VISUAL RESISTANCES

As a Latin American, I have become aware of our ontology Cuerpo-Territorio (Body-Territory) from different Latin American community projects and Latin American decolonial feminists that incorporated the notion as the political space where social relations happen. For instance, Rita Segato (2013), Marcela Lagarde (2018), Francesca Gargallo (2014), and Lorena Cabnal (2010) developed the concept of Cuerpo-Territorio, as a decolonial indigenous feminist approach to challenge processes that undermine our existence and experiences, and as mechanism of awareness that can bring healing through different practices, and in the case of this thesis through representation. "To reclaim the body to defend it from the historical structural attack that threatens it, it became a daily and constant struggle, because the Body-Territory, has been a territory in dispute by patriarchies for millennia, to ensure its sustainability since and on the body of women" (2010, p130).[69] Although Cabnal in Guatemala developed this concept, it applies to Latin American migrants, in particular to women. In addition, the decolonial framework

[69] Author translation. See quote in Spanish: "Recuperar el cuerpo para defenderlo del embate histórico estructural que atenta contra el, se vuelve una lucha cotidiana e indispensable, porque el territorio cuerpo, ha sido milenariamente un territorio en disputa por los patriarcados, para asegurar su sostenibilidad desde y sobre el cuerpo de las mujeres" (Cabna, 2010, p130).

might be understood as a process of historical awareness and resistance to colonial legacies. It is a struggle to reclaim one's position in the world through our bodies, mobility, and the spaces we occupy (Hooks, 2024). I also believe it is an ongoing and developing concept which is directly linked to creativity. For example, new epistemologies that decentralised the Western gaze emphasise the epistemic location of creators and participants, as I will explore in the next section.

The Latin American community in London has been unified by the work of women. Charities such as LAWRS, IRMO and LAWA have been working in the city to ensure it is a safe place for Latin American Women and provide services to facilitate integration. In the words of Françoise Verges, "a decolonial feminism whose objective is the destruction of racism, capitalism and imperialism" (2021, p5). A decolonial feminist movement aims to humanise the world again and assert the right to existence, which is crucial for the lives of migrants and refugees as they are constantly seen as disposable. Hence, visual resistance is constantly required to showcase revolution and create a sense of belonging, as I will explain in the next two sections. Resistance is, instead of the notion of being violent, a process of coming together and engaging with a situation, in a dialogical manner. In Sennett's (2009) terms, the negotiation produced between different agents, as a membrane procedure, allows porosity and resistance to work together and create permeability. The work I present has been a process of resistance, and these images acknowledge complex transformation with more altruistic values. Consequently, a process that pushes towards resistance balances the holes and porosities caused by neoliberal policies towards migrants. Latin Londoners and people interested in the community have gathered forces and created manifestations of resistance to reclaim values and traditions that are often minimised or ignored. Each of the projects that I will explain is part of the wider *mobilising identitie*s that have been growing in number in recent years and creating a network of awareness of the need for urban planning policies to consider the spaces for Latin American migrants in London.

1.2.1. LATINAS LAWA

Latin American Women's Aid (LAWA) was founded by a Colombian and a Chilean political refugee woman in 1987; a charity that advocates for protection of women and children. They offer intersectional and holistic services, from refuge homes, counselling, advice, support with English classes, and different empowerment programmes. In its 2022 report [Fig.1.] LAWA describes the organisation as

> LAWA reaches now over three decades of experience in the provision of "by and for" specialist refuge accommodation and supporting services to women and children fleeing from different forms of gender-based violence, mainly Domestic Violence. Our refuges are the only ones run by and for the Latin American community in the UK and in Europe. We are a grassroots organisation that is not only widely recognised by women in the community, but also highly trusted as attested by the over 1500 women and children that seek our support every year.[70]

In [Fig.1] it can be seen how over recent years, migrant women have been increasingly exposed to situations of abuse and uncertainty due to Covid-19, Brexit and the hostile environment towards immigration in the UK. The figure shows how Latin American women that use LAWA services understand Latinidad in a wider but also particular context.

[70] In this Report I worked closely with LAWA as a Graphic Designer.

SURVIVORS' IDENTITY AND THEIR INTERSECTING EXPERIENCE OF VIOLENCE

All our service users are minoritised women, children and young people that face intersecting disadvantages that shape their abuse experience, and therefore withstand additional barriers when seeking support. Over the last years, the women from our community have been particularly affected by the implementation of Brexit policies that have left them in a sort of "limbo" with regards to their immigration status and their access to the welfare system. This has increased their vulnerability and the complexity of their cases, forcing them to stay in unsafe spaces and perpetuating the institutional violence.

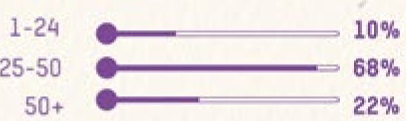
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

- More than 20%
- 10 - 19%
- 2- 9 %
- 1.9 - 1 %
- Less than 1 %

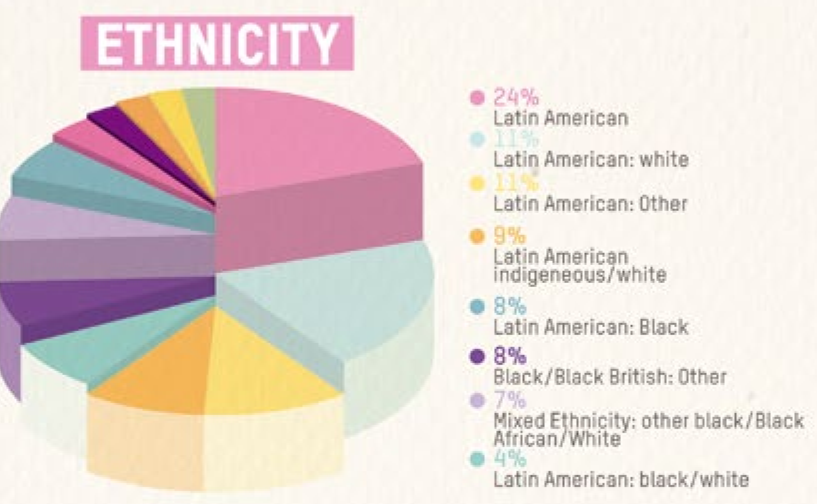
OUR SERVICE USERS

Upon beginning their journey with LAWA our service users complete our diversity and monitoring forms. This enables LAWA to keep track of the composition of our service users. This is why we know, for instance, that over the last year **the majority of women accessing our services were Brazilian (31,5%) and Colombian (20,4%)**. Most of them were aged between 25 and 50 years old (68%) and the majority identified as simply Latin American (24%), however **the ethnicities chart demonstrates that many of our service users identify with the many varied ethnic identities that exist in the Latin American culture** also, including black and indigenous. This highlights that the Latin American identity can cover a broad range of ethnic identities and it is entirely up to the women filling in the forms how they choose to identify themselves.

THE DIFFERENT ELEMENTS OF WOMEN'S IDENTITY AND THEIR OVERLAP, DEFINE THE ADDITIONAL CHALLENGES THEY FACE INCLUDING STRUCTURAL RACISM, HOSTILE ANTI-IMMIGRATION ENVIRONMENT, CULTURAL DISCRIMINATION, LACK OF SUPPORT IN INTERPRETATION SERVICES, LACK OF LEGAL AID, AMONG OTHERS.



ETHNICITY



- 24% Latin American
- 11% Latin American: white
- 11% Latin American: Other
- 9% Latin American indigeneous/white
- 8% Latin American: Black
- 8% Black/Black British: Other
- 7% Mixed Ethnicity: other black/Black African/White
- 4% Latin American: black/white
- 3%

- 3% Latin American: black/indigeneous/white
- 3%

- 2% Latin American: indigeneous
- 1%

FIG.1. LAWA Report 2022. Survivor's Identity and their intersecting experience with Violence infographic

Last year 31.4% of users were Brazilian followed by 20.4% Colombians, which relates to the statistics in the Literature Review presenting Brazil as the largest population of Latin Americans in London, followed by Colombians. Most of them identify as Latin Americans, yet some as Indigenous or Black, which is entirely up to the woman filling out the form and how they want to identify, LAWA opens the possibility to cover a broad range of ethnic identities from Latin America.

In 2022, LAWA worked with Bootstrap Charity, an East London initiative established in 1978. It aims to help people to develop employment skills. Over time they have created their own space and more than 70 organisations work in the building in Dalston, London, E8. The two organisations collaborated to commission content to visualise the work they do with Latin American women, particularly to represent the projects Growing Together and Change Makers. The work was produced by

FIG.2. Bootstrap Charity building where LAWA is based, in Dalston. East London. Sep, 2022.
Entrance to the Exhibition

FIG.3. Bootstrap Charity building where LAWA is based, in Dalston. East London. Sep, 2022

photographer Louise Carpenedo, a Brazilian living in London, who explores gender, race and migration in her work, along with Annais Berlim a cultural producer, who specialises in human rights, currently working at LAWA's VAWGs Advice Centre Outreach as a case worker.[71] The first part of the project is an initiative for Latin American women to be part of a community to feel active, connected and integrated. Growing Together provides the space to develop activities such as English classes, embroidery workshops, IT Lessons, skills-sharing, celebrations and growing vegetables in their allotment in South London. They have created a community, usually of older Latin American women, where they engage and plan the activities together. As stated by Mercedes Vivero the lead coordinator of the group in the Latin London Podcast episode Feminist Latin London, it is a safe and happy space for the women.[72] The groups have solid ties and solidarities and created a safe space for them in their migrant conditions. On the other hand, The Change Makers Programme is an intersectional and intergenerational feminist approach for Latin American and BME women to attend different community events. It provides a safe space to promote solidarity, sisterhood, personal and collective empowerment, which can help women to create change in other realms of their lives. Daniela Londoño, the LAWA Change Makers Programme coordinator, states that the project represents the idea of womanhood, being Latina, and what it means to be a migrant Latin American Woman in London from a decolonial perspective. "The idea is to connect with their roots, to connect with each other and learn" (2023). These programs prove the importance of solidarity, friendship, bonding, and networking that we can create with the women around us, making visible the strength of community work for dismounting patriarchal rules and creating safe spaces.

The project LATINAS aims to represent women's experience with the LAWA community and how it has impacted and changed their lives. The LATINAS exhibition showcases the story of 10 Latin American women from different backgrounds, ages and nationalities. It encompasses portraits, a written text of their migration experience into the UK, particularly London, and an audio piece that answers the question, 'How do you define yourself today?'. The audio manifests the varieties of language and accents to emphasise the diversity of Latin America and the identity behind every accent.

[71] VAWGS stand for Violence Against Women and Girls. "The VAWG Advice Centre provides specialised and culturally specific advocacy and support to Latin American and Black and minoritised women survivors of gender-based violence (e.g., domestic violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, trafficking, etc.) by helping them to safety, empowering and rebuilding their life free of violence. We run face-to-face and remote sessions in Spanish, Portuguese, and English" (LAWA, 2022, p13).

[72] See Methodology Chapter Two for more information on the podcast episode.

When interviewed for this work, Carpenedo mentioned her intention "to showcase different stories that all Latinas have here and challenge the stereotypes"(2023). Carpenedo is a Brazilian filmmaker and photographer working with Latin Americans in London for the past six years. She expresses that in this photographic situation (Azoulay, 2008), you are exposed to different layers of intimacy. She went to meet the participants in a place where they felt comfortable and wanted to be photographed. Some of them she knew previously, and some she met for the first time. Yet, she manifested that it was easy for her to get to know them and let them feel comfortable with the camera as she speaks Portuguese and Spanish and is a Latin American migrant herself. Therefore, she connected with them. As a migrant, you want to be listened to, you want to tell your story and the things you have been through, you want to feel represented and part of a system, you want to be able to show that you belong and that you have overcome so much to be here, that is the message Louise wanted to share. "As women, we have a lot of work to do together; women understand women, you know. Like a community" (2023). This interview echoes Nelly Richard's statement for *Photography and Writing in Latin America* (2006), when she mentions that photography has also served "as a strategy of resistance" (p3). This image [Fig.4] of Ivanna, 30, from Venezuela, was taken at Ivanna's warehouse in London. In her story, Ivanna mentioned that she often gets "seen as this exotic thing, the "Latin girl". I feel that they see me as something different instead of seeing me as a person, and that is one of the reasons I got a lot of jobs. I might be used as a diversity card." She sometimes feels overwhelmed at being very culturally different. These feelings that Ivanna mentioned constantly threaten a Latin American women's experience in London. When she was asked the question how do you define yourself today? She answered as a warrior because of all the challenges she experienced, yet she still found her way to remain in London and began a new life.

As expressed in *Photography: Race, Rights and Representation* (Sealy,2022), photography reminds us of our more profound experiences; it triggers the memory of the soul. When we look at a photograph of ourselves, our identity is highlighted, and it can trigger some positive thoughts and emotions, as well as negative ones; it all depends on how we are reframing it. As Ivanna mentioned, this image can also be a representation of the exoticisation of Latin American Women, particularly in the Global North, as a mythic construction of the sexy, sweet and charming type of women. As mentioned by Mendible "The Latina body offered a tempting alter/native: an exotic object of imperial and sexual desire. Gendered, races tropes framed debates about immigration, territorial expansion, and nationhood" (2007, p8). In the political stage,

FIG.4. Ivanna, 30, Venezuela. LATINAS by Louise Carpenedo and LAWA

the body of women has always fought forces of domination through resistance in terms of race, class and gender. Drawing upon Butler's conception of identity and gender as produced and generated as a social construct (2011) allows us to produce a body that performs through agency and a political will. In that sense, the images presented in this exhibition represent "Latinidad as a fluid set of cultural boundaries that are consistently reinforced, challenged, or negotiated by and through Latina bodies" (Ibid, p4). In addition, political, economic, social, and material conditions gather Latinas as a self/defined identity in the Global North and become more evident through the migration experience, which indeed passes through our body as the site of resistance, dispute, defence, and struggle.

In this photograph [Fig.4], the colours, the skin, the smoke and the plants give the image a tropical vibe that can reinforce the stereotyped figure of the Latina. Instead, it overcomes the stereotype by embracing the myth: a type of body, a skin colour, a way of life and a tropical atmosphere in which Ivanna feels at home. In contrast to mainstream distributions of Latin American women representation, these images have layers, and it depends on how we peel and read them so that they acquire meaning. This image manifests resistance in the context of LAWA and Carpenedo's work. Although the exhibition has not circulated in other places, it needs to be shown to a broader audience in London to keep challenging those stereotypes and reinforcing a positivity that, confronts and reclaims Latinidad and Latinas bodies as a site for knowledge production and beyond commodification. As stated by Sealy, "Photographs help us understand our dark past and create the conditions where restorative representational acts of care can be felt as well as seen" (p6).

