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Decanting on Estate Regeneration Schemes in London: Professional perspectives on responsibility and objectives

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Being a dissertation submitted to the faculty of The Built Environment as part of the requirements for the award of *MSc Spatial Planning* at University College London:

I declare that this dissertation is entirely my own work and that ideas, data, and images, as well as direct quotations, drawn from elsewhere are identified and referenced.

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Contents

Abstract

'Decanting' refers to the process of moving people out of estates which are slated for demolition or redevelopment by local councils as part of a regeneration scheme. As an aspect of regeneration, it has thus been identified by some academics as a mechanism which enables gentrification and facilitates displacement of low-income residents. This dissertation seeks to enhance our understanding of how decanting functions in practice by sharing the testimony of council employees who have overseen decants on certain regeneration schemes.

The research for this paper involved conducting interviews with employees of councils, developers and housing associations, particularly those in areas not commonly analysed in existing academic literature. Its purpose was not to challenge the perspectives and experiences shared by these interviewees, but merely to present their views and observe differences with prevailing narratives in current academic discourse on regeneration and decanting. The findings from this research suggest that previous academic accounts of decanting may overvalue the negative experiences of a minority of dissatisfied residents on certain estates when determining how decanting generally affects displaced individuals. Moreover, they neglect to adequately consider how council employees who oversee decanting approach their work, largely ignoring the principles by which they operate, underestimating the limitations and obstacles they encounter, and understating the extent to which the maintenance of harmonious relationships with decanted residents is conducive to frictionless development.

1. Introduction

1.1 – Topic Introduction

In the context of estate regeneration, 'decanting' is understood to refer to the process of rehousing tenants from homes on estates which are due to be redeveloped or refurbished. This process is undertaken by local authorities and usually involves moving residents either offsite to council-owned housing stock elsewhere in the local authority area or to available accommodation within the same site. Decanting thus constitutes a necessary stage within the regeneration process: new development cannot occur if buildings earmarked for demolition are still occupied. However, although the concept of regeneration has been a fiercely contested issue for decades in academic studies, journalistic articles and political debates, the subprocess of decanting has been much less scrutinised. Loretta Lees and Phil Hubbard's (2020b) recent survey of regeneration schemes in London has estimated that approximately 150 000 to 200 000 residents have been decanted since 1997 across a minimum of 161 schemes (corresponding data for the rest of the UK does not yet exist). It is my contention that a process which affects such a large number of people so profoundly is worthy of much more attention. To gain a better understanding of how large-scale displacement processes affects both individuals and broader populations, and to determine whether they might, for example, facilitate gentrification or enhance quality of life, we must improve our operational understanding of the mechanisms which ultimately govern these processes.

1.2 – Research Context

Estate Regeneration has been the subject of considerable academic discussion over the last two decades. In the UK, this discourse has primarily emerged as a response to the advent of New Labour in 1997 and its emphasis on urban regeneration policy, which spurred a wave of estate redevelopment initiatives throughout the country (Colomb, 2007). Much of this existing literature has focused on the experience of tenants affected by decanting, and in many cases has questioned the moral justification for regeneration schemes which compel large numbers of residents to be relocated. Much less attention has been paid to how councils functionally undertake decanting. By placing considerable and almost exclusive emphasis on the experience of residents, and, more often than not, on those who have particularly lost out via decanting, academic analysis has hitherto tended to present a view of regeneration in which councils are portrayed as faceless entities which impose their will upon residents without much consideration for their wishes. One aim of this paper is to complicate such narratives by presenting the thoughts and intentions of regeneration professionals in their own words. Just as Ballard and Butcher have argued that *"an exploded view of the developer…can advance our understanding of how the production of space unfolds and the ways in which power relations in urban development politics are negotiated"* (Ballard & Butcher, 2020, p. 274), I believe that our understanding of how decanting affects the residents of housing estates can only be improved by consideration of the role of local authority regeneration teams.

The literature in this area is moreover somewhat limited by its choice of case studies. Although the recent macroscopic analysis by Lees and Hubbard (2020a) draws on a database of 198 projects started since 1997, their qualitative analysis focuses on only six of these, including the Aylesbury and Carpenters Estates. These two estates, along with the Heygate Estate, have historically dominated academic narratives of decanting in London, and are at the centre of most of the analyses cited in this paper which focus specifically on decanting. It is certainly possible that the largely negative experiences of residents on these estates as shared in these papers is common to other estates in London, but this is a conjecture which ought to be supported by further research. This paper does

not purport to expand the evidence base of decanting experiences in London, and any inferences that may be drawn regarding the treatment of decanted tenants in areas supervised by the interviewees featured in the analysis section must be tempered by the acknowledgement that these experiences are related by regeneration professionals and not by the tenants themselves. Nonetheless, it is my hope that the data gathered here may help pave the way for the collection of a broader and more comprehensive evidence base on the impacts of decanting.

1.3 – Research Questions

The principal aim of this dissertation is to expand academic discussions of decanting by placing existing analysis of tenant experience in conversation with testimony gathered from council employees and other regeneration professionals. To achieve this, my research has been chiefly governed by three prevailing themes. Firstly, I wish to consider certain criticisms of the term decanting itself which have been raised by academics and journalists and question why the term has gained currency in the sphere of estate regeneration and whether its popularity is problematic. Secondly, I wish to consider the matter of residential compensation, comparing the accounts of academics emphasising the disenfranchisement of decanted individuals with the perspectives of regeneration professionals responsible for accommodating them. Lastly, I wish to evaluate the working relationship between councils and decanted residents by considering how much agency tenants have during the decanting process and how councils might conceptualise their obligations and attitudes towards decanted individuals.

In light of these goals, I have formulated my research questions as follows:

1. **How appropriate is the term 'decanting' in the context of estate regeneration schemes?**
2. **Are displaced residents fairly compensated during decants?**
3. **What governs the relationship between councils and decanted residents?**

1.4 – Dissertation Structure

Chapter 2 of this dissertation will review existing academic literature related to the three research questions outlined above. In Chapter 3, I will explain the methodology I have used to gather and analyse data on decanting in estate regeneration schemes in London, focusing on the interviews I have conducted with regeneration professionals. Chapter 4 will then present my analysis of the collected data and relate it to my research questions, examining how this data challenges or supports the narratives put forward by the literature surveyed in Chapter 2. In the conclusion I will summarise my findings and speculate on what implications they might have for further research in this area.

