**Gentrification and change in Stratford**

**Source 1 - Gentrification in Stratford**

The whole reason the part of East London was identified and selected as the site for the Olympic Park was to regenerate a part of East London that had long been neglected and where the population were amongst the poorest and most deprived in London.

The housing legacy of the 2012 Olympics was meant to provide an adequate amount of affordable housing for people living in the Stratford area. However, spiralling costs of the Olympics meant that the focus for the London Legacy Development Corporation has become the repayment of debts. The way to do this was to acquire land and build property that could be sold freely on the open market at market prices. Targets for affordable housing therefore have been revised down from 35%-40% in 2010 to a minimum of 20% and maximum of 35% in 2011, and a maximum of 31% in 2013.

The result has been a huge increase in property prices and rents in areas like Stratford. These prices are higher than local people can afford. In 2015, median household incomes in Newham were just under £29k, yet a two-bedroom intermediate unit required a minimum household income of £48k and a three-bedroom shared ownership property a minimum household income of £73k.

The complaint is that the properties are only available for private rent, as a very low percentage has been earmarked for ‘social housing’ and that the national cap on benefits means the private rents are beyond those on benefits. This, of course, is not an issue confined to this ward and is rather something of national concern. The effect on Stratford and New Town, however, is that the population remains transient with the poorest families at risk of being rehomed in areas outside of London.

The council has, since before the Games had the slogan - ‘Newham: A place people will want to Live, Work and Play’ on signs around the borough, and many locals say that the area *was* previously a place that people did already want to live, work and play in but now can’t afford it.

Stratford is an up and coming area to move to largely due to the regeneration of the area through the Olympics, improved transport links to central London and rising prices in other more longstanding ‘gentrified areas’ in London. Recent figures showed that values in Kensington and Chelsea fell 3% year-on-year, whereas big increases of 20.8% were recorded in Newham.

The situation excludes low income families from taking advantage of the area’s improvements. This contradiction has led to local campaigns such as the Focus E15 Mums and Boleyn 100. Newham Council deems existing housing not fit to live in and refurbishment is too expensive. As a result, people moved to temporary accommodation or moved to a different part of East London. Some houses in Carpenters Estate that were empty homes following evictions were left unlived in for up to 8 years. In a recent, highly publicised, occupation by a group of single mothers who moved into four boarded up Carpenters flats.

Newham Council say - “We’re going to build thousands more homes there and we’re going to get jobs there. If you want us to build more homes that people can afford, we’re going to have to move some people from our brownfield sites for the greater good.”

**Source 2**

**A Blogger’s View of Changes in Stratford**

The wasteland and industrial space that the Olympic park is situated on could have been used effectively to tackle the housing shortage that London is currently facing. However, developments focused their market to overseas investors and Middle class London residents, in favour of Capitalism as it benefits the economy on a macro scale, boosting London’s economy as a whole instead of benefiting the working class residents of Stratford and locals in surrounding areas who are in search of housing, particularly affordable and social housing.

Since the 2012 Olympic games, it appears Stratford has been subjected to a shift in social class, from its origin as working class background into a suburban playground for the middle class and tourists. The gentrification is visible by the genre of shops within Westfield who target a middle-upper class demographic with designer stores flooding the enormous shopping centre. In addition, grocery stores such as Marks and Spencer’s and Waitrose are situated within Westfield who are renown for producing “luxury” food items at a relatively expensive price in comparison to the Sainsbury’s which can be found in the old Stratford centre and Morrison’s nearby, who attempt to offer affordable pricing. As a result, this type of gentrification of an area has influenced the stall traders of the Old Stratford centre as stalls can be found selling fine cheeses and foods, which is a far cry from the fruit and veg produce and market clothing that used to run through the Old Centre, essentially losing its East-End appeal and conforming to the hegemonic ideas of what Stratford now represents.

As London is forming into a Supercity, its losing its integrity as it becomes difficult to define what “London” is as it is changing geographically, specifically Stratford as its architecture and physical landscape is redesigned to replicate a “Metropolis” like many other parts of London. Time-space compression is created through enhanced transport links and technological advancements decreasing the physical space of “London” as Stratford no longer emplifies (sic) its East-End characteristics but becomes a product of “The City”, a surface of modern architecture and glamorous visuals with no depth of its history or the communities and cultures it replaced. As a result of globalisation, communities and representations of areas and cultures become fractured such as the “East-End” and what it represented becomes a nostalgic memory of a time that once was.

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