In this photograph [Fig.5] Jael de La Luz, 41, from Mexico, is presented. Jael is an active member of the Latin American community and a feminist leader; she is the former Community Engagement Officer at LAWA and is part of the London Latinxs. Jael is well known in the community for the tragic experience she had to go through to be reunited with her family here in the UK. Jael's husband is a British citizen, and they married in Mexico; when Jael was completing the paperwork to be able to come to the UK, her visa was denied twice and later, she "went to the British Embassy, waited outside their building for a whole week and went on a hunger strike" (Interview with Jael De La Luz, 2023). She managed to get into the UK to be with her children and husband, but it was a painful and tragic process. In this image, Jael feels it represents the *borderlands* (Anzaldúa, 1987). In the light of Gloria E-Anzaldúa, Jael identifies as a *New Mestiza,* as a migrant that lives between frontiers or borders that are not just physical but also mental and psychological, "the mestizaje dual

FIG.4. Jael, 41, Mexico. LATINAS by Louise Carpenedo and LAWA

FIG.6. Jael and Ivanna images on display Bootstrap Charity building where LAWA is based, in Dalston. East London. Sep, 2022

FIG.7. Melida's images on display at Bootstrap Charity where LAWA is based, in Dalston, East London. Sep, 2022

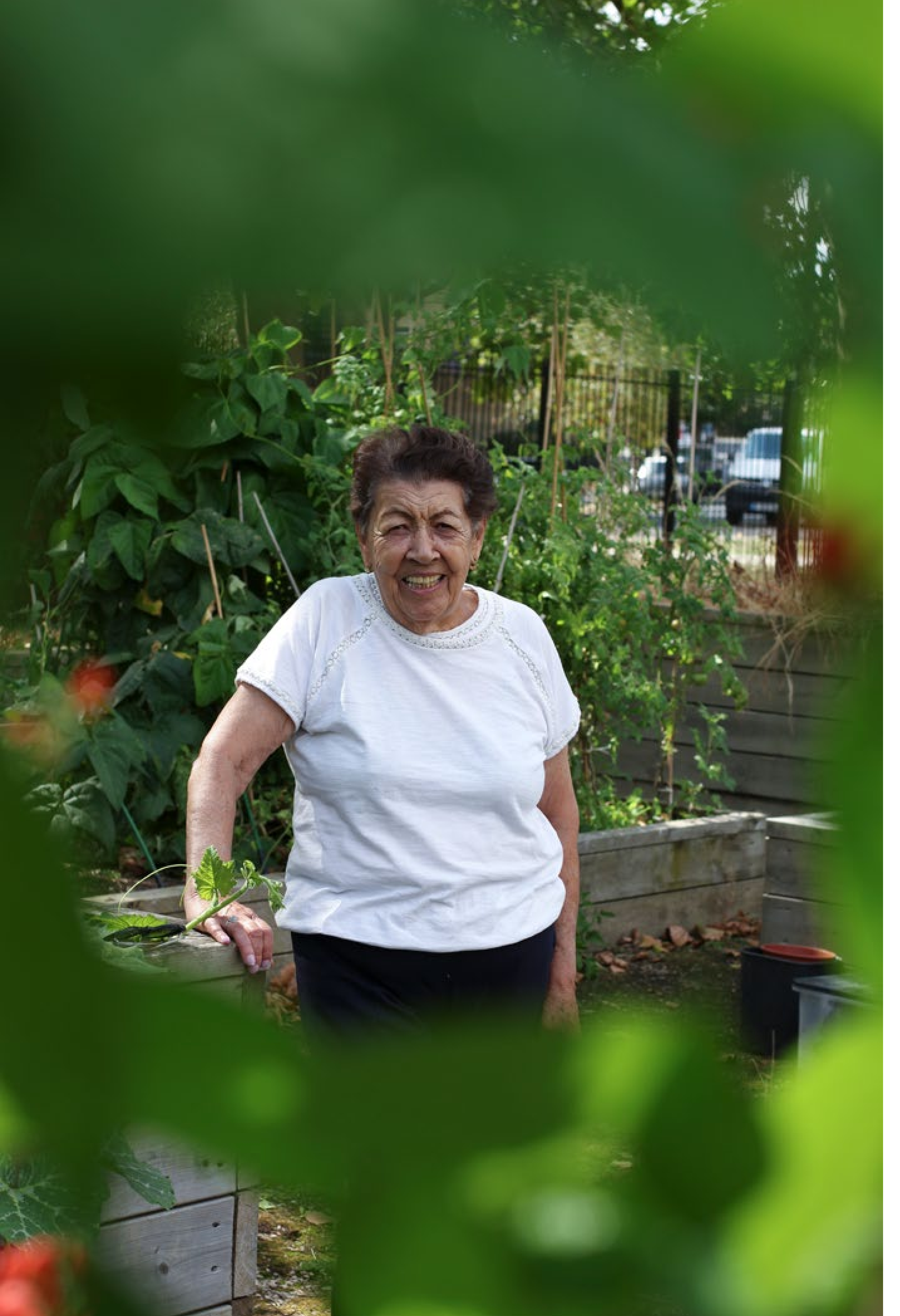


FIG.8. Melida, 88, Colombia. LATINAS by Louise Carpenedo and LAWA

FIG.9. Cosecha, The harvest basket, programme growing together LAWA, part of LATINAS exhibition

or multiple personalities is plagued by psychic restlessness (...) La mestizaje undergoes a struggle of flesh, a struggle of borders, an inner war" (p78). It refers to the invisible borders for migrants who must navigate an unknown and hostile system. Jael participated in the special episode we created for the Latin London podcast –explained in Chapter Two– a collaborative project with Mujer Diáspora, University of Reading and *Pueblito Paisa* Community Centre.[73] In this process, Jael expressed that she has the right to live free and with dignity in which no one is outside the common benefit (2022). *The New Mestiza*, a term appropriated from the colonial narratives of mestizaje as a mix of Spanish people and native Americans, copes with the tolerance of ambiguity, we learn to juggle cultures, we adapt and make a community to survive, that is operating in a plural mode, which is the mestiza consciousness.

The images [Fig. 8 and 9] of Melida, 88, from Colombia and the harvest basket were accompanied by objects that defined their relationship with the portrait. The portrait of Melida, Carpenedo decided to accompany it with the basket [Fig. 9] as it represents the purpose of the programme Growing Together, which is a space of solidarity and collaboration. The day the image was taken they were collecting their harvest and sharing it with the people present. Melida's story is one of resilience to systematic oppressions, she suffered gender violence in Colombia. After she raised her children, she moved to the UK at the age of 50 where she feels safe and happy in London, she would not go back to Colombia. In her memory Colombia is a place where you had to escape to establish a life experience with less oppressions.

Overall, these images represent the diversity embedded in the concept of Latinidad, as Anzaldúa said when referring to La mestiza "She reinterprets history, using new symbols, she shapes new myths (...) she surrenders all notions of safety, of the familiar. Deconstruct, construct "(Ibid, p82). This means that from abroad New Mestizas are empowered to create new narratives, from which to trigger processes of resistance and belonging. This is expressed from representation inside community lenses to developed visual resistance to the negative stereotypes constructed around the myth of Latinas.

[73] You can listen to this episode here: https://open.spotify.com/episode/1bFfMng-Gxk9hyGWwdDetCG?si=99223194f67c4709 minute 49. And see Appendix B.

1.2.2. ESPACIO LATINO

Espacio Latino Vol.1 is a photobook and project created by the Mexican photographer Paola Vivas.[74] The book showcases the stories of fourteen London Creative Latinxs.

Vivas has been in the UK for the last thirteen years; she was born in Mérida in the south of Mexico. As with many Latin Americans in London, she did not recognise herself as a Latina until she migrated. After the pandemic, she decided that she needed to recharge and reconnect with her roots, and it was at that time that she started to connect with other Latin Americans in London as an East London-based creative Paola put out an open call to photograph creative Latin Americans living and working in London.

As a starting point, the book defines Latino as a noun that refers to a person who is abroad and comes from Latin America. The artist positions herself as part of the community in the first lines of the work. As stated, when interviewed for this thesis (2023), Vivas said the project is an autoethnographic account in which, by exploring other people´s stories,

[74] The book was presented at the PhotoBook Café, a space in East London dedicated to disseminating photography and dialogues around it [Figs. 10 and 11]

FIG.10.ESPACIO LATINO by Paola Vivas

ESPACIO LATINO

By Paola Vivas
Friday 08th of April
6-9pm

Photobookcafe,
4 Leonard Circus, Shoreditch, EC2A 4DQ, London.

FIG.11. Book Launch at PhotoBook Café, 2022. Espacio Latino by Paola Vivas

she identifies herself as a Latin American and her connection through aesthetic values and visualities. She mentions that she aims "to highlight and showcase our people's diversity and individuality" (p3). This project is a space that creates visibility in sites and places Latin Americans in the city do not usually inhabit. She asked each participant what being Latino meant to him or them.

For instance, the image of Sophie Castillo [Fig. 12] echoes Anzaldúa's when addressing the new mestiza: "She has a plural personality, she operates in a pluralist mode –nothing is thrust out, the good the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned. Not only does she sustain contradictions, but she also turns ambivalence into something else". It links to Homi Bhabha's (1994) third space as the representational site, which creates meaning from ambivalence, from a fluctuating and unstable discourse. Latin America is seen as a diverse, giant land from which different perspectives and diversity flourish despite inevitable internal conflicts and tensions. The ambivalence is subjective, as Bhabha clearly stated "It is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same sign can be appropriated, translated, historicised and read anew" (ibid, p37). Sophie Castillo, a singer and songwriter, born in West London from Colombian and Cuban parents, said she is an "exotic amalgamation of cultures", as described in the book. Although this characterisation often falls into stereotyping and exoticisation, she never lets that hold her back and messes with her identity. Nevertheless, London, as a creative hub, is constantly commoditising the exoticism of its immigrant population. Yet Sophie has had the advantage of expressing herself in both English and Spanish and has become aware of the rich creative mix she can show by embracing her Latin American roots.

Nonetheless, these images can be ambiguous, as expressed by Nelly Richards (2006) it follows a path to the self-definition by European standards for the hunger of the exotic. The images justifies how you control representational discourses is how you control people, as any social group member is a consumer and producer of stereotypes. A specific image of Latin London women can also be used to be accepted into the culture only to be seen as a highly exotic, valued and objectified commodity. Although I argue that if an image has an agency and makes the subject of the image develop resistance and empowerment through production, circulation, and display, it can positively affect the construction of its own identity. An image can be read from many different perspectives. Still, the importance of it needs to be the process of creation and the subject it depicts, as is

Sophie Castillo

Upbeat, colourful and ephemeral are the first words that come to mind when looking at Sophie Castillo's work. Whether it's her music, her modelling or her clothing brand, Cannella Clothing, it's evident that they're all extensions and expressions of herself. She was born in London to a Colombian mother and a Cuban father, and the exotic amalgamation of cultures shines through her music, with the combination of Spanish and English lyrics and instrumental beats reminiscent of laidback Latin genres.

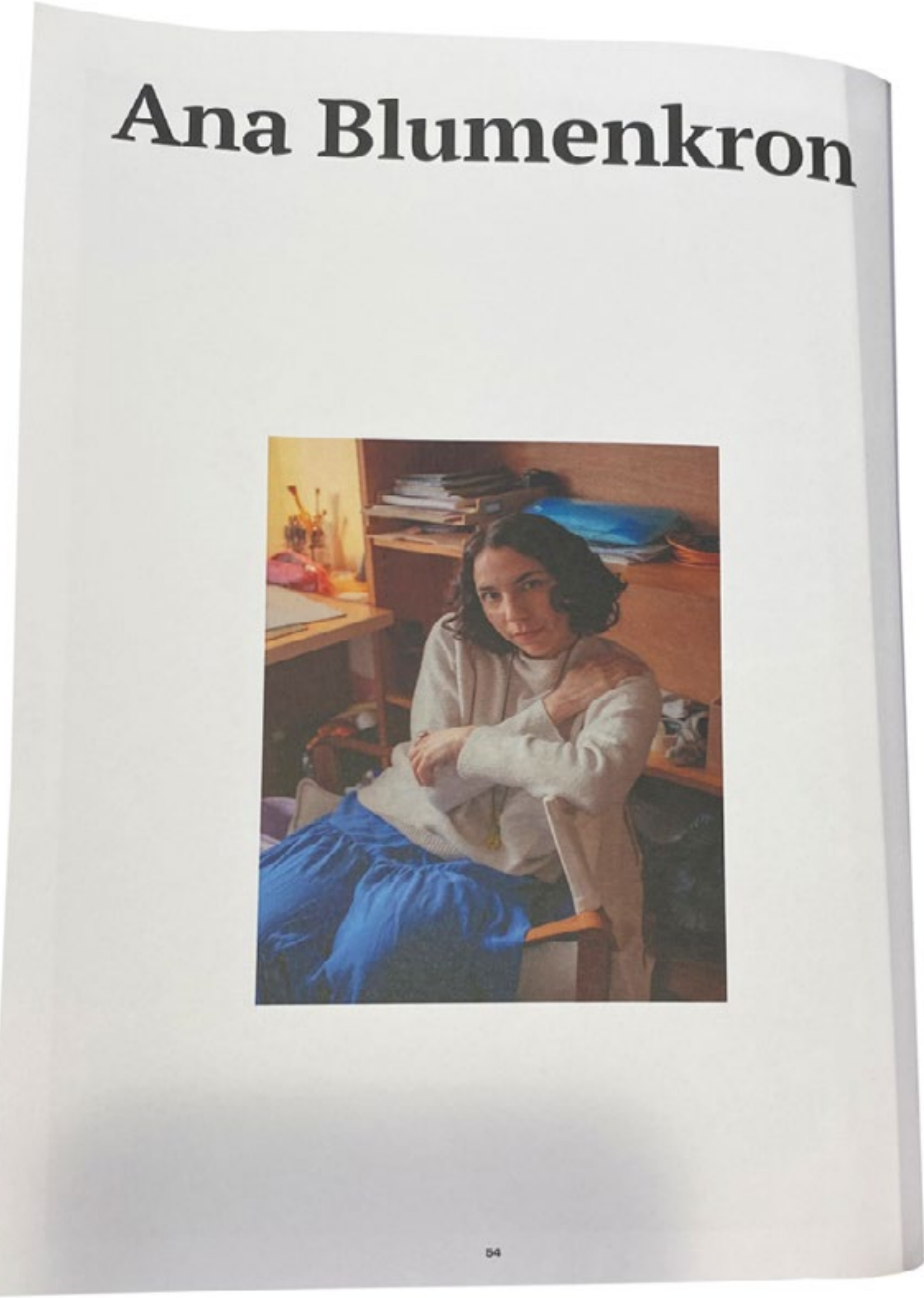
Being Latina in London has meant dealing with misconceptions about where she is from and clear, if nuanced, discrimination regarding the colour of her skin. As she puts it, though, she's never let that hold her back, "it's their problem, not our problem," she says determinedly. Instead, she has used Latin culture as inspiration to connect and express with art, music, vibrant colours and powerful stories. She hopes that her work brings more Latinos in the UK to the forefront and grows their representation in the music and editorial industries.

25

FIG.12. Sophie Castillo on Espacio Latino, by Paola Vivas

the case of participatory community projects. This project allows the carrier of stereotypes to re-appropriate other readings and re-restructure the view of Latinidad from the perspective of creatives and image creators. From a decolonial feminism perspective, this image challenges the European narrative by reappropriating the values they have given to Latinas and revisiting the life of Latinxs in London to create a new narrative, as we not only face downward occupational mobility, but we can also create and inhabit other spaces, as I will demonstrate and problematise in the following sections.

Lastly, this image of Ana Blumenkron [Fig.14] is fascinating, as only one image of her is in the book. Ana is a Mexican photojournalist, born in Mexico City and based in London. Her work focuses on gender roles, sexuality and romantic relationships from a feminist perspective. In ESPACIO LATINO, Ana's picture is sober and intriguing; she is looking at the camera with a captivating gaze, and her hands around her chest suggest a specific nonconformity, while the necklace, the rings and the skirt suggest certain affinities with Latin Americanness. In the text, she expresses how she needs to highlight Latino culture in her work and challenge Western beauty standards. This image led to an inter-visual dialogue between the two photographers as Ana also photographed Paola for an article in Vogue Mexico featuring 15 creative Latinxs living in the UK in July 2022 [Fig. 14], in which Paola expressed the importance of creating portraits to allow her to connect with people more intimately and enhance the photographer's responsibility in each picture taken. This approach speaks about the person's identity. Paola emphasises the project Directorio, a database for creative Latinxs working in London, in which they can find a solidarity network and a platform to connect. This new way of showing Latinxs in London is crucial for the community's future. As Anzaldúa mentioned, "Nothing happens in the 'real' worlds unless it first happens in the images in our heads" (1987, p87).



Ana Blumenkron

54

FIG.13. Ana Blumenkron, Espacio Latino by Paola Vivas

FIG.14. Paola Vivas. by Ana Blumenkron. For Vogue Mexico on creative Latinxs living in the UK / Creativos Latinxs viviendo en el Reino Unido

2. THE URBAN MARKET CITIZENSHIP

In London there is a tendency for migrants to feel that our lives are in constant suspension, the production of life in suspension, associated with contemporary everyday urbanism, practices in space that are intertwined with the massive flows of migration which characterise the global city (Sassen, 2013). Under this panorama, an ancient space, the urban market shifts into a transcultural spot that allows the production of a new type of migrant dwelling. In the UK there are many Traditional Retail Markets (TRM) "TRMs are indoor or outdoor, permanent or itinerant gatherings of sellers and buyers" (Bua et al., 2018, p2). These markets are particularly important for BAME communities, and vulnerable people, as they provide access to services, company, health, quality food and accessible places to work. Nevertheless, TRM remain at risk and under pressure to the new tendency in London of Commercial Gentrification (Román-Velázquez & Retis, 2021), impacting particularly migrant's communities.