2. Literature Review

2.1 – Terminology

In regular English, decanting is usually understood to refer to the pouring of liquids, usually wine, from one container to another to filter out sediment or unwanted material. In the context of estate regeneration, 'decanted' residents who are moved out of estates thus correspond to the removed, 'purified' liquid, whilst the allegedly dilapidated and unsuitable homes they are removed from correspond to the 'impurities' left behind. Although it is unclear when the term was first used in the context of regeneration projects, the fundamentals of its operation were first outlined in the Land Compensation Act of 1973, which enshrined the duty of local authorities to compensate residents displaced by compulsory purchase orders with suitable alternative accommodation (Land

Compensation Act 1973). Today the term 'decanting' is prevalent enough to have been used in official documentation produced by local authorities throughout the country, yet it is notably absent in both national regeneration policy documents and the Mayor of London's official guidance on regeneration. Although it is not possible to definitively diagnose why this discrepancy exists, it may be connected to a certain uneasiness surrounding the term itself and how its original definition links to its usage within a regeneration context.

Estate regeneration is far from the only professional field in which the term decanting has found such an ancillary usage. In property law, for example, "*trust decanting refers to the act of distributing trust property from an irrevocable trust to another trust, under the trustee's discretionary authority to make distributions to or for the benefit of its beneficiaries*" (Lockett & Blumeyer, 2020, p. 26). I include this example here as it forms a suggestive counterpoint to 'decanting' as used in estate regeneration schemes. Whilst both processes share a metaphorical similarity, their objects are notably different: 'trust decanting' involves the transferral of property by people, whereas estate regeneration 'decanting' involves the transferral of *people* by other people. It is this identification of people as the object of a process more commonly understood to refer to inanimate matter or property which tends to underpin criticisms directed towards the usage of the term 'decanting' within the field of estate regeneration. Mara Ferreri has described how, as a result of the 'decanting' process, "*residents become an uncountable, faceless entity that can be poured, like a liquid, from one container to another.*" (Ferreri, 2020, p. 1008) In her analysis, the term 'decanting' is understood as a method of depersonalising the practice of relocating council tenants: individuals cease to be individuals, and instead become particles within a larger mixture. A policy which may cause substantial harm or distress to displaced individuals is therefore justified by situating discussion within a more generalised context where the rights of the individual are subordinated to more ethereal notions of a collective, communal good.

Another negative interpretation of the term decanting is exemplified by a pair of articles published in The Guardian newspaper. Owen Hatherley, writing in February 2011, decried decanting as a "*grotesque euphemistic phrase for 'eviction'*" (Hatherley, 2011), whilst his colleague Stephen Moss echoed this comment a month later by labelling it a "*horrible developers' euphemism*" (Moss, 2011). These comments identify the term as an inherently dishonest one, suggesting that its veneer of professionalism disguises a more nefarious purpose. They also imply a synonymity between the terms 'decanting' and eviction, which, it should be noted, is a fallacious oversimplification since they are fundamentally different concepts. Nonetheless, the thrust of the argument presented in these articles is that they produce superficially similar end results, in that residents are ultimately moved out of their homes. This argument tends to be elaborated with more sophistication in academic writing on displacement. Lees and Hubbard, describing the methodology behind their research into the impacts of housing renewal in London since 1997, state that they "*drew on Marcuse's influential conceptualisation of displacement as involving direct and enforced removal of low-income households via decanting/evicting them*" (Lees & Hubbard, 2020a, p. 244), again suggesting an intrinsic similarity between the concepts of decanting and eviction in terms of their impacts on low-income residents.

This strain of criticism can be contextualised within a wider discourse surrounding the language of regeneration and displacement, which emphasises how language can be used to perpetuate certain narratives. For example, Elliott-Cooper et al. have argued that "*In the contemporary remaking of cities, elites conscious of the negative connotations of the term 'gentrification' never use it, instead obfuscating it with more positively-loaded terms like urban regeneration, renaissance, renewal, or redevelopment.*" (Elliott-Cooper et al., 2020a, p. 494). Philip Cohen has similarly observed how the

language used by regeneration professionals to discuss their work has been rendered virtually meaningless by an extreme version of nominalisation, the process by which actions are converted to objects and abstract nouns: "*the syntax creates a world of de-contextualised thinglike abstract entities... which have the mysterious capacity of acting or being acted upon, but lack any attributable responsibility for the outcome. […] In general this is an idiom of extreme de-personalisation; the fact that human actions or inactions have consequences is no longer part of the story.*" (Cohen, 2008, p. 103). It could therefore be argued that critics who have identified decanting as a term which depersonalises displaced individuals and conceals potential culpability in gentrification are thus including it within this larger framework of decontextualised, 'positively-loaded' planning jargon.

2.2 – Compensation for Decanting

Decanted residents are typically offered compensation in the form of replacement homes either near the redevelopment site or elsewhere in the same borough, or the 'right to return', which permits them to occupy a new dwelling in the regenerated estate once development is completed. In London, both of these principles have been enshrined in the Mayor's Good Practice Guide to Estate Regeneration, which specifies that estate regeneration projects should not only grant tenants who are temporarily moved off the estate full right of return, but that councils should also make reasonable provision of alternative accommodation which suits bespoke household needs. (Mayor of London, 2018) However, the reality of decanting may not always conform to these principles. Lees and Hubbard's research has found that 'compensation' offered to displaced leaseholders was frequently insufficient to enable them to buy new homes near their old ones during the regeneration process, or indeed to afford new properties on redeveloped estates once regeneration had been completed. Their report also indicated that the process of decanting itself is "*often very slow, poorly managed, and badly communicated*" (Lees & Hubbard, 2020b, p. 7).