The Urban Market allows for the production of The Urban Market Citizenship "urban citizenship is about expressing, if not producing, difference, and how fragmentation of claims affects urban citizenship and the right to the city with its universal, all-inclusive ideal" (Blokland et al, 2015, p1), which means that for the production of urban citizenship stability is crucial, nevertheless in London it does not necessarily happen that way and Urban Citizenship is produced in a landscape of uncertainty and instability (Berg, 2019).[75] The Urban Market (TRM) in London is an urbanscape of political and social discussion, a place that embodies Lefebvre's definition of a right to the city, where citizens should be able to shape the process of urbanisation; to reclaim spaces of encounter. Indeed, Lefebvre refers to a process of deindustrialization, and the shifts from rural to urban in the first steps of global capitalism

[75] This analysis is builds on my research about Latin Americans in London and Urban Change, from my MA dissertation (2016).

(1996), yet his writing is still compelling to analyse the brutal dynamics of the globalised city. Harvey reiterates the right to the city in a more contemporary discussion, as the Urban Revolution in which cities have become such an extreme manifestation of capitalism that the claiming of a right to the city implies struggle and a reconstruction of the urban system (2012).

The Urban Market itself –Outside (street) market or Indoor market– is a spontaneous space shaped by an ecosystem of social relationships. In the UK, for instance, Leicester Indoor Market is a space that has attracted a prominent South Asian community and a small population of Polish people (William, 2010) and is an example of the importance of these spaces for migrant communities. Tooting Market is also a space that has shaped the lives of the Tamil Diaspora and other migrants in the Southwest of London peripheries (Anpa, 2019). Similarly, Davis argues that in the USA, the 'civilised' society in the Mesoamerican and Ibero-Mediterranean cultures is based on the intercourse of the *Plaza de Mercado* (2001, p65). As a shared vision, it is the space of gathering, of knowing 'the other' and interacting.

In the UK, as Michael Rios mentioned, Latinos seek to create spaces of gathering that resemble a domestic space in their homeland, turning them into a private-public space that "anchors group solidarity in the urban landscape" (2010, p103). The Urban Market has been a significant place for constructing Latin London, in both Elephant and Castle and Seven Sisters. Therefore, it is a channel for Latinidad to flourish as a transcultural dynamic in the urban fabric, shaped by the migrant gaze, which, as I have explained before, is a means for recognition. These places allow for the reproduction of sociable working hours and challenge the Migrant division of labour, which refers to "workers from abroad taking on the growing number of low-paid jobs at the bottom end of London's labour market" (Evans, Datta & Wills, 2010, p38). TRM offer migrants opportunities that otherwise will be neglected in the broader London labour market, such as setting up their businesses, having their kids in the places at work, creating a vibrant community, organising their events, etc. (McIllwaine et al., 2010). As described by Hasenberger and Nogueira when referring to the former Seven Sister's Indoor Market (2022), "the Latin Village provides an important social resource and is a meaningful place where the spheres of work and home, public and private, overlap" (p14), a space of co-operation. Sennett described cooperation as a skill of exchange that focuses on collaboration with each other, allowing people who share the same space to create an amalgam of interactions, detaching new constellations of actions in which living together makes it easier to balance the skills between each

other, without someone else acting as the 'institution of power'. "Mutual support is built into the genes of all social animals; they cooperate to accomplish what they can't do alone" (2012. p5). Yet the author argues that modern society is de-skilling, losing that sense of working together. Instead, we are told to 'be competitive'. Indeed, in 'global cities', a new dynamic of expulsion (Sassen, 2014) appears in the urban fabric, breaking familiar connections between neighbourhoods, enhancing dynamics of isolation and, consequently, homogenising urban places that no longer identify with one place. This means the dynamics of belonging are undermined. All this creates anxiousness about the urban future. In the next section, I will show some strategies of resistance and visualisation for constructing an urban space based on human interaction. The Urban Market becomes a mechanism to channel Latinidad and represents a gaze of the everyday migrant experience.

FIG.15. Image taken by Southwark Public Libraries, in Nov. 1963. Elephant and Castle redevelopment, showing progress on the new Shopping Centre. Showing the former public subways closed in 2015

2.1. WALKING THE ELEPHANT

This image shows a man confidently walking down the subways at Elephant and Castle in 1963, prior to The Shopping Centre being opened to the public (1965). He is perhaps a doctor, an electrician, or some kind of worker. South London has always been identified as the working-class area of London where service people live, or at least used to before planetary gentrification hit the city (Lees, 2008). The image depicts a scene of Elephant and Castle; though 63 years have passed, it is not unfamiliar: a construction site, a space in transition. By looking at the photograph, it is clear the intention to archive and preserve the process of change and regeneration in the area as Southwark Council commissioned it. As I have explain in Landscapes of Memory Chapter Five, humans need to keep records that later can tell the histories of a nation. Reflections in the representation of space impact the way the space is perceived or lived in. This image represents what Virginia Woolf called 'street haunting' (1927) as the minds wandering the streets, and at the same time, it shows how we all become part of the tangible urban landscape. The person in the picture is imagined as coming and going underneath the subways, walking at their pace, not interrupted via a giant urban barrier. Still, this free navigation of London in the image is no longer possible today, as the subways closed in 2015 as part of the Elephant and Castle redevelopment process.

Lauren Elkin defined Elephant and Castle as "the absolute awfulness (...) the ugliness of a society that lends no hand to the marginalised" (2017, p88). I wonder how many of her city walks have been conducted in the Elephant; as a white American writer writing about London and Paris, this book does not represent a wide intersectional approach to the idea of walking the city as a woman, indeed not as a minority in the Global North. Nevertheless, there are some interesting developments in her work *Flâneuse: Women Walk the City in Paris, New York, Tokyo, Venice, and London* (2017). Elkin based her concept on the 1850s male figure of the *Flâneur*, created in Haussmann's Paris, a man that can wander around the city, detached from his surroundings. The *Flâneur* could engage with the urban experience as a wealthy man with free time to walk and wonder. The modern city created public spaces to interact, observe, and rest, yet the modern idea of the European city. Indeed, as the author argues, a city was planned and built by white males, not thinking of the marginalised minorities. Elkin developed the idea of the *Flâneuse* inspired by Virginia Woolf and the suffragette movement. Elkin investigates women walking the cities – bear in mind that she only explores cities in the Global North – she says, "I walk because, somehow, it is like reading" (p21). There is undoubtedly an ethnographic approach that I have taken throughout my years in London by walking the Elephant.

As Elkin explains, Virginia Woolf felt overwhelmed by the changes in London. Is the changing rhythm of the city expelling us? How can we overcome or adapt to the changes in the city? If we ever felt part of it, do we ever feel that again? There are different approaches to go back and retake the city, which I will reveal in the following paragraphs.

When I started my MA in 2016, in early February, I became interested in investigating Latin American women's experiences in London. Back then, I lived with a Latin American woman in Dollis Hill, Northwest London. She once told me about the Latin American House and her friend, the filmmaker Patricia Díaz. Coincidentally or not – as you will never know in London – Patricia Díaz and Ximena Alarcón hosted an event that month at the London College of Communication (LCC) in Elephant and Castle, where they presented the arts-based research project called Weaving Migrations. The audio-visual installation told the story of the cultural interactions between the Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre community, LCC staff, students, and visitors. They wanted to highlight the closure of the former Elephant and Castle subways that used to connect The Shopping Centre and the University – the same subways just opened in the 1963 picture [Fig. 15]. Via a binaural sound Alarcón and Díaz, uncovered the soundscapes of everyday interactions, effects, memory and observations.[76] In *Feminist City*, Leslie Kerns stated that "nothing that we

[76] See https://vimeo.com/162946040

FIG.16. Images from Walking the Elephant Tour, UCL Geography MSc Urban Studies and Latin Elephant, in which I have participated as organiser and assistant, with UCL 2022-2023

have wasn't fought for; that we'll gain in the future will be given without a fight" (2021, p119). A created space is a junction of vectors that make it real. To narrate the histories of space helps to develop a sense of ensemble movements, which are mediated by the gaze. De Certeau argues in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1980) "Thus space is composed of intersections of mobile elements. It is in a sense actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it. Space occurs as the effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalise it, and make it function in a polyvalent unity of conflictual programs or contractual proximities" (p117). Both Kern and De Certeau are clear to assert that a space is made by the everyday interactions that occur within it and those are only possible if there is a constant movement happening in that space. A space like Elephant is at constant threat from closure, if you were to navigate the area without knowing it well, it has a sense of disruption, and you can easily get lost. GPS are not updated to changes and there are no signs or symbols that can help you navigate the roundabout. As Elkin mentions "walking is mapping with your feet" (p21). Latin Elephant embarked on the idea of opening up the Elephant for people and campaigning for recognition of the area to help locals overcome the forces of urban change, through a series of walking activities [Fig. 16].

This first project was created in 2017, commissioned by Student Supported Fund of LCC/UAL and in collaboration with Latin Elephant, aimed at creating a participatory visual experience, that became a digital tool capturing a lively, convivial public space that creates and fosters community. The two-year project was called Walking The Elephant / Recorriendo Elephant, led by the illustrator, designer, writer, researcher and educator Luise Vormittag. They carried out several workshops in and around the former Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre, inviting residents and traders to map their everyday experiences in the area to produce cartographies as can be seen in [Fig.17]. They have also produced digital cartography, and a three-part series of pamphlets, where people can navigate the re-imagined Elephant, drawn by Vormittag from the perspectives of those gathered during fieldwork.[77]

After the Walking the Elephant Project, the charity realised the potential that lies in walking the city, as Elkin mentioned "I had to walk around to understand where I was in space, how places relate to each other" (2017, p6). They wanted to aim for recognition of the space and to create a process to get the people to know the new relocation sites and exposed the version of the narrative of what happened to the Elephant and Castle Shopping

[77] See the map here: https://latinelephant.org/walkingtheelephant/

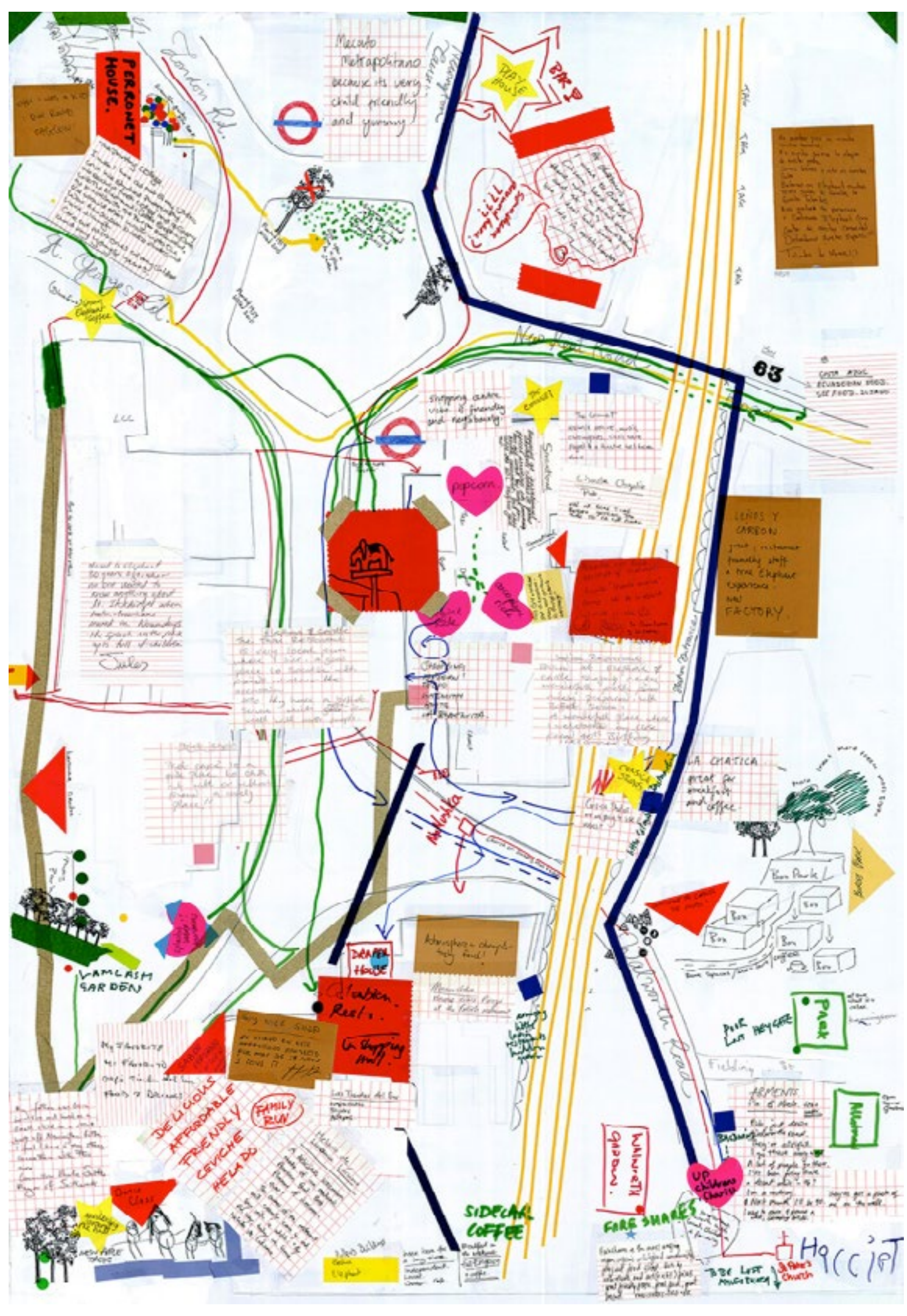


FIG.17. Walking the Elephant collaborative map developed by Luise Vormittag, Latin Elephant and the local community. https://latinelephant.org/walkingtheelephant/

Centre's traders. They also wanted to create resistance and appropriate the new spaces, to not be defeated by the urban change process. In 2018, they won Funding for the Untold Stories Grant, so they created The Elephant Walking Tour conceptualised by Elephant directors, Patria, Santiago and Natalia. They had a focus on food at the beginning; Elephant is known for its café culture and food from all over the world.

The funding was part of the London Mayor's Commission for Diversity in the Public Realm which awarded £533,000 to support a series of community projects designed to improve diversity in the capital's public spaces. The grant was advertised as offering "Londoners the opportunity to develop ideas and share their stories which will be represented within the public realm" (2021). Latin Elephant also commissioned a mural with the grant, one that represents Latin America and the local community, which is a key point that they showed in the walks. [Fig.18] Painted by the Peruvian muralist and artist Gisella Stapleton Prieto with the message *Latinoamérica Florece* – Latin America is flourishing – it has become a symbol of the community, and it is aimed to be preserved in the further redevelopment process where the arches might be affected. As mentioned before, this mural presents Abya Yala, as the territory of pre-Hispanic times, where the connection to earth and the rhythms of the body prevailed in what I have addressed before as the Cuerpo/Territorio vision. It tells a history of diversity but also resistance, as it narrates how, by emphasising the Latin London memories in the area, it commemorates the migratory experiences that made the place a Latin American hub.

After the funding was finished, they wanted to do the walks and invite people to get involved with the area, highlight its café culture, and show the food available. They also wanted to help the traders direct foot traffic to their businesses. Different people and traders organise each tour.

In the thirteenth episode of the Latin London Podcast, I interviewed Sophie Wall, Latin Elephant project coordinator (2023) [Fig.27]. She is an access worker, translator and writer. Sophie studied languages and lived in Colombia, which made her feel closer to Elephant and Castle after she returned to the UK. We spoke about the relocation process in Elephant and Castle after the demolition in September 2020, the intersectional crisis the traders faced since COVID-19, Brexit, Gentrification/Relocation and Cost of Living, additionally about the central role of Latin Elephant for advocacy, political campaigning and visibility.

FIG.18. Mural outside DistriAndina in Elephant and Castle, Latin Elephant team with Artist Gisella Stapleton

FIG.19. Walking the Elephant Tour. Latin Elephant.Winter 2022

RECORRIDO
POR ELEPHANT
EDICIÓN DE INVIERNO
LatinElephant
SÁBADO, 10 DE DICIEMBRE • 1:30 PM
ARCO 1, ELEPHANT RD SE17 1LB
• CONOZCA A LOS COMERCIANTES Y LA COMUNIDAD
• DISFRUTE MUESTRAS DE COMIDA DE ESTAT TEMPORADA
• APOYE A LOS NEGOCIOS INDEPENDIENTES
REGÍSTRESE POR EVENTBRITE O ESCRÍBANOS: INFO@LATINELEPHANT.ORG

FIG.20. Recorrido por Elephant. Latin Elephant. Invierno 2022.

FIG.21. Participants at the Walking the Elephant Tour. Latin Elephant. Winter 2022

FIG.22. Participants at the Walking the Elephant Tour. Latin Elephant. Winter 2022

FIG.23. Walking the Elephant Tour. Latin Elephant. Summer 2022

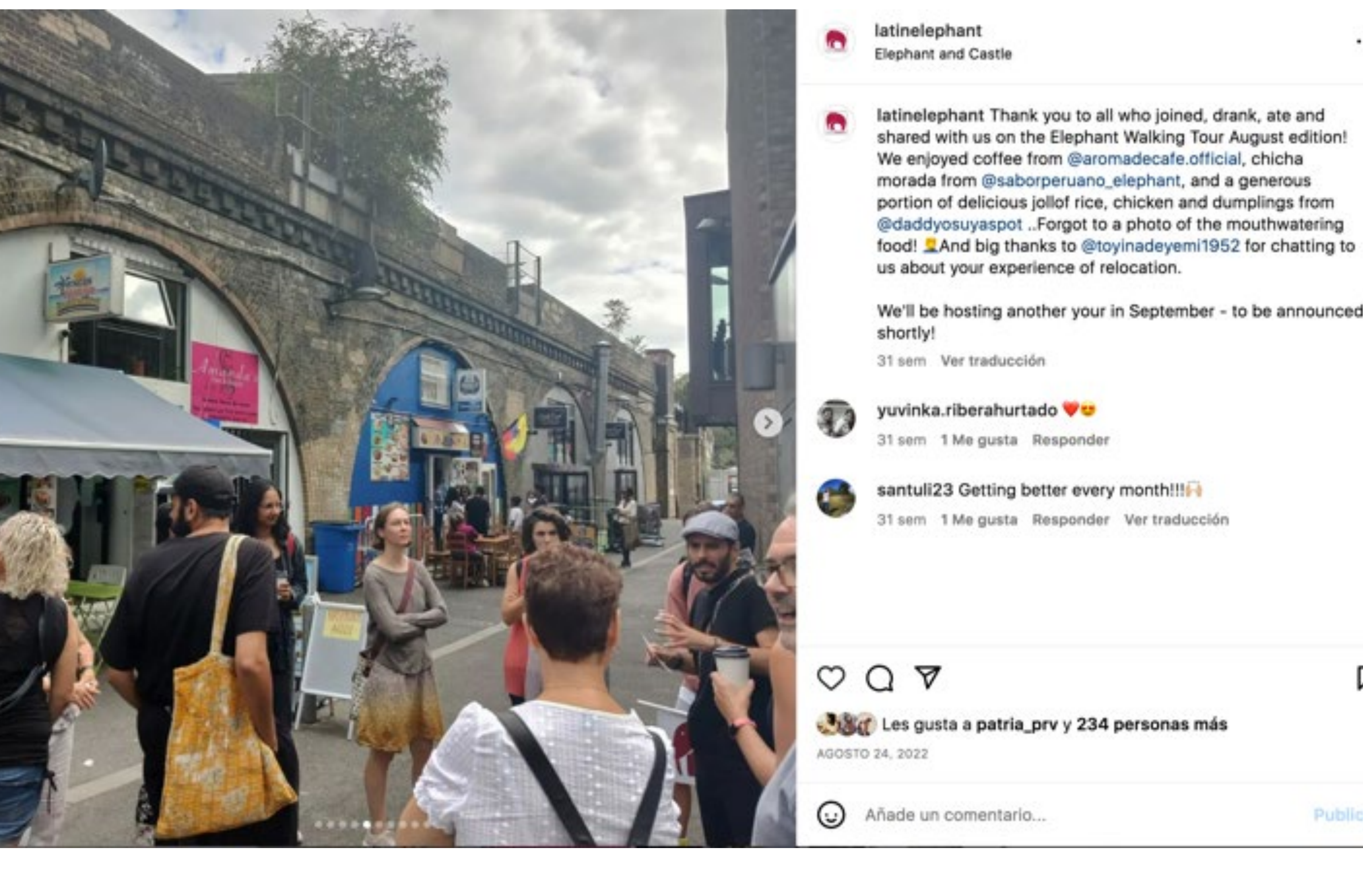


FIG.24. Participants on Walking the Elephant Tour. Latin Elephant. Summer 2022

FIG.25. Participants on Walking the Elephant Tour. Latin Elephant. Summer 2022

FIG.26. Walking the Elephant Tour. Content Latin Elephant Instagram.

FIG.27. Latin London Podcast. Episode 13, Walking the Elephant. Sophie Wall

Sophie mentioned that "they wanted to bring groups of people around Elephant and Castle (...) as there has been a lot that is lost in the area (...) and there is a lot of people that don't think that there is something here anymore because The Shopping Centre is closed, so they wanted to direct the foot traffic towards business" (2023). They have built a relationship with the traders that allows them to show and share an honest story on how these changes have impacted local people.

In the episode, we discussed the role of Universities as spectators in the walking tours, which is decisive for understanding the impact of urban planning policies on BAME populations. There is a paradox or issue that they are trying to avoid, and it is the exoticisation of the despair, as in London, many Universities have shifted into a capitalised-based education that aims for experiences rather than further involvement with communities.

Furthermore, as I have explained earlier, there is potential to visualise the importance of Women and their role within the community. The community has been women-led, with campaigning mainly developed by figures such as Patria Román-Velázquez, The London Latinxs, and the women traders Vicky Álvarez and Martha Hinestroza in Seven Sisters. The imperative role of women in the construction of Latin London is also evidenced within this walk, as I have shown through the use of Latinidad as a unifying factor based on the feminine values of care and protection. The walks as a *Flâneuse* structure are related to Elkin's: "The *flâneuse* is still fighting to be seen, even now, when, as we'd like to think, she more or less has the run of the city" (p18). The group wanted to be acknowledged as a place in the city, fighting against this vertical, phallocentric redevelopment scheme.

As expressed by Kern and Elkin (2020), we are connected on the street level and the movement towards a vertical city, as a phallocentric development, makes us believe that we are disconnected. But as feminist geography has shown, what you do up on the luxury skies impacts the street and below-line lives. So, we should create alliances on a street level. In that case, there are ways to challenge that kind of development, and these walks are a political challenge and, at the same time, an ethical experience of Latin American cultures in London. In Autumn 2023, the walk took an approach directly linked to memory and the archive; they showed participants [Fig.26] pictures of the former places inside the Shopping Centre and portraits of traders that used to be in the area. They emphasise the loss of a trading ecosystem that could be captured in the images, where an issue of race and inequality is evident, as I have exposed the way urban planning policies in London are creating and producing urban regeneration.

Latin Elephant's narrative of what happened in the Elephant is embodied in campaigning as re-claimers of our space in the city. For Latin Elephant walking is campaigning, a political act that puts the right to the city as the site for discourse, encoding in the narrative being told or untold by the players at stake. The work the charity has done exposes representational forms that are encoded as platforms for demanding visualisations. It is an extended version of social movements of Latin Americans in London campaigning for visibility. The experience of the migrant gaze in the city is also built within our space of encounter. However, the process aims for a positive visualisation of the traders in Elephant; it also reinforces the idea of *othering*, as being different from the landscape, which is not, in reality, a disadvantage, and actually, in some cases it allows the community to be different from the rest of the offer within the area, which reduces the *rate of assimilation*.

The poetics of walking are embedded in the visuality-oriented public techniques of Latin Elephant as a charity, focusing on expressing optical veracity, that is, the epistemological truth as a migrant community. Walking as an exercise of recognition but also as a political tool is an expression of the image complex expressed by McLagan and McKee (2012) in *Sensible Politics: The Visual Culture of Nongovernmental Activism* as the configurations of visuality that are mutually constitutive realms: aesthetics, mediation and political movements. This triggers perception, cognition and aspiration. As shown in the series of figures [Figs. 19-26] above, the capacity to experience the city embodied psychologically and emotionally allows for the apparition of the spatial organisation of power and the tensions involved. As expressed by Butler (2011), "plural and public actions is the exercise of the right to place and belonging" (p59); this is the space of appearance, that is to say, the migrant gaze.

2.2. *SEVEN SISTER´S INDOOR MARKET FILM*

As highlighted in Diasporic Geographies in Chapter Three, around 2000, Latin Americans started settling in Tottenham, North London, changing and improving the infrastructural and cultural aspects of the Seven Sisters Indoor Market, Pueblito Paisa or Latin Village. A TRM, Traditional Retail Markets, is not only a space for gathering and entertaining but also a political space for struggle, resistance and organisation. Moreover, they are spaces of authenticity. Zukin argues that "authenticity refers to the look and feel of a place as well as the social connectedness that place inspires" (2010, p220). Yet, there is a crisis of authenticity due to the constant changes in the contemporary conception of space as a space of commodity consumption instead of social relations.
The community plan created by Wards Corner Coalition,[78] has drawn the attention of two filmmakers Klearjos Papanicoulau and Marios Kletakis; both decided to tell the history of the everyday life in the Seven Sisters Indoor Market (SSIM) to a wider public. The film presents to the viewer the counter-position of what the council has called a derelict landscape, putting emphasis on the level of risk, that not only marks the SSIM but London as a whole, as a space that is uplifting individuality and little by little letting complex-communal spaces die, this audio-visual

[78] See Chapter Three for further details.

FIG.28. Cranes of new construction around London, still from the Seven Sisters Indoor Market Film

approach has called the attention of the community and other social activists that feel empathy, with the cause, allowing processes such as a crowd funding campaign [79] that is aiming to get funding to resist the CPO; the community have also organised meet ups to introduce the market to a wider audience, in order to called the attention of the Mayor of London, to intervene.[80]

The film starts with a journey from Central London to Seven Sisters, putting the viewer in a journey from impersonal chaotic London to a space of familiarity and informality, is constantly emphasised during the length of the audio-visual document through the music, confronting the sound and images of cranes, cement, bulldozers and so on, with the Salsa, Reggaeton and Vallenato (Latin American music) of the market. Furthermore, this film has shifted into a political tool for resistance, the community have created a strong sense of belonging, people in the market are recognised by a wider audience. The change is imminent, but the question is how the change is confronted? The value of this market, as Klearjos Papanicoulau (2016) argues, "is a space that is visually genuine because it is an informal place; it allows the production of spontaneous appropriations". With the film they aim for a visualisation of a place that unveils subterranean discourses, exposing visually the anxiety that living in a 'global city' produces to its inhabitants facing situations of inequality, as Stuart Hall expresses in his analysis of Caribbean Cinema in Cultural Identity and diaspora, "that form of representation which can constitute us as new kinds of subjects, and thereby enable us to discover places from which to speak" (p236). This film has detached actions and put risk into the public eye to create awareness of the massive cracks in the membrane of London [Figs.29 & 30].

The urbanscape of London, as a space of influx and constant foreign investment, reckless competition and increasing prices, is in the hands of citizens in how awareness is awakened and how we engage with causes of resistance. Local governments' responses to these systematic problems of gentrification

[79]See the campaign https://www.youcaring.com/latinvillagewardscorner-714518?utm_source=marketo&utm_medium=email&utm_content=Day-2&utm_campaign=Nurture-Stream-Organizer

[80] At the time of writing, Jeremy Corbyn and Laura Corbyn have visited the market and remain compromise with the cause, promising the community a place int he city. See more http://www.expressnews.uk.com/texto-diario/mostrar/555301/laura-corbyn-visito-pueblito-paisa?ref=articlerelated] [http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/london-mayor-election/1914800/Boris-Johnson-woos-Liberal-Democrats-ahead-of-2008-mayoral-election.html#continue

FIG.29. Seven sisters Indoor Market, 2016. Still from the Seven Sister's Indoor Market Film

FIG.30. The images are part of the crowd funding campaign that is showing testimonies of people that use the market. It also exposes the situation of Latin American Women migrants and how in this trans-cultural spaces they encounter between each other and be empowered

that have been denounced on many occasions all over the city will lead to a positive or negative change. In Seven Sisters, the council's response has benefit private property developers. Nevertheless, local traders and residents who have shaped the place into a space of social interactions have managed to challenge those forces and get their voices heard in the process of regeneration, with their community plan in the process of recognition. In the recent report *Social Value Index: Building the Case for the Democratic Commons in Tottenham* (2023). Almeida defines the Public/Commons Partnership in terms of the fights Wards Corner Community Coalition has been involved in for the past 15 years. "Public-*commons* partnerships are offered as a method of providing broader social, economic and political value to a local community and bolstering the production and sharing of community wealth" (p2). Local government policies will have to approach policies of permeability between the citizens and the state, enhancing a discourse of cooperation, dismissing xenophobia, and integrating the migrants as part of London's urban space instead of neglecting its importance and addressing this issue as undesirable.

As I already made clear in Chapter Three, the community in Seven Sisters and wider Tottenham challenged Grainger PLC, a natural state developer, who retired from the Seven Sisters Market Redevelopment. *The Seven Sisters Indoor Market* film was released in 2016. It was a catalyst to unify the community and visualise the problem to a wider London audience. It later nourished the different community groups that came together to challenge Grainger and the practices of capital-led urban development aimed at blocking and separation. Social Value is visualised via the images produced and disseminated that I have discussed in these six chapters. A more cooperative and integral urban future can be built through the communal view of urban realms.

2.3. *ÉLEFAN*

Films and cinema energise the creation of memories, giving significance to life experiences, as explored by Sprio when referring to Italian generations of migrants in Britain: "the power of the voice and of being heard amongst in a community of people whose experience is shared is fundamental to the nurturing of the self in an alien land" (2013, p184). Daniel Díaz is undoubtedly one of those voices, a *mobilising identity* which, from a shared cosmogony, political connections and agency, represents a diaspora group and allows the triggering of action and participation, enhancing the construction of diasporic memories. Diaz is a Colombian-British filmmaker and producer, born in Southwest London in the 1990s. When interviewed for this work, Díaz (2023) mentioned how vital the Elephant and Castle was for him and his family when growing up. It was a place where they evoked Colombia. He mentioned that it was a place that remained as if it was Colombia when his family left and that stayed like that since it was demolished in 2020-2021. Díaz suggested that it was the place of pilgrimage for Latin Americans in the UK to connect with other Latinos and their roots.

Daniel Díaz always had the idea of making something about Elephant and Castle, and in 2019, when he heard about the demolition, he started

ÉLEFAN

WITH LUCY VILLAMIZAR LENIN ERAZO FELIPE HERNANDEZ SEBASTIÁN TABARES ARIAS CESAR QUINTERO ANNA CASTRO AND LATIN ELEPHANT

A CINEOLA PRODUCTION "ÉLEFAN" DIRECTED BY DANIEL DÍAZ PRODUCED BY RYAN KEANE & DANIEL DÍAZ CINEMATOGRAPHY RICH FELGATE
ADDITIONAL CINEMATOGRAPHY SUSY PEÑA EDITED BY RYAN KEANE MUSIC JOSE REBIMBAS SOUND EDITOR & RE-RECORDING MIXER
YANINA MORA CASA COLOURIST FILIPE FERNANDES STILL PHOTOGRAPHY MIKE EXCELL ARTWORK YU SATO

FIG.31. Élefan poster, film by Daniel Díaz, 2022

to go to the area, film it, and get connected to the place again. Then he heard about Latin Elephant's work and approached them to create a visual resistance manifestation, or an archival of this process, with them. He worked with Santiago and Natalia, as previously mentioned. He designed a script that allowed them to tell the stories of the retailers in their last days trading at the *Élefan* –as we called the area in Spanish-. [Fig.32].