The lack of adequate compensation for residents displaced via decanting is a common theme in academic literature on regeneration schemes in London. Loretta Lees includes one such example in her analysis of regeneration on the Aylesbury Estate in Southwark, recounting how a tenant of a one-bedroom maisonette was offered £67,000 to move out as part of the decanting process, despite the home being worth more than double that according to the Nationwide House Price Index calculator (Lees, 2014, p. 935). A paper co-written between Lees and Mara Ferreri details how residents on the Heygate Estate in Elephant & Castle were offered insufficient compensation for their displacement despite earlier promises made by the council: "*The uncertainty regarding the rehousing process, combined with the withdrawal of promises made at the beginning of the 'decant' and the personal concern of many owner occupiers, particularly the elderly, about remaining on the nearly vacant estate, meant that most leaseholders were pushed to negotiate the acquisition of their homes by the Council on an individual basis. In the vast majority of cases, the compensation offered was below market price for similar existing properties, and even further from the expected prices of the new units to be built on the estate's site.*" (Lees & Ferreri, 2016, p. 18) Paul Watt (2013) has written about how, on the Carpenters Estate in Stratford, negative experiences of decanted residents who had been offered offsite accommodation served to unite residents who chose to remain behind by showing them what they had to lose by moving out. Watt has elsewhere indicated how the 'right to return' can be a difficult right to exercise in cases of particularly slow redevelopment schemes: "*Custom House and Carpenters regeneration schemes began in the early-to- mid 2000s, but no redevelopment partner was in place and zero redevelopment had occurred by 2019...Even if a redevelopment partner is found at either Custom House or Carpenters during 2020, it could take another 5– 10 years until any new homes are built. This means the decanted tenants will have been waiting over 20 years to exercise their right to return.*" (Watt, 2021, p. 333)

These accounts fit into the tradition of the larger corpus of academic literature on urban displacement, which tends to emphasise the disenfranchisement of those affected. Tom Slater, for instance, has argued that: *"rare are the instances where displacement results in some kind of beneficial or ''resilient'' outcome for the displaced household; common to the overwhelming majority of qualitative accounts of dislocation are disruption, humiliation, bitterness, pain and grief."* (Slater, 2013, p. 384) The findings presented by Lees and Hubbard in their policy briefing appear to bear out these conclusions, since many of the decanted residents they spoke to expressed fundamental concerns about the regeneration process itself, including an 'overwhelming majority' who questioned whether the case for demolition had been adequately explained, a majority who felt the decant process had been unnecessarily drawn out, and *"50% of those from non-white ethnic backgrounds (69% of the interviewees were from BAME backgrounds) [who] felt that the renewal of their estate was tantamount to racism, deliberately removing BAME groups to allow for white gentrification."* (Lees & Hubbard, 2020b, p. 6).

The national government's Good Practice Guide states that *"this guidance does not intend to set out a list of mandatory requirements for estate regeneration schemes. It is intended as a general good practice guide for all stakeholders to consider in relation to the characteristics and challenges of each individual scheme."* (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2016) Yet the lack of strictness in following these guidelines, or those of the London Mayor, in adequately compensating decanted residents appears to suggest that policy 'guidance' contains little merit if, as the research presented by Lees and Hubbard suggests, it is repeatedly ignored by those who are expected to follow its advice. It could further be argued that the privilege of ignoring written guidance in this manner speaks to the fundamental imbalance of power between the two major stakeholders in regeneration, namely the local authorities who are responsible for carrying out decanting, and the displaced occupants who are subject to decanting procedures. This relationship is explored further in the next section of this literature review.

2.3 – Relationship between Councils and Decanted Tenants

The absence of the word 'decanting' from both the National Government and Mayor of London's Good Practice Guides on Regeneration noted in section 2.1, and the apparent lack of diligence in fairly compensating residents noted in section 2.2, are reflective of the fact that the power to determine how decanting is undertaken ultimately rests at the local authority level. Local councils produce their own guidelines on how to implement decanting, and, as such, are almost entirely responsible for the treatment of residents on housing estates affected by regeneration. The power imbalance present in this arrangement has caused some academics to identify regeneration as a convenient mechanism through which councils can achieve idiosyncratic goals without experiencing a significant challenge to their authority. Paul Watt, for example, has argued that the popularity of regeneration schemes, particularly in London, is a response to a housing crisis which requires greater focus on housebuilding, and that, consequently, *"regeneration-as-demolition has increasingly become housing policy in the sense that the emphasis shifts away from improving estates residents' lives (as in the early schemes) and towards meeting borough housing targets."* (Watt, 2021, p. 416) He further describes how housing estates *"stand in the way of councils' entrepreneurial borough strategies as part of their urban renaissance goals for their town centres…Estates do not fit into these entrepreneurial borough strategies and must be bulldozed…for urban renaissance goals to be met."* (ibid., p. 416) These two arguments imply that, as far as councils are concerned, housing estates, and, by extension, the residents of these estates, are obstacles to development and urban renewal, and that, consequently, the principal purpose of decanting is to facilitate development by relocating these residents elsewhere.

This formulation of the relationship between councils and housing estates has formed the basis of further criticisms of councils which have accused them of deliberately fomenting estate deterioration to justify regeneration. Ben Campkin, writing about the Aylesbury Estate in Southwark, has argued that "*reflection on the longer-term history of the estate emphasises the powerful distorting effects that negative imaginaries of decline have had on public debates about its future. Perhaps what really underlies the drive to tear down these buildings now is not the desire to eliminate poverty but the wish to eliminate its visibility.*" (Campkin, 2013, p. 103) Felipe Lanuza, writing about the nearby Heygate Estate, has similarly observed that "*despite certain physical neglect, an appraisal study commissioned by Southwark Council in 1998 found no structural damage in the Heygate's buildings and elevated walkways, instead pointing to the need for refurbishment and regular maintenance...However, Southwark Council deemed the disrepair of the Heygate to be irreversible...In 2002 the council confirmed plans for the complete demolition of the estate to clear the way for developing what they described as an ambitious regeneration project.*" (Lanuza, 2014, p. 51) In a promotional video for Kidbrooke Village, a large regeneration scheme designed to replace the Ferrier Estate in Greenwich, architect Alex Lifschutz acknowledges that the "*blight of deciding whether [the Ferrier Estate] should or shouldn't be redeveloped had actually created a self-fulfilling prophecy.*" (Berkeley Group, 2013) Joanne Preston (2016) has noted how the Ferrier Residents Action Group, which protested against the regeneration scheme, has argued that this apparent indecision was part of a calculated attempt by Greenwich Council to justify reduced financial investment in the estate with an eye for future redevelopment.