The film starts with a conversation between Sebastián and Felipe [Fig.33], two young Colombian boys who worked at Distriandina when it was a restaurant and a nightclub. Currently, it works only as a shop. In that scene, one can grasp a "candid, honest moment that foreshadows what happens when these places are knocked down" (Interview with Daniel, 2023); this scene encompasses vulnerability and the naïve attitude of young migrants; it is also refreshing as it shows the ability of migrants to adapt and to make a place, a home in a host place. It emphasises the impact of the dynamics of the expulsion of the neoliberal city (Sassen, 2014) on migrant and marginalised communities, a constant force of displacement manifested in the neglected practices of local authorities. This is evident in the photographic series made by Mike Excell –a friend of Diaz's– which accompanies the film. [Fig.32]. The migrant gaze is the look with which Latino spaces have been portrayed but also the way official sites for Latino communities have had to pass through in the planetary process of gentrification, which means "a process involving a change in the population of land-users such that the new users are of a higher socio-economic status than the previous users, together with an associated change in the built environment through a reinvestment in fixed capital" (Lees, 2008, p12). In this image [Fig.33], the arches, the railway, and the contrast between new and old council houses depict the changes in the area and how the community's expulsion is sanitising the place, creating a site of boredom and homogenisation. Sebastián and Felipe, two young Latin American boys, represent the Migrant Gaze in terms of the expulsion of Latinidad as the bodies that might face displacement due to the global dynamics of real estate development.

There is a level of activism and ideological alignment in the representation of these stories; the loss of the spaces for gathering forces second and third-generation migrants to create new links and connections to their homelands that might not include their first-generation parents, a dynamic that might develop a sense of alienation, "as the second generation is so much easily able to slide between identities" (Sprio, 2013, p187). Therefore, there is a risk of losing one of them if there is not a place where one can find familiarity.

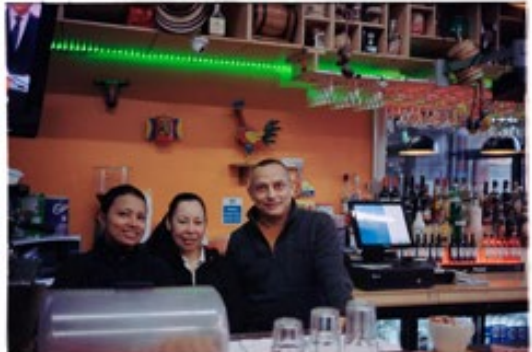
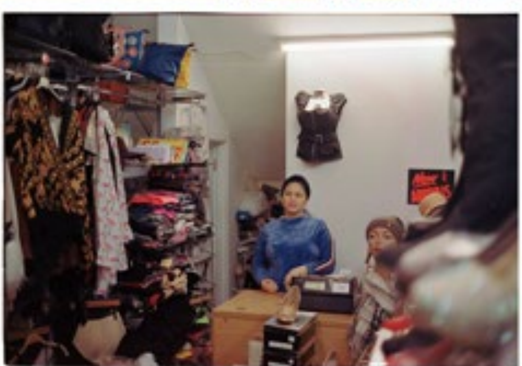



FIG.32.Élefan Film Photographic Series by Mike Excell (2023)

FIG.33.Élefan Film Photographic Series by Mike Excell (2023). Felipe and Sebastián

The interest in these images has been evident in their circulation amongst film festivals where the author has encountered that there is a broader issue of cities, migrants and gentrification at stake in the global neoliberal economy (Interview with Daniel, 2023), echoing Hall M.'s research on *The Migrant Paradox* (2021) "From the street we see the state: how liberal democracies differentially conceive of citizens in terms of class, gender, "race," and migration status; and how citizens conceive of belonging in terms of journeys, cross-ings, encounters, and contestations" (p48). The exploitation of local economies to promote private investment has led to the constant displacement of marginalised communities that usually don't adapt to the new demographics of specific areas and pushed fragmented and decluttered communities to the margins; that is why the work of representation is crucial to counteract the intentions of profiting from the commodification of cultural values. The storytelling highlights and denounces these systematic activities, and as I have proven through this thesis, the importance of counter-narratives that challenge the narratives of gentrification, exoticisation and displacement in London to create and enhance community ties that foster a sense of belonging.

Overall, this film illustrates problems of displacement and threats that in capitalist London have been enhanced in the last 15 years, looking at the importance of organised resistance to show alternatives for the preservation of community spaces such as the Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre and The Seven Sisters Indoor Market that via visual activism are addressed to show to a wider public its importance within London.

In light of the privatisation of social practices, due to the profit of any space in London as a 'global city' (Minton, 2006), this film provides scanning of the feelings amongst traders and residents and a desire to keep fighting for the creation of an urban revolution (Harvey, 2013) that acknowledges belonging and fights against homogenisation. Indeed, it is an uncertain terrain for Latin Londoners, London's minor ethnic communities, and Londoners. Yet, as Harvey suggested, "So, we, the people, have no option but to struggle for the collective right to decide how that system shall be reconstructed and, in whose image" (2013, p164). As I will show in the next section and have been presenting throughout this thesis, the process of community organisation via *mobilising identities* challenges everyday segregation within a UK hostile environment via Visual Activism.

3.

STORYTELLING OF FEMINISED RESISTANCE IN LATIN LONDON

In the remainder of this chapter, I will explore the concept of the gaze regarding Latin American Women in London and the migrant condition, using storytelling to trigger processes of resistance, trust, healing and belonging.

Storytelling has become a tool to express those things that women cannot talk about, to understand and visualise complex experiences and to develop a network of solidarities in which women's work and practices gain value and are put on the agenda to call for social justice and policy changes. "Women's efforts can be supported in several ways, and benefits may well ensue from a multi-pronged approach" (McIllwaine & Chant, 2016, p223) in terms of how women might be able to inhabit cities with better policies for their rights and needs. Catalina Ortiz suggests that co-creating with cultural organisations using arts-based approaches fosters empathy via storytelling. "(S)torytelling can play a significant role to translate and reframe urban knowledge and aspirations" (2022, p411), connecting memory and everyday practices and enhancing the process of resistance, healing and belonging.

The use of the adjective feminised has been widely recognised since sociologist Diana Pierce coined the term in 1978 to refer to the intersecting oppressions and complications that women, care workers and poor communities face, particularly in The Global South (Peterson, 1987). For migrant women, this is exceptionally challenging due to the lack of support networks and social isolation (McIlwaine & Chant, 2016), which links to the development of the migrant condition in a situation of precarity, uncertainty, and insecurity. McIlwaine coined the term "Feminised onward precarity" to explain its intertwined and intersectional characteristics "to capture how female and male migrants experience precarious living and working conditions that

reflect devaluation and exploitation in intersectional ways" (2020, p1).

In the way migrants' lives experience the Global North, there is a component of resistance that developed as a counter-narrative to the feminisation of precarity, and in that process, charities and networks of solidarities have helped to create a Latin London geography of resistance. As I expressed before, representing the conditions of precarity and resisting permits Latin Americans to develop broader visibility in the city. Representation reinforces networks within the community; as Mirzoeff points out, "the right to look is strongly interfaced with the right to be seen" (2011, 484), and in the case of Latin American women's work, the Right to be Believed (McIlwaine, 2020) forming a complex of visuality. Therefore, individual and collective interests come together to cooperate for a right to the city, mainly in the global realm, a process compelling to minor ethnic populations pushed away from inner cities. In doing so, representation becomes a means to denounce, challenge, and create cooperative actions amongst transcultural inhabitants.

3.1. SUPER-DIVERSITY AND THE POLITICS OF HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT FOR LATIN LONDONERS

Vertovec's recent approach to super-diversity is updated to various social categories directly linked to migration. "Superdiversity is a concept pertaining to a set of social conditions and processes giving rise to changing forms of social organisation. These conditions also arise from and contribute to shifts in the meanings of multiple social categories and the social relations conditioned by them" (2023, p193). Superdiversity impacts the way cities are shaped, mainly, in the case of this research, via the way migrants shape and inhabit cities. For Latin Londoners, inhabiting super-diverse areas has helped to mix and shape Latinidad with the dynamics of London as a global city. As Metter Louise Berg (2022) expressed when interviewed for the Latin London Podcast, the dynamic of super-diversity allows for different cultural backgrounds to mix and develop specific dynamics linked to London specifically.

As expressed before, the UK's Hostile Environment policies have been exacerbating precarity and complex conditions for migrants since 2014 with the UK Immigration Act, which "circulated through social circuits first as an ideology and then as deeply damaging social policy" (Hall, 2021, p30). The act exacerbated social divisions and inequality, making the lives of migrants in the UK even harder. For instance, If you are a migrant woman denouncing a situation of abuse, if you go to the police

and you don't have your right to settle yet, the police will detain you and won't deal with the violence issue, revictimising the person, as denounced in the project Women Resisting Violence (McIlwaine et al., 2022), that I will present in the next section.

In *Narratives of Migration, Relocation and Belonging - Latin Americans in London* (2020), Román-Velázquez & Retis argue that "These structural conditions are reinforced in the UK by the immigration regime - the so-called "hostile environment" - that actively militates against migrants, especially migrant women survivors" (p11). This, not particular to Latin London but to any migrant group, affects the bonding and alliances and calls for an extended migration solidarity network. Even though the community is very supportive and constantly helps with language barriers, access to service, right to work and other everyday life complexities, "advice via word of mouth and informal support structures within the Latin American community may somewhat mitigate the impact of language and other barriers, but they do not always convey the complexity of rules and entitlements for individuals and can diminish rather than enhance the capacity to gain access to resources for individuals and groups" (Berg, 2019, p7). This links to feminised precarity as the network sometimes naturalises conditions of suffering and poverty and exacerbates communal precarity conditions, for instance, isolating within their language and not creating a space for learning English; "but also how precarity has been feminised through a process of devaluation and exploitation of insecure forms of work and wider living conditions" (Mcilwaine, 2020, p2621).

To foster belongingness, the community will benefit from consistently working for visibility and spaces to mix and socialise in London, as "Despite the relative visibility gained over the last 30 years, Latin Americans remain largely invisible in census data, thus remaining one of London's 'hidden communities'" (Román-Velázquez & Retis, 2020, p196). There is a need for holistic support to dismantle infrastructures of violence that threaten Latin American migrants, which also can benefit from a broader recognition that will challenge the politics of the hostile environment.

3.1.2. MinA THEATRE: GEOGRAPHIES OF MIGRANT RESISTANCE

Butler argues, "We must think about bodies together in a historical space that undergoes a historical transformation by virtue of their collective action" (2015, p74). The movements of bodies shape transnational cities and cities in general; cities are living organisms and are affected by dynamics within each of them, particularly in the global era. Migrant bodies in action together enhance a space for an appearance that usually does not happen in isolation; in collectivity, migrants find visibility to exercise the right to place and belonging. Here, the migrant gaze working with an active aim points the attention to a particular aspect that seeks a place to belong, and if the infrastructure fails, vulnerability and exposure to harm come to the surface and foster conditions of precarity. Nevertheless, *mobilising identities*, as I have proven, are constantly enhancing processes of representation that struggle to highlight the need to further provision for migrants as interconnected bodies.

The Latin American Bureau and Kings College London created Women Resisting Violence (2022), a project that traces the experiences of Latin American Women and gathers initiatives that respond to them. They created a podcast series, a book, events, reports, and alliances to respond to the ongoing and alarming problem of *feminicidio* in Latin

America and the violence Latin American migrant women experience.

One of the organisations that collaborated is MinA Theatre – Migrants in Action, a collective created by Carolina Cal Angrisini in 2018 to support minoritised migrant women. It is a group of Brazilian women who have worked both in London and Rio de Janeiro.[81] They advocate for the visibility of Latin American Brazilian women in the UK and Europe. They use storytelling and performance to bring their stories to a broader audience and denounce the inhumane and violent situations that migrant women have to go through. Nevertheless, it is also a resisting and survivor space to showcase the capacities of women to recover when in a safe and communal space. MinA participated in the project *Women Resisting Violence* to re-enact and reinterpret the report entitled 'We can't fight in the dark' (McIlwaine and Evans, 2018); the project is called *We Still Fight in the Dark* (2022), a coproduced work on storytelling and arts-based research presenting empirical data, art performances, workshops, poems, photographs, songs and a film, all created in alliance with 14 Brazilian migrant women in London [Fig.34]. To highlight the importance of visual networking in the migrant condition, the filmmaker and photographer is Louise Carpenedo –the same person who took the picture for the LATINAS LAWA project, mentioned earlier [Fig. 35-26]–, which, in terms of the gaze it enhances the importance of creating acts of engaging in the photographic situation (Azoulay, 2008). It is here as well, that the social nature of vision comes into play, since both the seemingly individual act of seeing and the more obvious social act of representing occur in historically specific networks of social relations (Poole 1997, p7).[82] Consequently, social movements are generated to act through visual constructions and representations to confront violent forces.

The project seeks to understand the concept of Latin American identity as an agglutinant in said diaspora communities from the practices of representation that are integrated into audio-visual media and photography. Identity here is understood according to Stuart Hall as a constant production of individual and collective recognition within the field of representation. From the postcolonial perspective these projects offer coherence in the experience of dispersion and historical fragmentation of diasporas, considering that

[81] For more information, listo to Latin London Podcast Episode 16 with Carolina Cal https://open.spotify.com/episode/4mVq8s2T2Hux3KtmFDvAkr?si=735d-478f514347ff

[82] The whole video-performance can be seen here https://www.migrantsinaction.org.uk/We_still_fight_in_the_dark

mina_theatre

mina_theatre We still fight in the Dark video-performance teaser is out!

**Stay tuned so you won't miss the chance to watch the full video soon !

We still fight in the dark was created collaboratively in eight drama workshops with Brazilian migrants in London led by Migrants in Action (MinA) as a response to findings from the research 'We can't fight in the dark: Violence Against Women and Girls among Brazilians in London' (2018) led by Professor Cathy McIlwaine from King's College London.

Credits to:

Adriana Pereira
Aline Santos
Beatriz Grasso
Eliete Reis
Karina Sgarbi
Letícia Gonçalves
Luciana Duailibe
Marcia Alves

Você não é bem vinda

401 reproducciones
FEBRERO 17, 2022

Añade un comentario...

Publicar

FIG.34. MiNA Instagram page presenting the video-performance. 2022

Photography Film About

Louise Carpenedo

Mina Theatre - We Still Fight in the Dark (Teaser)

Video created for Mina Theatre, a London-based project that uses theatre to support minoritised migrant women in the UK to overcome obstacles. 'We Still Fight in the Dark' is a creative collaboration on the experience of gender-based violence suffered by Brazilian women in London.

Filming - Louise Carpenedo

Art direction - Nina Franco

Music and sound - Alba Cabral

FIG.35. Louise Carpenedo Webpase presenting We Still Fight in the Dark (2022)

FIG.36. We Still Fight in the Dark, report. Page 18. 2022. Louise Carpenedo taking the pictures

FIG.37. MiNA Youtube presenting the teaser of video-performance. 2022. 56% of Brazilian Women in London never reported an episode of violence

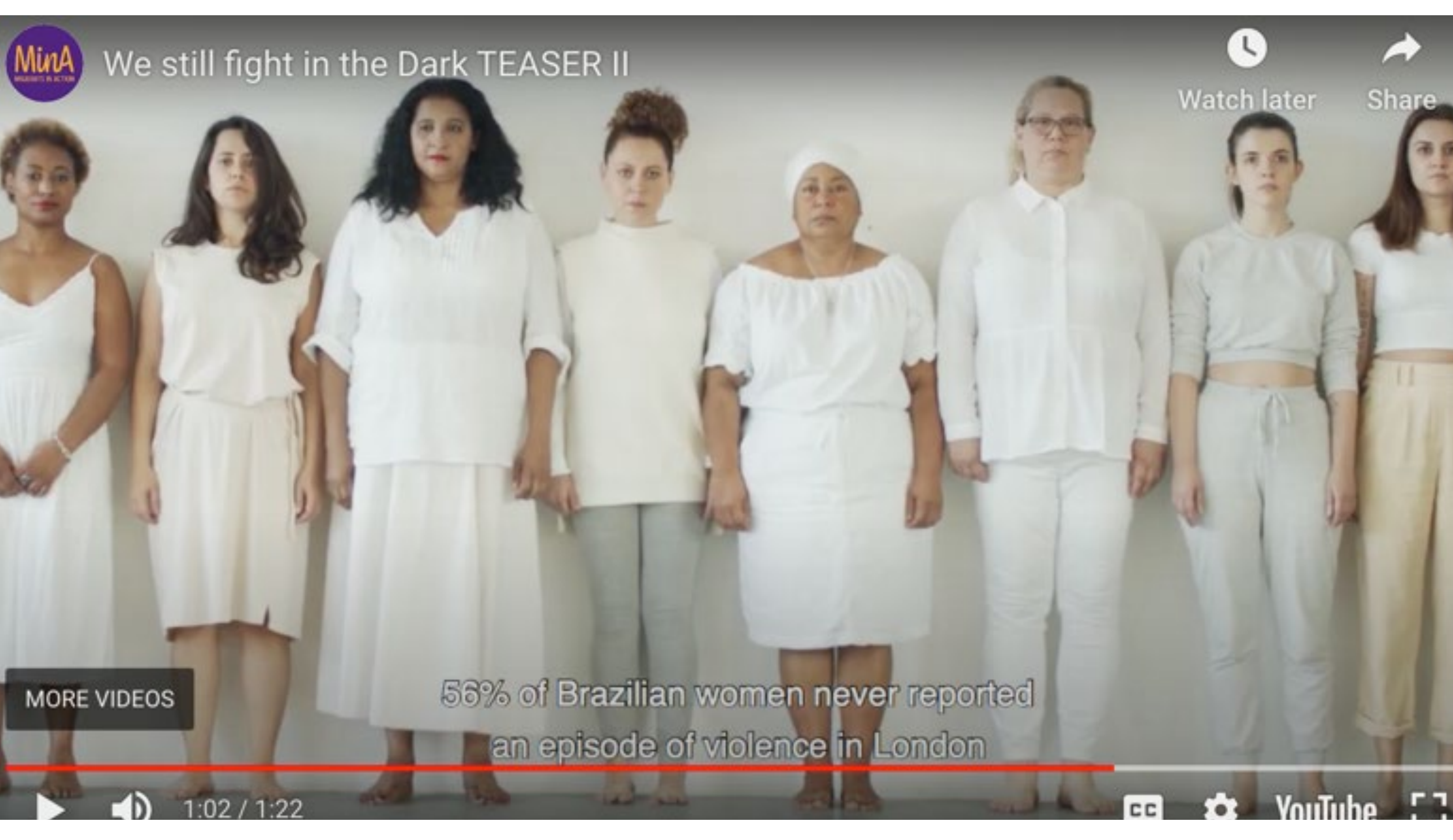


FIG.38. MiNA Youtube presenting the teaser of video-performance. 2022. 56% of Brazilian Women in London never reported an episode of violence

cultural identity is an unstable concept, in movement and constant transformation; it is given from relationships of difference, without these, representations could not happen (2014, p224).