In these accounts, the construction of estates as problems which councils must deal with to achieve their goals has the further consequence of stigmatising the residents of these estates as part of the problem. Mara Ferreri has argued that, as a result of this conceptualisation of estates and their tenants, "*'decanting' should thus be seen as the disarticulation of social, cultural, legal and political relations around the historical promise of municipal housing. This disarticulation cannot be separated from the dominant subjectivation of municipal housing residents through the powerful signifiers of stigma and victimhood, which dispossess them of legitimacy and produce them as disposable*." (Ferreri, 2020, p. 1009) Luna Glucksberg has related how councillors who had previously worked on regeneration proposals in Peckham felt compelled to deliberately exaggerate levels of deprivation and neglect on estates to secure funding, which reinforced the perception that the occupants of these estates were themselves part of the problem: "*Decanting and expulsion from the area were the logical outcome of a process of cleansing of people and communities that were deemed to be beyond improving, and whose only contribution to the betterment of the area was moving away.*" (Glucksberg, 2014, p. 113) Jessica Perera has discussed how, in the wake of the 2011 London riots, political discourse over the fate of 'sink estates' began to be heavily informed by the stigma "*attached to black and multicultural neighbourhoods and council estates, linked now to dangerous black youth subcultures.*" (Perera, 2019, p. 6) An important facet of these arguments is that this stigmatisation and dispossession of legitimacy is not ephemeral or limited to the period in which these residents dwell on these estates, but lingers in time. Thus, decanting may be regarded as only the first step in solving the 'problem' posed by these residents, with the full 'solution' only reached when the initial displacement is complemented by the continual exclusion of these residents from the areas from which they have been removed. As Cooper et al. have argued, "*Estate regeneration hence involves multiple displacement processes, from the initial decanting of populations to allow for redevelopment to a wider exclusionary pressure that prevents working-class populations from ever returning to the estate or its vicinity.*" (Cooper et al., 2020b, p. 1359)

These arguments imply that processes of physical removal and social discouragement limit the agency afforded to residents in deciding what happens to them. Academic discourse on this subject

is somewhat divided. Some scholars, like Chris Allen, would argue that the profit-seeking ideology of housing market renewal is necessarily underpinned by the disenfranchisement of the working-classes, which would include housing estate residents (Allen, 2008). However, others have emphasised the extent to which households which relocate from areas affected by regeneration are not only able to exercise control over certain aspects of the relocation process, but frequently benefit from moving. Kearns & Mason (2013) have observed that a majority of 'outmovers' in their Glasgow case study reported having 'some or a lot of choice' over the area they moved to, and that they generally considered their new homes an improvement over their old ones. Posthumus and Kleinmann have argued that *"the institutional context displaced tenants are in does not eliminate choice, but induces choice within certain limits that are not always as hard as they appear at first"* (Posthumus & Kleinhans, 2014, p. 120), and that consequently tenants faced with the prospect of displacement are not 'passive victims' if they can control certain aspects of their relocation. Paul Watt, whilst conceding that this may be true, places a stronger emphasis on the broader constraints imposed by regeneration: *"The key choice in the demolition and displacement process – whether your home will be demolished – [is] not under residents' control."* (Watt, 2021, p. 338) The question of choice in these schemes dovetails with the question of compensation examined in section 2.2 of this paper, since the prospective benefits of choice would obviously be limited if choices commonly afforded to residents, such as the right to return, are, in practice illusory and unavailable to them.

2.4 – Literature Review Summary

The picture of decanting which emerges from this discourse is a troubling one, defined by a one-sided and oppressive power dynamic between councils and residents. Residents may possess some agency during the relocation process, but they do not have any say in whether they move or not. Moreover, they are depicted as a stigmatised and depersonalised group whose very existence in areas designated for regeneration is considered a burden best relieved by moving them away. This status is compounded by the language in which they are discussed, which de-emphasises their individuality through the word 'decanting' itself, considered to be an objectifying word which may reflect the influence of abstract, technocratic language designed to minimise negative connotations in regeneration work. Finally, the compensation they are offered is argued to be frequently insufficient, suffering from inadequate choice and, in some cases, locked behind the promise of future development which could take decades to transpire.

3. Methodology

3.1 – Methodological Framework

To gather the information needed to answer my research questions, I decided to take a qualitative approach to gathering data. This entailed conducting interviews with regeneration professionals who had worked on regeneration schemes in London which involved resident decants, and subjecting their testimony to a Thematic Analysis (TA) which enabled me to identify themes and commonalities to shape and refine my research objectives. In section 4, data gathered from these interviews has been triangulated with secondary data, consisting of official policy documents produced by councils, developers and housing associations, and the academic literature examined in the literature review section of this dissertation, to produce a more holistic view of regeneration schemes which considers the experience of tenants and council employees.

3.2 – Semi-Structured Interviews

As characterised by Galletta & Cross (2013, p. 45), semi-structured interviews *"incorporate both open-ended and more theoretically driven questions, eliciting data grounded in the experience of the participant as well as data guided by existing constructs in the particular discipline within which one is conducting research."* This seemed like an ideal approach to adopt for my interviews, as I wanted to encourage my interviewees to share their experiences of working in regeneration and on estate decants, but also wanted to gauge their reactions to more theoretical questions raised in academic literature, such as questions about terminology and gentrification. These were obviously sensitive topics to raise with regeneration professionals since they often contain implicit criticisms of their work and may insinuate a lack of care or regard for residents. The semi-structured interview format was thus also useful in that it enabled me to participate in a dialogue with interviewees rather than remaining deliberately unengaged. As Blandford (2013, p. 36) writes, *"where the interview strays into potentially sensitive areas…it is surely unethical to remain artificially detached from the setting. In such situations, it is impossible to substitute one researcher for another: the researcher is effectively a research instrument."*

3.3 – Interview Design

To conduct interviews, I prepared one set of questions addressed to employees of local authorities, and one set addressed to employees of developers and housing associations. These questions, as originally written, can be found in Appendices A and B. These questions were adapted and rewritten as interviews progressed in response to themes and ideas which emerged in discussion with interviewees, and so may not match the actual questions put to interviewees. Although largely similar, the two sets of questions I created differed in a few key respects: most notably, questions aimed at developers and housing association employees were written with the assumption that they may be less familiar with the operational nature of decanting. Questions had previously been prepared to correspond to a certain identified theme, or combination of themes, which I had identified as important to the issue of decanting prior to conducting primary data collection. These themes were: Terminology, Objectives (of Decanting), Power Imbalances, Responsibilities, and Gentrification. Interviews were subsequently transcribed and re-analysed to refine my chosen themes and produce my three principal research questions.