In these images [Figs. 37 & 38] the gaze is directed to an invisible spectator, which could be the UK immigration officer, the male perpetrator, the state, the authorities, and other authoritative gazes that look at migrants with a miserable attitude; this performance puts the gaze in a direct line with the camera, to claim for a place. Usually, as migrants experience isolation and fear, the eye gaze looks to other sides, and we direct the looking or process of being present to other spheres, which gives the one taking the power to direct and control the social interaction. The migrant gaze, as I have exposed, is the capacity to look differently. Still, it also compromises the way that we are looked at—the same as Latinidad is a complete paradox, as it is being a migrant.

The research report *We Still Fight in the Dark* (2022) is an account that helps to create awareness of the experience of violence of migrant women and put at stake that they are not passive victims "instead recognising how their resistance is spatially constrained and contingent on spatialised embodied colonial imaginaries (Heimer, 2022, p184)".

In these images [Figs 39 and 40], it is evident how through the union of wounds, the red threads, they come together to embrace each other and to support carrying the pain, a landscape that seems empathic, the red of the wound feels like filling in the relations panorama, which is also evident in the music they created and the conscious phrases they repeat "I don't belong here... or there" the constant paradigm that migrants navigate, as I have expressed in this work. For instance, "while 77% experienced violence before leaving Brazil, 52% who have suffered in Brazil experienced it again in London (McIlwaine and Evans, 2022, p12). These women are survivors, as the song says, "In life, in the struggle, in the strength of a movement, we encounter each other". Although it depicts deep pain, it also shows strength and support; the video and photographs strongly show women who encounter women in their intersectional oppressions to come together as migrants and claim their visibility.

Contemporary cultural studies have often focused on defining transculturality by relating it to cultural memory as the pivot to building identity. For instance, the work *Migrant Memories - Cultural History, Cinema and the Italian Post-War Diaspora in Britain* (Sprio, 2013), the analysis written by Kabalek and Carrier (2014) *Cultural Memory and Transcultural Memory*, and the work of Astrid Erll with *Travelling Memory* (2011) are essential

studies from which we can speak about transcultural memory as a way to visualise sociocultural exchanges within diaspora communities. In this case, Brazilian migrant women, in the process of healing, recognise that it is necessary to think about memory as a cultural apparatus that allows for the recreation of practices from the place of origin through the movement in spaces of migrants. By enhancing the creation of symbolisms related to a particular episode or event, *Women Resisting Violence* considers visuality as a tool of transcultural remembering, diasporic memory and resisting the geographies of violence experienced in transnational cities to generate new survivors' identities.

20. WE STILL FIGHT IN THE DARK

FIG.39. We Still Fight in the Dark, report. Page 20. 2022

FIG.40. MinA Migrant in Action, for webpage of Women Resisting Violence LAB

4.

CONCLUSION: THE FEMINIST MIGRANT GAZE

In London, shaped by the impact of strikes and the discussion on workload and the gender gap, *La Potencia Feminista* (Gago, 2019), translated as feminist potency, is sharply relevant. To highlight the importance of community and think about ourselves not in isolation but as a collective; to formulate the representations and the spaces for the migrant condition to flourish as a safe feminist space, the feminist Migrant Gaze, as *Potencia*, is to be aware of the political capacity of everyday life encounters to produce alliances. It is not new to say that the movement of people triggers a surplus that accumulates in cities, and that is also related to the impact that diasporas have in cities as communities; in Vertovec's terms, they support the development of capitalist organisations through transnational ties, local development through local settlements and in the form of remittances which, help to mobilise collective resources in pro of helping the homeland. The city, then, is the epicentre of the diasporic movement, and that is why this research focuses on its dynamics, the global city (Sassen, 1990) in which migrants create new practices of belonging to a new city and help each other to overcome their condition as foreigners.

In this chapter, I have looked at the production of Latinidad and its manifestations in the London environment; I have given examples of how Latinidad and self-naming are processes of awareness that help to create belonging. Román-Velázquez & Retis stated, "Asserting a Latin American identity appeals to a post-colonial sense of self-definition against the backdrop and legacies of a colonial past that defined, yet oppressed, the region. Latinidad in this context becomes a political statement of a post-colonial sense of belongingness and self-definition, and as such, it invokes the diversity of Latin America" (2020, p196). Following the importance of spaces to reproduce Latinidad, I have looked at the Urban Market Citizenship and how it is at

risk due to gentrification in gathering spaces, mainly Seven Sisters and Elephant and Castle. Finally, I have looked at the geographies of feminised Latin London and the importance of community and collectivity to represent and challenge the gaze for a looking process in which we are active, as Latin Americans and construct our own spaces of representation.

Finally, I proposed the Feminist Migrant Gaze as a process of self-naming and self-identification that, based on a community, is a practical process of resistance for migrants –particularly women– in global cities. As Verónica Gago suggested "esa imagen de cuerpo-territorio muestra batallas que se están dando aquí y ahora, señala un campo de fuerzas, y lo hace visible y legible desde la conflictividad" (2019, p90)[83] the body experimented as territory, and the territory experimented as body. Which in the case of migrant bodies requires a rearrangement of the host place and a right to belong that can be reproduced via processes of representation and socio-political changes derived from them. The migrant condition is transversal to the socioeconomic spheres and, first and foremost, goes through the body, the channel for the gaze.

[83] Author translation: "The image of cuerpo-territorio (Body-Territory) presents battles happening here and now, pointing at a realm of forces, which become visible through conflictual" (Gago, 2019, p90).

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have examined the representational dynamics of the Latin American diaspora in London over a particular period of fifty years, from the 1970s onwards. With a focus on photographic projects, I developed an argument created through empirical qualitative research with arts-based approaches and archival images. My investigation was framed by several topics: being a Latin American, diaspora and representation, gentrification, social movements and visual activism concerning the contemporary geographies of Latin Americans in London and how past circumstances inform these.[84]

For the past thirty years, knowledge production has been shifting towards representing lived experiences rather than abstract theories –emphasising activism, social justice, and applied research (Leavy, 2020). Therefore, my main interest in pursuing this research builds on my experiences in London as a Latin American woman. The research investigates why and how the image as representation plays a fundamental role in visualising diasporic struggles and reinforcing community values, which enhance the sense of belonging. In doing so, I highlighted how transculturality is intrinsic to the diasporic groups of Latin Americans in London, prompted and triggered by neoliberal politics and the capitalist system. Keeping the above in mind, the investigation is original for the way it has embedded insight at the intersection of scholarly debates, as well as through my practice as a creative artist and community member. The methodological approaches delve into social movements as performative, founded on the coordinated efforts of participants, activists, demonstrators, and individuals. Each of those who are part of what I highlighted as *mobilising Identities* of Latin Londoners, people who ally to challenge the *rate of assimilation*.[85] Therefore, producing an effect in the

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[84] See Chapter 2, section 1.1.1. Methodologies Diagram, Positionality.

[85] See Chapter 2, section 1.1.4. Latin Americans Visual Activism.

diaspora that mixes different Latin American sociocultural practices to retain spaces for belonging in the city, without falling into the significant homogenised values of the global city's economy. In doing so, I looked at the Essayistic as a method to interrogate images and visual representations, merging social research with creative arts. This provides the ability to reproduce discourse through images with compelling elements crucial for the struggles of diaspora communities.

To help navigate the above, this PhD thesis began with a literature review, which looked at the concept of diaspora regarding representation and why it has been necessary to consolidate the Latin American community in London. It sets the framework of Latin American identities as transcultural, with internal contradictions and paradoxes derived from colonial times. This is followed by the methodological chapter that discusses Researching Representation in Latin London. It justifies my qualitative analysis, presents methodological approaches, my arts-based research methods, and a self-reflecting process of putting research into practice. The chapter concludes by analysing the Narratives of Latinidad, highlighting how essayistic approaches visualise the thinking processes of images as a tool for social justice. The following chapters explain the impact of *mobilising identities* for diasporic geographies of Latin Americans in London. It explores this through photographic projects, archives, and visual community-methods based on my research findings, looking at them as strategies of resistance and resilience. Finally, I will display the challenges I faced during my PhD research, indicating how I overcame them and suggest further research.

MAIN CONTRIBUTIONS AND ANSWERS TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The findings of this thesis provide a better understanding of the contemporary and historical representational dynamics of Latin American migrants in London. It brings to light a deep comprehension of the image as a socio-political system, which links a host city with the place of origin and fosters collective identities into action by providing opportunities for diasporas to develop a transcultural identity. Every chapter enhances the readers' understanding of the Latin American community's practices of representation. This includes a demographic profile of the Latin American diasporic geographies in London, an attempt to define what it means to be a Latin American, highlighting the Latin American diaspora as a women-made community, the importance of memory landscapes and crucial challenges to archival representation. Finally, I address photography and film's role in representing the Migrant Gaze through community-driven projects using essayistic methods. I have worked on these chapters with an activist spirit, realising that the *mobilising identities* are growing in strength and voice.

This thesis contributes to understanding the uses of images as vehicles for social justice, particularly in my empirical chapters four, five, and six. Chapter four addresses the Latin American Diasporic community in London as Women-made, focusing on feminist projects with roots in decolonial practices from Abya Yala; chapter five discusses the role of memory and mnemonic devices, such as the archives, as tools for the production of Latin London Memories; finally, chapter six looks at the Migrant Gaze which emphasises Latinidad as visual resistance.

I approached my research questions by investigating the role of memory in the production of a diaspora community. To answer the questions: **I)**

How do the productions of representational systems create memories to enhance the sense of belonging? II) Which mnemonic devices do diasporas use to recreate their places of origin in the global city? III) How do these devices acquire value? I presented different systems of image-making political representation, which shows the challenges of London's mnemonic landscape. For example, in chapter five, I emphasise the importance of mnemonic projects and devices to produce a sense of belonging; by looking at the projects Latinidad LDN and Salsa Fever, I challenge the notion of the archive as the producer of 'official narratives' and discuss it as a place for healing and community engagement. Similarly, in chapter four, I presented Artivisms as a strategy of decolonial resistance and visualisation for Latin American women in London through the FLAWA initiative (Festival of Latin American Women in the Arts).

Furthermore, to answer the questions: **IV) How are transcultural processes of the Latin American diaspora in London evidenced? V) How does representation address processes of urban change for the Latin American diaspora in London? VI) How do the dynamics of diasporas, as a community, affect the urban landscape of London?** I explored how photographic essayistic practices inform communities facing urban change and their influence on the charitable sector's work on processes of gentrification in London, particularly in chapters three, two, and six, by exploring and highlighting the practices of Latin American image-makers in the areas of Seven Sisters, and Elephant and Castle. I worked with empirical sources such as the Mapping Memories project and interviewed people who worked in the area, such as Latin Elephant, Emily Burgoyne, Silvia Rothlisberger, and Daniel Díaz. I also used historical sources such as Southwark and Haringey Archives. By framing these projects as urban diasporic productions, I argue about the role of presentation as an activism tool that encourages community building and challenges the discourse and processes around urban change policies in London.

I have looked at how the transcultural dynamics of Latin Americans in London are evidenced (chapters three, four and six) addressing the community construction as decolonial through grassroots groups' work produced and maintained by women's labour; via the Latin London Podcast, I gathered critical qualitative data that led to a comprehension of the Latin American community as a women lead the project, with many of the charities (LAWRS, LAWA, Latin Elephant, IRMO) run by and for women, as well as the social anti-gentrification campaigns (chapters two and three), which intertwined with my final question **VII) How are Latin American women challenging/resisting gentrification in London?** For instance, with

the project Walking the Elephant by Latin Elephant, LATINAS by LAWA (Latin American Women's Aid), analysed in chapter six, and the projects presented in chapters three and four, I insisted on the political management of everyday life with a feminist approach that explores the emotional journeys of the migrant experiences in London to centralise the critical analysis on collective solidarities and feminised resistance. Finally, as I have shown, I highlighted the characteristics of the Latin American community as a community of choice where the women have taken the lead in creating networks and spaces for gathering. Considering the body as the territory for the migrant condition, a feminist migrant gaze calls for processes of resistance (chapter six).

ACADEMIC CHALLENGES, LIMITATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

Reflecting on the hurdles of conducting this PhD research is crucial as part of this conclusion. There are some critical situations that I would like to highlight as a concluding remark. My PhD started with an academic and activist interest in finding a deeper understanding of the images as tools for social change, social justice, and activism for Latin Americans in London. Throughout my fieldwork and research, I have used autoethnography as a self-representation and border-crossing methodology to merge academia and 'real' life, as I am both a researcher and practitioner. This doctoral research aimed to highlight the framework of the diaspora and further knowledge on how representational dynamics influence the life of communities. To a certain extent, this inquiry stemmed from my interest as a Latina woman who has practised as an image maker and has a deep interest in producing valuable work for people and their politics.

In 2018, when I started this project, I was in my hometown, Medellin, Colombia, and it took two years to move to London due to the COVID-19 outbreak. The rapid changes in London and the subsequent disconnection proved to be a further challenge. I had to stop the research for one year, which meant I had to undertake an extra year to finish it. When I eventually moved to London in 2021, I could maintain and relink my past relationships with community members. The Podcast Latin London provided the support I needed to feel like a part of it again and contribute to the dynamics of the community. I also joined LAWA's Change Makers programme and other community initiatives such as Mujer Diáspora/ Diaspora Women; the post-pandemic City landscape of London proved to be even more challenging. I realised how the role

of women has been crucial for the making of Latin London, and that is where this thesis took a feminist migrant approach.

Moreover, the LSE PhD Mental Health Report suggests that 42% of PhD Students reported having mental health issues during their PhD, and 14% had mental health crises. The last year has been the most challenging for my PhD path. During this time, after moving to be full-time in London, I have confronted many challenges as a migrant and in my personal life, including compromising my physical health. However, I have also achieved many profound findings in my research and my professional development that would not have been possible without the strength and confrontation brought about by feminism. This year's panorama has been very challenging for most people working in higher education, especially with the global financial crisis. The current infrastructure in the education system and practices around it faces a major critical challenge; we have experienced it in the broader sector, with the most significant number of employment strikes happening in early 2023. This is, of course, increasing the number of mental health risks in staff and particularly members on casual contracts and unsecured positions such as PhD students. This exacerbates the need to survive and puts the research into a significant challenge. Despite all the challenges, it has helped to shape my research and further my arguments about the contemporary socioeconomic crisis and instability of academic lives.