3.4 – Participants

My initial goal with regards to data collection was to talk to both regeneration professionals and employees of private developers who had worked on estate regeneration schemes in London. This was conceived with the intention of sharing the perspectives of the people who organised and oversaw decanting procedures (i.e. council employees), as well as those who had an interest in the process but may not be actively involved (developers). Talking to 'decanters', as opposed to the 'decanted', offered an opportunity to gather a relatively fresh perspective on decanting, which has heretofore been largely addressed in academic analysis through the lens of tenant experience.

I originally sought to recruit interview subjects from four pairs of neighbouring boroughs in London, with each pair consisting of one relatively 'wealthy' and one relatively 'poor' borough as determined by median resident income. This was intended to account for experiential differences between boroughs and provide a diverse range of perspectives. However, I was forced to modify this approach owing to difficulties sourcing interview subjects from developers and from some boroughs. Ultimately, I was able to secure seven interviews: five with employees or former employees of regeneration teams on local councils (Brent, Westminster and Greenwich), one with an employee of

a private developer and one with an employee of a housing association. Although this number was smaller than I initially intended, I felt that by the final interview I was close enough to a point of categorical saturation that it was not worth proceeding further, in that the new data I was collecting was solidifying my existing insights but not providing any major new ones (Charmaz, 2006).

For the purposes of this dissertation, interview respondents have been anonymised and renamed as Interviewee 1, Interviewee 2, and so on, according to the order in which they were interviewed.

3.5 – Thematic Analysis (TA)

Thematic Analysis can take many forms, but is generally understood to include *"a research question to be investigated, which may evolve as a study progresses; material of some kind, for instance, transcribed interviews or found text; and a particular standpoint, for instance, the experiences of the researcher or a theory."* (Fugard & Potts, 2020) It is considered a relatively simple theoretical approach compared to other analytical methods such as Discourse Analysis or Grounded Theory, and perhaps lacks the capacity to adequately interpret data as opposed to merely describing it. However, it is also a relatively accessible framework for researchers with little experience of qualitative research, such as myself, and moreover offers considerable flexibility in terms of developing research questions and data collection (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Since my primary data consists solely of a relatively small number of interviews, TA seemed an appropriate method for evaluating the testimony reproduced in the transcripts of our interviews.

As Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 87) have outlined, there are typically six phases involved in thematic analysis:

1. Familiarising oneself with one's data
2. Generating Initial Codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Producing the report

These stages are recursive rather than linear, meaning that they frequently overlap. This reflexivity was beneficial in that it enabled me to reformulate my codes, themes and research questions in response to investigation and reinvestigation of transcripts. The codes generated in phase 2 were initially identical to the broad themes used to write my interview questions, mentioned in section 3.3. However, as I refined my themes according to phases 3-5 outlined above, these codes were revised to reflect my the research areas ultimately chosen. Since I felt that the issue of gentrification was not sufficiently discussed in my interviews, and was moreover a weighty topic to address in its own right, I discarded it as a research theme fairly early on. I felt that the themes of Responsibility, Power Imbalances and Objectives were all intrinsically related, and so combined and reformulated them into the themes of compensation for residents and the relationship between councils and residents. Lastly, the issue of terminology and the sensitivity of the word 'decanting' was retained as a theme to provide an introduction to the overall topic of the dissertation.

3.6 – Limitations

The methodology I have adopted for this paper necessarily places a number of limitations on what it can reasonably achieve. As noted in section 3.5, Thematic Analysis is a relatively simple analytical method which does not involve significant interrogation of the experiences shared by interviewees. Whilst I have made some effort to corroborate their statements with written policy documents

where possible, a more thorough analytical approach along these lines could reveal more discrepancies or commonalities between what councils say they do and what they actually do. I would furthermore stress that, since academic literature on decanting has rarely before shared the perspectives of regeneration teams, my own intention in sharing them is less focused on cross-examining their reflections than on merely presenting them.

As stated in the Participants section, I was unable to interview as many people as I had intended to for this research project, or from as wide a range of boroughs as I wanted. I was furthermore forced to scale back the number of non-council employees I spoke to, which greatly limited the extent to which I was able to discuss the role of developers and housing associations in organising and facilitating decanting. Further research into this area would undoubtedly benefit from gathering qualitative data from a broader range of actors involved in the regeneration process.

Although I chose to restrict my focus to London for the sake of more easily gathering data, since it has been subject to more academic research than other locations in the UK, it is vital to acknowledge that decanting is primarily shaped by councils and the resources they possess, and thus data gathered from a select group of councils within London cannot necessarily be considered representative of experiences elsewhere in the country. However, my intention with this research project is not to provide an in-depth assessment of particular decanting schemes or claim that they are, in fact, representative, which I believe offsets this potential limitation. I would moreover argue that this is an inevitable limitation of any analysis of regeneration which involves considering particular case studies rather than addressing the process on a macro scale.

3.7 – Ethics and Positionality

Prior to undertaking interviews, I completed the UCL risk assessment form to outline potential risks involved in this dissertation. Since my primary data consisted of interviews, these risks mainly pertained to the non-disclosure of sensitive information and protecting confidentiality. To safeguard against these risks, all participants were asked to sign a consent form before being interviewed. Interviews were conducted over Teams from the interviewee's home or office and were not monitored or overheard by anyone else. Personal data relating to the interviewee, including audio recordings and contact information, will be deleted following the submission of this dissertation to further protect their identity.

4. Analysis and Findings

4.1 – How appropriate is the term 'decanting'?

When questioning the appropriateness of the term 'decanting', I gathered a range of interesting responses from my interview subjects which largely diverged from the negative portrayal encountered in academic and journalistic articles on the subject. Some interviewees certainly acknowledged that the term 'decanting' could be interpreted in a negative way. For example, Interviewee 1, who worked for a housing association, stated that:

"[The term decanting is] not something I use with residents because they're people. I talk to them in terms of rehousing. […] It usually is not an appropriate way to talk about people and their homes in a direct conversation. You've been sort of dehumanised, haven't you? […] I think there is more effort now in [our organisation] and I think possibly within other organisations to use better terms."

Interviewee 4, who worked for a developer, also recognised how the term might have negative connotations:

"I think rehousing is probably more sensitive. I guess decanting you would probably more associate with buildings as opposed to people."