There are several opportunities to continue this research. As discussed in this PhD thesis, there needs to be more attention to constraints on the image as a political system for Latin Americans in London, compared to opportunities and resources for quantitative research. I provide a practical and theoretical framework in representation, diaspora, and Latin Americans in London. There is a gap in using images for research purposes and creating processes with academia and community grassroots groups that can help the community instead of extracting knowledge from them. I have exposed the successful case of Latin Elephant, in which academia, image-makers and community organisations intertwined to provide tools for creating place and enhancing belonging.

There are further opportunities to work with the archives as I have explored here, particularly with Haringey and Southwark Local Archives developing creative community alliances to review their content and call for grassroots projects on archive recollections and visualisation of Latin Americans in those areas. As I have demonstrated in Chapter Five, little has been written and researched about the importance of representation and images for the migrant experiences, particularly regarding Latinxs in London.

Finally, knowledge production in the new paradigm of academia must value community organisations. It must create discussions that provide a more comprehensive understating of its dynamics but also give something back in a search for a more social justice-driven academic world. In this thesis, I have read, understood, participated, and created with the Latin American community in London in a historical, non-formal, creative, and participatory way that allowed me to construct and reclaim spaces in the city.

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APPENDIX

A: Glossary

The concepts presented here are key terms for my research

1.VISUAL CULTURE:

In her book *Visual Methodologies* (2016), Gillian Rose argues that visual culture refers to the study of images regarding cultural significance, social practices, and power relations embedded in the ways of seeing and imagining. For Mirzoeff (2015), Visual Culture involves a mental model that results from what we see and do. Today's visual culture allows us to produce a network society as it connects experiences around the globe. For this research, Visual Culture is a contextual frame which relates different social groups and their interactions through images, the discourse fixed in the image itself, the production and circulation of the images and the social effect it can produce, which is my particular interest about the Latin American community in London.

2.VISUALITY:

In *Vision, Race, and Modernity* (1997), Deborah Poole argues that visual images are part of a comprehensive organisation of people, ideas and objects, a system that I call visuality, whose action is visualising. That is, how we see and act regarding the process of seeing, how we see it as a cultural and social construction, works as a mechanism that allows representations of place and identity.

Visuality allows for depicting realities (exile, forced migration, economic exiles, refugees, students, second-generation immigrants, expatriates, and dual citizens) that blur cultural boundaries and aim for social change. For my research, visuality is directly related to social change and social movements. For that reason, my use of the term visuality rather than something that classifies or marks is an action related to what Mirzoeff calls *The Right To Look* (2011) "is not simply a matter of assembled visual images but the grounds on which such assemblages can register as meaningful renditions of a given even" (p, 477), which detonates a whole form of doing.

3.VISUAL ACTIVISM:

This is a central concept for contemporary debates about visual culture and within diasporic communities. It is a mode of being that engages with the sociocultural context to create or trigger change. It is a collective and collaborative form of representation and is at the basis of a diasporic community. Visual Activism is how diasporic communities advocate for their cultural constructions in a host location, such as a global city like London.

4.LATINIDAD:

This concept refers to Latin American migrants, particularly those from the global south to the global north. Mike Davis mentioned *Magical Urbanism: Latinos Reinvent the US City* (2001), "the social reproduction of *Latinidad*", in which people do not merely identify and are identified as being from their particular countries but emphasise their Latin American common origin, thus appearing to be the 'same' social group. McIlwaine (2011), from the perspective of her geography studies of Latin Americans, remarks: "Despite comprising a wide range of nationalities, ethnicities, and cultures, Latin Americans are generally referred to as a community" (Ibid, p98). So, in my research, the term Latinidad refers to a commonality that combines different places of origin but is located in a particular host location, such as London. I explore the term deeply in Chapter Four and Six.

5.GENTRIFICATION:

Coined by the British Sociologist Ruth Glass (1964), this term refers to a problem of competition for urban space in which the displacement of working-class people by middle-class or white-collar workers occurs. Decades later, Loretta Less (2008) argued that the significance of Glass's work about the processes denoted by gentrification was that she foresaw the urban future, given the contemporary influx of real estate investments and the implications that mass migration has had in London, together with the formation of significant diasporic communities such as the Latin American one. Zukin expands on the notion of gentrification, addressing the ideas

of authentic urban spaces as "the look and feel of a place as well as the social connectedness that place inspires" (2010, p220), which means that an authentic urban space is based on its social relations. In London, the creative classes have often liked to mix with various diasporic communities. This has resulted in the areas where Latin Americans live becoming even more attractive to financial firms and real estate investors. This has meant that they have expelled the communities who cannot afford to live in the newly revived areas.

6.LATIN LONDON:

Patria Román-Velázquez was the first academic to use the term Latin London (1996) as an example of the social reproduction of Latinidad in London. She referred to people who created a new social environment and cultural practices that cannot be found back in their homeland. For instance, they might use other nations' visual codes and urban dynamics and mix them with their own practices. For example, in the Seven Sisters Indoor Market in London, one can dance salsa, drink mate (an Argentinian drink), eat a Colombian arepa and play rana. Even more, Latin Londoners are permeable to other identities, which links the concept to transculturality.

7.DIASPORA:

This term refers to groups of migrants dispersed from their place of origin and established their sociocultural proximity in another place called the host space. This project examines the diasporas from three aspects, which Vertovec (1999) analysed. First, as a social formation, that is, as the grouping of diverse people with a common cosmogony aspect; second, as a type of consciousness that alludes to the relationship with the place of origin and the host place; and third, as a mode of cultural production, which refers to how they move collectively to generate strategies of resilience (Kalra, 2005, p6). Diasporic identities are those that share the principle of rupture or disruption.

8.*MOBILISING IDENTITIES* AND *RATE OF ASSIMILATION*:

Lisa García Bedolla, in her work, *Fluid Borders: Latino Power, identity and politics in Los Angeles* (2005), proposes the term *mobilising Identities* as "an identity that includes a particular ideology plus a sense of personal agency" (Ibid, p23) it is an identity with a clear set of values, cosmogony and connections to place that coherently sets a political view. However, it also presents an agency; it means attachment to a community, even though there is political turmoil or stigmatisation. *Mobilising identities* within a diasporic group allows them to enhance successful adaptation, political participation, protest, and act on behalf of the group.

Paul Collier, in his work *Éxodo: inmigrantes, emigrantes y países* (2014), introduces the concept of *rate of assimilation*, described as the possibility for a diaspora to be absorbed or to be downplayed by the majority group of people from the host location. Thus, the *rate of assimilation* will be low if the diaspora interacts and stays active as a community; if not, the majority group might absorb the whole diaspora. Therefore, for this research, *mobilising identities* are the ones that challenge the *rate of assimilation* within a diasporic community and help to enhance their place in the city.

9.TRANSCULTURALITY:

The prefix trans- connotes practices that go "across, over or beyond" space and time (Mikula, 2008). Transculturality was first coined in 1940 by the Cuban Anthropologist Fernando Ortiz in *El Contrapunteo Cubano del Tabaco y el Azúcar*. He was describing the appropriation of Cuban land by Spanish colonisers, and he was presenting this as being one of the first transnational practices in the Latin American region. An essential aspect of his argument is that what happened in Cuban society since colonial times was not a process of acculturation, conceived as the erasure of one culture due to the imposition of another more powerful one, but a process of transculturation. This implies an

encounter in which both cultures acquire elements from the other and, in this way, create a 'new culture' that nourishes various traditions and social practices (1983, p86). Regarding a more contemporary definition, Wolfgang Welsch (2016) suggests that "Transcultural identities comprehend a cosmopolitan side, but also a side of local affiliation (...) Transcultural people combine both" (p10). For this research, Latin Londoners have transcultural identities and live in places where they combine social and cultural practices from different regions in Latin American.

10.VISUAL ESSAY:

An essay is a narrative form to analyse thoughts, linguistics, and actions. In terms of visuality, it is a way to interrogate the capability of reproducing a discourse through images with a persuasive element, which is crucial for the struggle of diasporic communities. For my research, I will be looking at essays as visual forms that raise political questions; the essayistic act is a fabrication that presents a point of view, a selection, or a political perspective about a social issue. According to J.M Catalá (2014) in *Estética del Ensayo: la Forma Ensayo, de Montaigne a Godard*, the visual essay is a prolongation of complex thoughts; it is an emotional and conceptual framework which allows for a binding dynamic to appear. It is metaphoric, dynamic, and narrative.

11.PHOTO ESSAY:

This tool narrates a specific situation from different photographic genres that can be combined with text and other media. A photographic essay is a form of a visually anthropological narrative that tries to make a statement about a particular social group (for example, the Latin American Diaspora in London). It often produces memories as documents to preserve culture through fieldwork observation and participation.

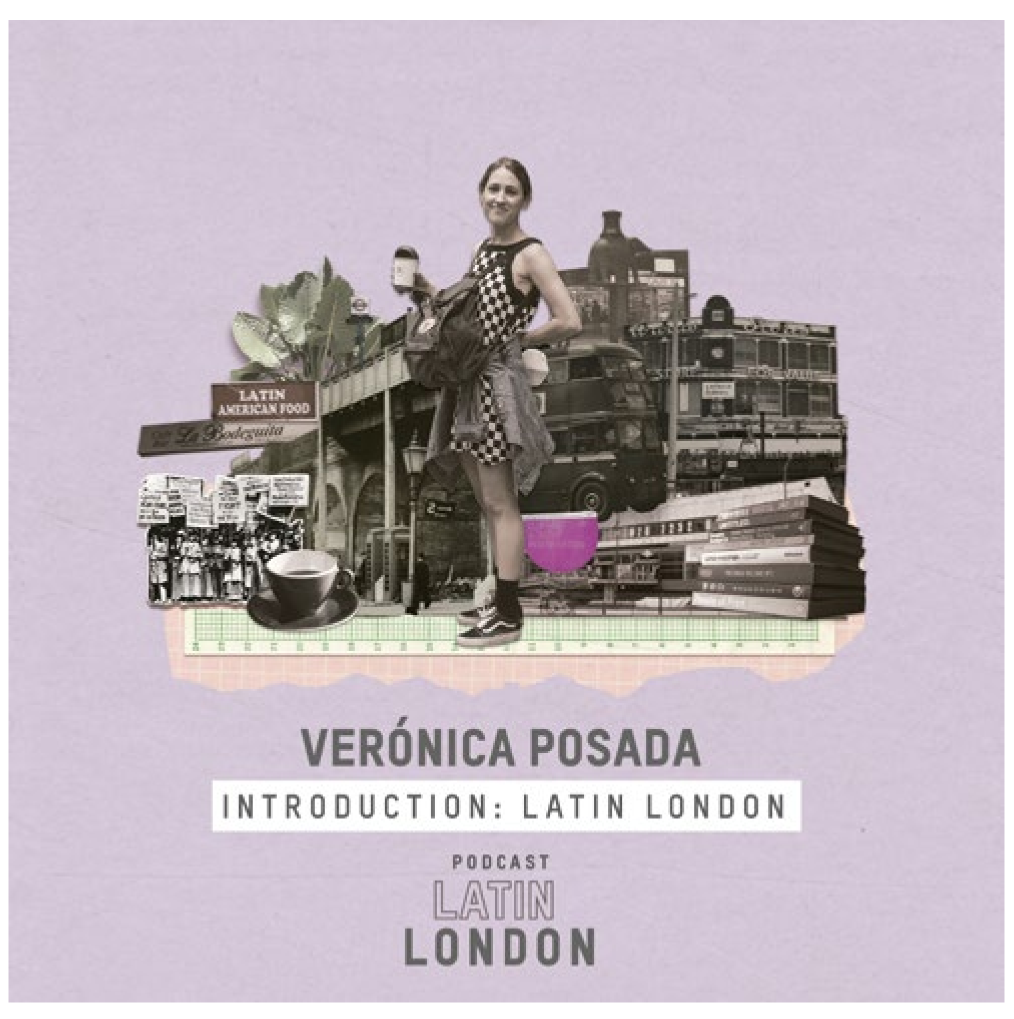
12.FILM ESSAY:

This is a form of cinema that is reflective of the function of images and sound. For Laura Rascaroli (2017), the film essay is a performative search for an object that is mainly historical; it relates to time and history. The Film Essay has a political viewpoint; it aims to show a gap between the object and the world. "The visible result of this labour is that the Film Essay detaches objects from their background, thus introducing a gap of potentiality between object and world. This gap is its philosophy (p189)"; that gap leaves space to show links between affections, perceptions and visual images.

B: Podcast Episodes

The next pages present the podcast episodes

LATIN LONDON: A LIFE IN THE DIASPORA. INTRO: VERÓNICA POSADA ÁLVAREZ



TO LISTEN
SCAN HERE

In this episode, I introduce the main topic: the life of the Latin American community in London. I talk about the creation of the diaspora based on my Literature Review Chapter. I bring to light some demographics of the community in the UK. Moreover, I discuss the importance of women in creating diasporic communities. Finally, I argue that the urban planning policies in London do not consider the inhabitants of the areas, which has motivated many campaigns and protests.

EP. 1. ELEPHANT AND CASTLE: A HUB FOR LATIN LONDONERS. SANTIAGO PELUFFO SONEYRA

TO LISTEN
SCAN HERE

In this first episode, Elephant and Castle: A Hub for Latin Londoners, I talked with Santiago Peluffo Soneyra, a London-based Latin American researcher, community organiser, journalist, and writer. Peluffo is co-director at Latin Elephant, a South London-based charity campaigning for the rights of BAME communities (Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic), in particular Latin Americans, in the process of urban regeneration. He is passionate about equality, migration and identity, politics, and media. We spoke about Elephant and Castle as the meeting place for the Latin American community in London, how this place has been changing, and how the community is facing one of the most challenging decades due to urban renewal. Moreover, we discussed how the Elephant and Castle became London's Latin Quarter and has faced recognition thanks to the hard work that Latin Elephant and people in the area have been doing.

EP. 2. LATIN LONDONERS: A WOMEN MADE COMMUNITY. MARTA HINESTROZA

TO LISTEN
SCAN HERE

Marta Hinestroza is a London-based Colombian lawyer, dancer, singer, and community leader. Marta has helped construct NGOs and charities as an interviewer in implementing the Colombian Peace Treaty within the Colombian Truth Commission; she is constantly working with the women from the Diaspora Woman/ Mujer Diáspora collective. Also, she is actively involved as a cultural ambassador, part of Escuela Talentos, a Colombian folklore music group, and co-founder of Recipaz, Mesa Étnica for international refugees and exiles.

In the conversation, Marta Hinestroza told her story of migration to the UK and how she managed to get asylum as a refugee escaping the Colombian conflict. She came to the UK and set up a hair salon in The Seven Sisters Indoor Market, which gave her a sense of belonging and became her home in London. We discussed issues related to the redevelopment of the area and how it affects the retailers and the community. Finally, we examined the formation of the Latin American campaigns and social movements in the light of feminism and how women's labour opens the possibility of belonging in London for the broader Latin London community.[86]

[86] For more information about Marta Hinestroza's story please listen to UpRooted Podcast, a production I have also contributed to https://open.spotify.com/episode/236ZCjDXzNR6kxnIqwMHGc?si=62655a-8829ba49ab

EP.3. LATIN AMERICANS IN THE UK, OPENING THE FIELD. CATHY MCILWAINE

TO LISTEN
SCAN HERE

Professor McIlwaine has been working for twenty years exploring the intersections between gender, poverty, and transnational migration, particularly with the Latin American community in London. We discussed Professor McIlwaine's two significant reports developed to create statistical analysis and socio-economic profiles of the Latin American community in the UK, *No Longer Invisible* (2011) and *Towards Visibility* (2016).

We talked about how the construction of Latin London has been done mainly by women as a women-led community. We emphasise in her current research Violence Against Women and Girls in urban environments among Brazilian women in London and the favelas of Maré in Rio de Janeiro. Finally, we discussed the importance of art for social research. Also, she has two ongoing public engagement and artistic collaborations, one with the Latin America Bureau (a podcast series on Women Resisting Violence) and one with Migrants in Action (a multimedia art project), which I discuss further in Chapter Six and Episode 16.