Interviewee 2, who worked for Westminster Council, offered a more complex perspective, in that they conceded that the term could appear divisive, but indicated that there wasn't an official or ethical taboo against using the word in their workplace:

"Interestingly, the official title of our decanting team is not the decanting team, it's the rehousing team, so I think we recognise that some people can interpret the word as a bit cold and a bit transactional.[...] Most people, including residents, they don't have a very strong response to the word, so there's no mandate on us to say 'you must not use decanting because that doesn't give true value to the person as the centre of it.'"

Statements like these suggest that there is some awareness amongst regeneration professionals that the term decanting is not always ideal, even if it is commonly used. Although there is little evidence of misgivings surrounding the term's sensitivity in existing policy literature, an FAQ document produced by the housing association One Housing does acknowledge that 'decanting' may have some unfortunate implications: "*We appreciate that the word doesn't sound very sensitive towards the people affected so we try not to use it, but like a lot of work jargon people sometimes use it without thinking.*" (One Housing, 2018, p. 1)

However, some interviewees were keen to assert that, although in theory the appropriateness of the term 'decanting' is worth scrutinising, it was not a hugely significant issue as regards their day-to-day work. Interviewee 2, for example, ruminated that:

"I think what's more important for me is, if you're at the receiving end of the service, how do you feel? Do you feel listened to? Do you feel that people are communicating with you? [...] That would be my judgement, is that rather than obsess about the 'decanting' word, for me, it's more important to focus on what kind of service the resident is receiving."

Interviewee 7, who worked for Brent Council, offered a similar reflection on the relative importance of language:

"I don't know whether there's a word that could make it more personal, because I think, regardless of the word you use, the service people got was a very personal service."

Beyond ethical considerations of the use of the word 'decanting', some interviewees were able to provide justifications for its use which were rooted in its operational utility and its distinction from other, similar terms. Interviewee 3, who worked for Greenwich Council, mused that:

"Decanting – it's almost a kind of two-stage process, isn't it? Rather than just moving people, as it were. For me, that would be its meaning."

This point was echoed by and elaborated upon by Interviewees 5 and 7. Interviewee 5, who worked for Brent Council, stated that:

"If it's outside of the scheme, then there is no decant offer. There is just a rehousing offer. If you are within the scheme, then it is a decant. [...] Rehousing tends to be applied generally across the board, so if people want to transfer, and they want to be rehoused, they will look on the council's waiting list, and if an offer is suitable for them, they will be rehoused. They won't get any compensation. However, if they're on the estate and we are looking to rehouse them, we use the word decant."

Interviewee 7 similarly argued that 'rehousing' and 'decanting' could hold distinct definitions in the context of regeneration:

"I think [with] rehousing, someone could come from anywhere. Whereas [with] the decant, the whole thing is: how do you get them out of this block that you need to demolish in order to move them into something? So, no, I think it's not the same. Ultimately, at the end, you rehouse somebody, but the decanting is, I think specifically, because you need to clear the block, you need to clear the area so that the area can be redeveloped."

This differentiation between decanting and rehousing outlined by interviewees is not always easy for lay people to appreciate, and is perhaps compounded by a lack of clarification on potential differences between the terms in written policy documents. In a Minority Report on the Ferrier Rehousing Strategy produced in 2005, Councillor Eileen Glover states that *"the first mistake was in calling the strategy a 'Rehousing Strategy' (RS). It should have been a 'Decant Strategy'."* (Glover, 2005, p. 7) This document was a dissenting report on a committee recommendation and thus does not itself fully elaborate on the differences between a 'decant strategy' and a 'rehousing strategy', but the basis of her criticism is that the use of the latter phrase omits key information for affected leaseholders and freeholders that might be more properly conveyed by the former.

An information pack for tenants produced by Hackney Council further illustrates how the subtle differences between the two terms can be overlooked by simply indicating that they don't exist, informing affected residents that *"'Decanting' means rehousing."* (Hackney Council, 2018, p. 2) However, as Interviewee 6, an employee of Brent Council, noted, it may be the case that the two terms are more commonly conflated when talking to residents, who may be less familiar with the term 'decanting', but are used distinctly in more professional settings:

"We tend to say to the tenant that we're rehousing them because it's clearer. And we tend to use the word 'decant' more internally, with partners, because they're looking for stats and other information on which block is due for demolition and things like that. So to a client, it's 'rehousing', and to internal partners it's 'decanting'. [...] I think it's just better use of English to say rehousing because [residents] actually understand the process of rehousing, moving them from one property to another, whereas decanting may mean something completely different."

Interviewee 5 concurred with this view:

"From a tenant's point of view, the normal word would be rehoused, but from an officer's point of view, it's the word decant."

The perspectives shared here suggest that, although there may be some grounds for considering the term 'decanting' insensitive when devoid of context, regeneration professionals are sufficiently aware of these grounds to avoid using the term in contexts where it may upset, or even confuse, those whom it is likely to offend. There are practical and ethical reasons for avoiding the term in front of residents, and because of this, it is frequently replaced by clearer and less depersonalising terms such as 'rehousing', which residents can understand more easily even if it is not exactly synonymous. Furthermore, these reflections suggest that the term 'decanting' is neither an instance of deliberately depersonalised planning jargon, nor a euphemistic synonym for eviction, designed to obfuscate its connections to gentrification. There is a clear rationale for using the term in a professional context as it can be used to describe a specific process that is not adequately described by the term 'rehousing'. Thus, decanting may not fit into the tradition of 'developer speak' discussed by Cohen or other critics of the language of regeneration.

4.2 – Are displaced residents fairly compensated during decants?

When discussing the core aims of decanting, interviewees universally emphasised two central guiding precepts for their work: the need to adequately provide for displaced residents, and the need to facilitate development. Interviewee 3 framed these principles as follows:

"I think [the purpose is] to facilitate the development in a timely fashion, but in a way that also works for the existing residents."

Interviewee 7 gave a similar response:

"It's moving people into new properties that suit their needs, and it's clearing a building for future use. It's both things. It's physical, what you're going to do with the building after you've done it, but actually what's really important, just as much if not more so, is actually finding the alternative accommodation, suitable accommodation for the people who were originally living in that building."