EP. 4. URBAN MYTHOLOGIES.
DAVID MCEWEN

TO LISTEN
SCAN HERE

David McEwen, Architect, MSc Building & Urban Design in Development. He studied Architecture and Urban Design at the University of Edinburgh, The Bartlett UCL, and the University of Cambridge. McEwen was born in Cali, Colombia and grew up travelling all over. For the past eight years, McEwen has been exploring and working with the Latin American community in London as an active member. We discussed how he developed a post-political approach to urban regeneration in London by analysing mythologies in constructing cities. He has been part of the crowdfunding Save Latin Village and was awarded a grant from the Royal Society of Arts to design a community plan and set up the architectural cooperative Unit 38, which I examine further in Chapter Three.

EP. 5. DIASPORA WOMEN. PATRICIA DIAZ DAZA

TO LISTEN SCAN HERE

Patricia Diaz Daza is a Colombian filmmaker and writer. She is one of the founders of Diaspora Women, an initiative to empower Colombian women from the Diaspora to get involved in the process of change and reconciliation as exiles. It is a space in which many women have encountered healing and transformation in their lives. As Patricia Diaz mentioned, "This is the real meaning of the diaspora: that we can recognise in each other the woman that we are". We spoke about Patricia's trajectories as a migrant woman and a migrant storyteller. She reflects on belonging in the diaspora, people who don't belong in the UK, not in Latin America. We also discuss Patricia's documentary Salsa Fever (1991), about the salsa culture in London in the 1990s, which I develop further in Chapter Five.

EP. 6. THE MAKING OF LATIN LONDON. PATRIA ROMÁN VELÁZQUEZ

TO LISTEN
SCAN HERE

Dr Patria Román-Velázquez is well known for being the first person in London to write and talk about Latin Londoners. She coined the term Latin London (1996). Dr Román-Velázquez is an academic and activist; her work has been a pivotal contribution to understanding space and attachment to place in the context of urban change, particularly in London, around Elephant and Castle. Her work focuses on how urban change affects the Latin American community and BAME communities in the city, putting their cultural practices at risk of disappearance. Dr Román-Velázquez is the founder of Latin Elephant, a charity that aims to incorporate Latin Americans and minority ethnic businesses in the processes of urban renewal; through their activist work, they managed to create methods of relocation, retention, and sustainability for retailers in London. We discussed how Dr Román-Velázquez work has been crucial for a new generation of Latin American researchers, activists, and social workers. She proves how Latin Americans have appropriated specific spaces in London, re-developing imageries from their own countries to fortify their identities and giving them the character of transnational centre points.

EP.7. DIASPORIC GEOGRAPHIES. CATALINA ORTIZ

TO LISTEN
SCAN HERE

Dr Catalina Ortiz, Colombian, has been an associate lecturer at The Bartlett Development Planning Unit, UCL, since 2015, where she is the MSc Building and Urban Design in Development programme leader. We discuss broader aspects that link to the diasporic geographies in cities and how to engage through different ways of producing knowledge throughout the cultivation of collectivity. We emphasised how we, as migrants, look for familiar geography to see and identify faces, music, and flavours in the cities.

We talked about her co-designed urban projects as spaces for radical imagination and the importance of amplifying the voices from the peripheries to transform from within and activate the awareness of the living heritage in cities.

EP. 8. LONDON'S SUPERDIVERSITY. METTE LOUISE BERG

TO LISTEN
SCAN HERE

Mette Louise Berg, Professor of Migration and Diaspora Studies at the UCL Social Research Institute and co-director of UCL's Migration Research Unit. In our conversation, Professor Berg shared her experiences as an anthropologist interested in migration and how that took her to Cuba and Spain. She told us how she was inspired by her grandmother's travels to New York and how it triggered her interest in movement. We discussed and introduced the concept of Diversity and Superdiversity and analysed Anthropology as a discipline with a solid colonial legacy and the impact of othering.

We encountered the work of Fernando Ortiz and debated his controversial role in anthropology and the legacy of his work in Transcultural studies. Professor Berg told us about issues related to illegality as a social and political construct that produces life in uncertainty in an extreme environment of austerity in Europe, particularly in the UK. This leads us to discuss her project with Latin Americans in Southwark and the importance of the role of women in the community, which I discuss further in Chapter Four.

EP. 9. SOUTHERN WORDS / PALABRAS DEL SUR. SILVIA ROTHLISBERGER

TO LISTEN
SCAN HERE

Silvia Rothlisberger is a writer, journalist, and activist with an incredible interest in contemporary literature. Rothlisberger worked at The Guardian and founded Literary South, a Podcast and Radio show focused on translated contemporary literature. Rothlisberger curates the literary events at the Festival of Latin American Women in the Arts. FLAWA is a festival that celebrates the work of Latin American women in London and many creators representing the Diaspora. Analysed further in Chapter Four.

Silvia shared with us her journey as a Colombian migrant woman in London. She told us how Elephant and Castle allowed her to feel that she belonged, as it is the home of the Latin American community. Through working in the Latino Media Company Express-News, she started to understand the concept of gentrification. That triggered the idea to create the Latin Quarter, and It's People documentary in collaboration with Latin Elephant. The film highlights the presence of Latin Americans in Elephant and Castle in South London; it shows the risks that the community is facing due to the regeneration.

EP.10. CALLING BACK FROM NEO NORTE.
TERE CHAD

TO LISTEN
SCAN HERE

Tere Chad is an artist and promoter of Latin American culture. She was born in Chile and migrated to the UK. We talked from The Elephant Arcade in Elephant and Castle. Part of a two-week pop-up exhibition programme that is trying to activate the area and integrate it as it faces a dramatic process of urban change. We talked about what it means to be Latin American and what it is to be a Migrant Artist in the UK. Tere told us about her projects Neo Norte, Calling Back, and Abrazo Entramado, among others. We also touched upon the importance of creating knowledge regarding social responsibility through the arts.

EP.11. THE MIGRANT IMAGE. DAVID BATE

TO LISTEN
SCAN HERE

Professor David Bate is a photographic artist, theorist, and lecturer at the University of Westminster in London, UK. His work is also part of CREAM –Centre for Research and Education in Arts and Media- at the University of Westminster.

David Bate has lived close to Elephant and Castle for almost 20 years. We discussed topics related to the image and its importance for the migrant condition; Professor Bate reflected on the political role of memory as an act of imagining through the diverse uses of images. We discussed the activist component of the image and its importance for social movements, particularly as a trigger for the sense of belonging and fighting for migrant rights in London.

EP. 12. SOUTHERN EPISTEMOLOGIES. CHERILYN ELSTON

TO LISTEN
SCAN HERE

Dr Cherilyn Elston is a lecturer in Latin American cultural studies and the director of the Spanish programme at the University of Reading. She is currently working on a project exploring the cultural politics of memory, human rights, and transitional justice in the context of the recent peace process in Colombia. This project also incorporates the memory activism of the Colombian diaspora in the UK and explores the literary and cultural production of Colombian migrants and exiles.

Our topic of discussion was Southern Epistemologies, where Dr Elston talks about her research with a responsible co-participatory approach, working with Colombian topics without being exploitative. We discussed Dr Cherilyn Elton's work at the Latin American Diaspora Woman Collective in London, the relations through solidarity, particularly within women's history, and the importance of negotiating our positionalities within knowledge-based institutions.

EP. 13. WALKING THE ELEPHANT. SOPHIE WALL

TO LISTEN
SCAN HERE

Sophie Wall is the Latin Elephant project coordinator. She is an access worker, translator and writer. Wall studied languages and lived in Colombia, which made her feel closer to Elephant and Castle after returning to London. She became part of Latin Elephant in 2018, working across advocacy, campaigning, coordinating projects, communications, and outreach.

We spoke about the relocation process in Elephant and Castle, after the Shopping Centre closed down in September 2020, the intersectional crisis the traders are facing (COVID, Brexit, gentrification and cost of living), and the crucial role of Latin Elephant for advocacy, political campaigning and visibility for them, and the organisation's role as an archive for the urban memory of the *élefan*. Finally, we spoke about the symbolism of the place for Latin Americans and the importance of feminine values in the process of resistance, which I explore further in Chapters Three and Five.

EP14. FEMINIST LATIN LONDON.
DANIELA LONDOÑO & MERCEDES VIVERO

**TO LISTEN
SCAN HERE**

Daniela Londoño and Mercedes Vivero are part of LAWA, Latin American Women's Aid. A charity that advocates for the end of violence against women and children.

Daniela Londoño is a Colombian and a passionate activist. She coordinates LAWA's programme Change Makers, an intersectional and intergenerational feminist approach for Latin American and BME women to attend different community events. It provides a safe space to promote solidarity, sisterhood, and personal and collective empowerment, which can help women create change in other realms of their lives.

Mercedes Vivero is the lead coordinator of the project Growing Together, the first initiative for older Latin American women to be part of a community to feel active, connected and integrated. They provide the space to develop activities such as English classes, embroidery workshops, IT Lessons, skills-sharing, celebrations and growing vegetables in their allotment in South London. The group have created a safe space for them in their migrant condition.

EP15. BRITISH LATINX.
CLAUDIA LOPEZ, LA MS LOPEZ

TO LISTEN
SCAN HERE

Claudia was born in Colombia; she teaches at Saint Gabrielle's College in South London and advocates for the visibility of the Latin American community in the UK.

La Ms Lopez has been working in education for the past 13 years, specialising in EAL, which stands for English as an Additional language; that means she teaches and works with students who are new to the country or have been here for a short amount of time and are at the beginner stage of English. Cultivating an engaged and empowered set of students is her goal. Teachers are no longer the "givers of knowledge." We are facilitators of experiences. We talked about Claudia Lopez's journey to the UK; we discussed what it means to be a British Latinx and have a bilingual brain; we debated the labels Latin, Latino, Latina, Latinx and Latin American.

EP16. MINA, MIGRANTS IN ACTION, COMMUNITY THEATRE. CAROLINA CAL

TO LISTEN
SCAN HERE

Carolina Cal is a Theatre Practitioner for social change. Cal founded MiNA Theatre, a London-based community programme focused on the Latin American Community. The project aimed to be a safe space for minoritised migrant women; they work along notions of migration, identity, and belonging. It is a collective created in 2018 they have done work both in London and Rio de Janeiro. They use storytelling and performance to bring their stories to a broader audience and denounce the inhumane and violent situations that migrant women must go through. Nevertheless, it is also a resisting and survivor space to showcase the capacities of women to recover when in a safe and communal space.

EP17. LATIN LONDON RESISTANCE. ROSA HEIMER

TO LISTEN
SCAN HERE

Dr Rosa Heimer is a passionate activist, and her work is well-known amongst the Latinx community in London. She has worked in India and Lithuania on intersectional projects around migration, violence against women and LBGTQI+ people, and gender equality. Dr Heimer has worked with LAWA as a policy coordinator -Latin American Women's Aid – a specialist organisation focused on ending violence against women and girls (VAWG) and led by and for Black and Minority Ethnic women in London.

Heimer finished her PhD recently (2023) at Kings College with the supervisor of Professor Cathy McIlwaine, who has been in this podcast before. Thesis title: 'The coloniality of violence: Latin American migrant women at the crossroads of violence and resistance in London'. A decolonial approach to the production of knowledge, which I use to discuss further in Chapter Four and Chapter Six.

EP.18. PERFORMING LATINIDAD. MIGUEL HERNANDO TORRES UMBA

TO LISTEN SCAN HERE

Miguel Hernando Torres Umba is a Colombian actor, theatre performer and creative director. He studied at Bogotá's Academy of Arts and the International School of Corporeal Mime in London; he has worked extensively in London and globally as a Performer and Director.

Torres Umba is the cofounder of LYT, The Latinx Youth Theatre, where he aims to open space for Latin Americans in the creative industries. We discussed the importance of community for developing the arts and bounds as migrants in London. We discuss Torres Umba's activist work to explore creative platforms in London.

EP.19. LATINX SOLIDARITY. STEPHANIE MEDDEN

TO LISTEN
SCAN HERE

Dr Stephanie Medeen's research explores ethnocultural identity, transnational migration, activism, and solidarities. She is interested in how collective identities are constructed and deployed in response to political, economic, and social turbulence. Her research has explored Portuguese and Spanish-speaking communities in the United Kingdom and examined how community members and activists engage in identity work to forge alliances and respond to challenges. Her most recent work explores how language ideology operates in postcolonial "third" spaces, where belonging is often experienced differently by individuals who, despite sharing a "common" language, have disparate histories of oppression. Her recent project, *Citizens, Settlers, and In-Betweeners: Brexit and Divergent Experiences of Belonging in Lusophone London*, will be published in 2024 and will contribute to our understanding of language as a fulcrum for ethnocultural convergence and cleavage in the contemporary Portuguese-speaking diaspora. She is an Assistant Professor at Bentley University. Dr Medden has also been involved with Latin Elephant and other charities and people mentioned in this podcast; she has been deeply involved in the knitting of Latin London.

EP.20 THE LATINA STEREOTYPE. JAEL DE LA LUZ

TO LISTEN SCAN HERE

Jael de La Luz is a Mexican historian, community organiser, mother of three children, editor, pentecostal, dissident, and activist—a key figure in London's Latin American community. Jael de La Luz worked as the Community Engagement officer at LAWA (Latin American Women's Aid) and with the Feminist Library in South London.

With Jael de La Luz, we addressed the topic of Latin American women stereotypes. As part of our processes of recognising ourselves within British society, we have faced –as almost all migrants do- stereotypes and malicious comments. Latinas are often perceived as hot, funny, happy, loving, sensual, and hypersexual and carers; such perceptions are very damaging for a migratory experience and even so for the creation of a sense of belonging. We discussed this as structural violence, addressed intersectional feminism and its actions towards addressing cultural stereotyping from a grassroots perspective, and how, on everyday premises, we can try and overcome this as Latin American women in London. She told us harrowing personal stories and how to heal through community work and resistance.

LATIN LONDON. EPISODIO ESPECIAL. COMUNIDAD PARA EL CAMBIO SOCIAL

TO LISTEN
SCAN HERE

This special episode entitled Comunidad para el Cambio Social was created using a participatory methodology in collaboration with Nodo Reino Unido e Irlanda en apoyo a la Comisión de la Verdad (the UK and Ireland Hub in support of the Colombian Truth Commission), Mujer Diáspora (Diaspora Woman), Pueblito Paisa Community Centre and the University of Reading. The whole episode is in Spanish. With this project, we aimed to foster spaces of collective action for the resolution of conflicts that trigger positive social change.

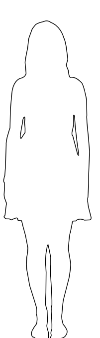
This project aimed to create a collective space of psychosocial support and reflection for people who have given their testimonies to the Colombian Truth Commission in the UK. The workshops took place in Conciliation Resources, Tufnell Park London, a space for peace-making and social change. We focused on three topics for conflict resolution, no repetition, and the reparation of the victims: Creativity, Conflict

Management, and finally, a Workshop on Collective Creation of Communicative Pieces for Development where we created reflections around Identity, Community, and Action/Activism. In this episode, you will hear about the importance of identity to inhabit the diaspora from diverse spaces, alongside reflections on how food, sounds, and flavours are essential to bring together Latin Americans in their condition as migrants. The episode also explores the pain and nonconformity of the diaspora, many of whom have migrated for political reasons and have experienced painful displacement processes. Secondly, you will hear about the importance of creating a community from diasporic connections; we asked ourselves, how do we create a community? What approaches, moments, and dynamics allow us to create community? Delving into the community as a safe space, especially from the migrant condition, we ask how, from within the community, we can create a sense of belonging and rootedness in the city that hosts us. Finally, we seek to speak about the notions of Action and Activism, how, from the community, it is possible to create social change.

Participants:
Mirta Osorio, Jael de la Luz, Marta Hinestroza, Adriana Patiño, Peter Browning, Angela Caicedo, Nelly Mosquera, Andrea González Wolff, Mariana Montoya Rodas, Julián Segura Vahos, Santiago Giraldo Arboleda, Doris Chauca Coronado, Ernesto Zuñiga, Marina Echeverría, Luis Fernando Sepúlveda López, Cherilyn Elston and Verónica Posada Álvarez.

See more:

https://www.ivoox.com/podcast-latin-london_sq_f11290818_1.html
https://open.spotify.com/show/3UV77vJmHol1no68Ml1zPc?si=f4eec878c4b54276
https://cream.ac.uk/events/latin-london-podcast/
https://www.instagram.com/latinlondonpodcast/



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