Interviewee 5 placed more emphasis on the importance of satisfying tenants:

"The core aim of decanting is to ensure that the tenant is no worse off than they currently are. So it's making sure that they move to a decent size property, or better, and making sure that they can afford the rent and also making sure that they get appropriate compensation so that they are not out of pocket."

These comments are mirrored in corresponding policy literature. For example, a document outlining the rehousing strategy on the redevelopment of the Ferrier Estate in Greenwich lists amongst its main aims the council's desire *"to maximise the number of residents able to return to the redeveloped site in order to maintain a sense of community"* and *"to ensure that tenants have as great as choice as possible when moving to new homes in terms of location, tenure, type and size."* (Greenwich Council, 2005, p. 1) A explanatory leaflet produced in support of the South Kilburn regeneration masterplan states that *"The majority of residents have indicated that they wish to stay in South Kilburn and the Masterplan has been designed to allow all residents to do so."* (Brent Council, 2004, p. 10) On the subject of residential choice, the allocation policy for South Kilburn states that *"Those tenants, who choose to move to a new home in South Kilburn, will be invited to select from a range of tenants choice items available such as kitchen and bathroom units, colours / tiling, and floor coverings."* (Brent Council, 2010, p. 6)

Public-facing documents such as these are obviously designed to reassure residents that councils will treat them fairly during decants, and cannot be taken as proof that they actually do so. However, the evidence gathered in my interviews indicates that the principles outlined in these documents guided the approaches council employees took towards compensating residents. For example, one of the sections in the South Kilburn allocation policy describes the principle of 'Needs Plus', which was mentioned by interview subjects from Brent as a policy which sought to address the specific needs of certain residents. Interviewee 6 explained this as follows:

"'Needs plus one' is where somebody, usually an older person, is living in a three- or four-bedroom property and all their extended family have moved away. They're left alone in that large accommodation, however [because] there's health reasons or they have visiting grandchildren…we inserted a section called 'Needs Plus', so if they're in a three- or four- bed, they'll get a two-bed."

Interviewee 5 echoed this point:

"We have it coded in policy to say: 'needs plus one' will be offered on this basis…therefore if they've got a three bedroom and they only require one bedroom, we'll give them the 'needs plus one'. [...] For

a lot of people who've had families [who've] moved away, for their family to come and spend time with them, they're gonna need an extra bedroom."

The adoption of a 'Needs plus' policy suggests that councils view residential compensation not as a mere formality, but as something which needs to be tailored to individual circumstances. Several interviewees described how successful approaches to decanting were fundamentally linked to the extent to which they engaged with affected residents as individuals rather than as a collective. For example, Interviewee 7 stated that:

"There was a team that specifically got to know the residents on a very individual basis, what people's requirements were, what their expectations were."

Interviewee 2 offered a similar reflection:

"It was critical for us, establishing the relationships and face time with those households…There is a family, a person, at the centre of this, and let's do good by that person."

These philosophies governed how interviewees addressed bespoke requests from residents. For example, Interviewee 6 discussed how a common request from residents concerned the desire for kitchens and dining rooms to be kept separate in their new homes:

"I think it's a generational thing…so the older client wants the separate kitchen because they have a thing about smells, [whereas] the younger client might not have an issue with open plan. How you [accommodate] that is, you have to do a mix. So you might do a mix of separate kitchen where you possibly can."

Interviewee 4 offered an example of how feedback from residents who had been decanted onsite at Kidbrooke Village actively shaped the design of the estate:

"We delivered a lot of the parkland initially that was very prim and proper, sort of like a golf course. We used an analogy that it was 'kind of perfect'. And the feedback we got from residents was that the service charge they were paying was too high and that 'the look and feel of it actually isn't that good, it's so nice that it actually doesn't feel quite right.' So then we worked in partnership with a wildlife trust to kind of regreen it and make it much more natural and certainly increase the biodiversity to a quite extensive scale. I think that's just one of the examples we've got of really trying to work with the existing residents."

In light of comments like these which emphasise the extent to which regeneration teams work closely with residents to meet their expectations, it is perhaps unsurprising that interviewees almost unanimously indicated that, in their experience, the vast majority of residents they engaged with were satisfied with the outcomes of decanting and the compensation they received. For example, Interviewee 2 stated that:

"In terms of people who are overtly or extremely dissatisfied, I'd say it's about 5%."

Interviewee 6 suggested put forward similar numbers:

"You are always gonna get somebody who, no matter what you tell them, they've either said you didn't tell them, [or] 'actually, I wanted more. I call it my '3% unhappy' and my '97% fairly happy'."

Interviewee 3 offered a slightly more modest figure:

"Maybe 70/30, but I'm not aware that there were huge numbers of people complaining about the process."

Interviewee 1 agreed with the notion of a high satisfaction rate, but offered a somewhat more ambivalent evaluation:

"I think once people have got over potential inertia, and fear of the unknown, quite often it can be beneficial, but it's still extremely disruptive, and if people are frightened of change, it can cause a lot of anxiety before you get to the finishing post. […] There were people who were sort of hostile and very resistant to change, but generally the outcomes were good, people were pleased with their new homes."

These figures and assessments are obviously anecdotal and not rooted in quantified data, such as might be provided by surveys of decanted residents, which interviewees indicated were not typically issued. In the absence of such data, it is difficult to definitively challenge existing academic narratives of residential trauma caused by decanting and forced displacement on regeneration schemes. Nonetheless, the testimony gathered here suggests that the existing academic discourse on these processes may overstate the degree to which residents are not fairly compensated, listened to, or satisfied during decanting. As mentioned in section 1.2 of this paper, the current evidence base in academic literature on this subject places an overwhelming emphasis on a handful of known 'problem' cases. Moving beyond the purview of these commonly analysed case studies may complicate our picture of decanting as a fundamentally disenfranchising process by suggesting that, on other estates in London, it may in fact lead to beneficial outcomes for a majority of affected individuals. This is hardly an unprecedented thesis to propose, and is indeed one of the official justifications for regeneration policies (DLUHC & Ministry of Housing, 2016). The main import of reiterating it here is to indicate that decanting is a complex process which can be handled very differently from council to council, and that our analysis of how it compensates affected individuals should strive to adequately reflect this.

4.3 – What governs the relationship between councils and decanted tenants?

As outlined in section 2.3, residents cannot choose whether or not to be decanted. Once a council nominates an estate for regeneration, residents are obligated to comply with council directives which will move them offsite if required. However, building on the evidence shared in section 4.2 concerning approaches to engaging with residents and resident satisfaction rates, the interviews I conducted indicated that councils are both willing and able to build constructive relationships with individuals affected by decanting. Interviewee 2 explained how having a team dedicated to rehousing residents was in the interests of all concerned parties.

"By having a dedicated function, not only, in my view, is it better for residents, but also from a council's perspective, because ultimately the council has an absolute vested interest in getting vacant possession as well."

Interviewee 7 elaborated on this point by indicating that developers also had a vested interest in the process:

"They want it to be as smooth as possible. They don't want to have to come up against resident opposition. […] And [decanting] impacts on their timelines, on their project plans. If it's delayed for any reason, they can't go to the next stage, so they're very aware of it. But they don't take responsibility for the decant, they just want you to make sure it does [go smoothly]. And sometimes they will give you resources to support [decanting] because it's in their interest."

The stated desire to work closely with residents was reflected in the methods interviewees employed to communicate with and inform them during the regeneration process. Interviewee 4 stated that:

"We have a community forum which has been established over the number of years that the scheme has been going. We meet monthly, all the partners of the scheme…we liaise directly with the community forum as a group, but also my email address is out there for residents to use…It's certainly useful to hear what the community likes and what the community wants, and what they think is particularly lacking."

Interviewee 5 described how Brent Council employed a 'resident's friend' to represent their interests on the estate regeneration scheme at South Kilburn:

"One of the things that we employed was a 'resident's friend'. That's to make sure that people had a person to go to where they could have questions answered. […] They would actually negotiate on behalf of residents to say what they'd like to have in the scheme. […] It's an independent organization, and we made sure that the tenants selected the resident friend because it was gonna be their advisor."

Of course, as the academic literature has demonstrated, not all residents are keen to comply with decanting. Although all interviewees acknowledged that some residents were very resistant to the idea of moving, the consensus was that not only did these constitute a very small minority, as alluded to in section 4.2, but that councils were not always entirely to blame for misleading or disappointing residents. Interviewee 7 explained how external factors could alter the landscape of regeneration in ways councils couldn't control:

"If you do something over a long period of time, the world around you changes, government policy can change, funding arrangements can change, the economic environment can change…You have to take people with you on that journey of change, and there'll be so many people who will be really involved and most people will think, 'oh God, they've changed their mind again.' So communication is absolutely key."

Interviewee 6 noted an example of this:

"Our main problem at the present moment is car parking. A lot of the developments now are car-free, so that's led by the Mayor of London, so we are having, and will be having, issues in the future because as far as I'm aware, all the future development will be car-free development. A lot of people are very, very tied to their vehicle."

Interviewee 2 raised the issue of particularly resistant residents spreading misinformation, which could hamper the council's ability to effectively build relationships with other residents:

"You will always have these very core agitators, and the people who will fight us to the death because they love a fight…and so what they might do is start spreading misinformation. So, for example, 'they're going to force you to move outside of Westminster, don't talk to them or they're going to run down the estate and then give you the worst possible offer.'"

Interviewee 6 echoed this point:

"You get [a] group of people who have assumed that we are not going to do what we say we are going to do, and we are going to change the whole area and gentrify it. So what we are saying to people is, 'we're gonna move from this side of the road to the other side of the road'. And somebody else is saying, 'No, don't believe them, they're lying, what will happen is they'll sell off the land to

some multimillion [company], and people from all over the borough will come and live there and you won't get the opportunity, so if you dig down now and don't give them the free land, it won't happen.'"

The importance of communication in resolving issues such as the perpetuation of misinformation and changing circumstances over time was reiterated when interviewees were asked about the Heygate Estate, which, as noted elsewhere in this paper, is commonly regarded as an example of a badly handled decant. Although the interviewees could not claim to be entirely familiar with the details of the scheme, they offered some general thoughts about why it might have encountered difficulties. Interviewee 6, for instance, suggested that imperfect decants were linked to imperfect consultation processes:

"If you do a good consultation, have things written, have workshops, have Saturday consultations, have open days, have all sorts of things, it's likely that you will get that number [of protesting residents] reduced."

Interviewee 7 observed that poor decanting experiences may be linked to the history of the affected estate and its relationship with the council:

"I think there are places where there is such a history of mistrust between the council and the residents. […] Residents won't completely trust you because you are the council. You are a figure of authority: you have powers they don't have. […] I think where there's very entrenched negativity, it can be hard to overcome it."

As indicated in the literature review section of this paper, descriptions of decanting and regeneration in academic literature are typically presented as struggles informed by fractious relationships between councils and the tenants they wish to displace. However, this type of narrative bears little resemblance to that presented by my interviewees, who were keen to stress the extent to which they collaborated and communicated with residents to achieve the outcomes most desirable for them. Councils and developers are portrayed as having a clear interest in maintaining a healthy relationship with residents so as to minimise delays and risks to development. Failures in communication and provision of previously promised forms of compensation may be less rooted in deliberate deception than they are in the complexities and uncertainties intrinsic to large-scale regeneration projects. This perspective challenges that put forward by scholars such as Lees and Hubbard, who have recently suggested that, as a consequence of the extended timeline of regeneration schemes, *"the life of residents is effectively suspended: there is no longer any incentive to improve their home or neighbourhood, nor is it clear how they should plan for the future"* (Lees & Hubbard, 2022, p. 351), since, on the basis of the testimonials gathered here, councils have an active interest in helping residents plan for their future by assisting them through the decant process.

5. Conclusion

In the introduction of this dissertation, I stated that, as a mechanism central to regeneration schemes, decanting was worthy of further investigation. The evidence presented here supports this declaration by demonstrating that the realities of decanting may differ in substantial ways from the observations and inferences previously put forward in academic literature. Firstly, the term 'decanting' itself is found to be a useful one with distinct operational meanings that differentiate it from similar words. The extent to which it potentially depersonalises residents is mitigated by these nuances and by the conscious avoidance of its usage in front of residents by regeneration professionals. This avoidance speaks to the second important observation suggested by the

testimonials shared in this paper, namely that council employees who oversee decanting consider themselves to be guided first and foremost by the principle of treating decanted residents fairly and sensitively, recognising and aiming to fulfil their individual needs and desires during the relocation process. This is borne out by the interviewees' unanimous belief that the vast majority of residents they engage with are satisfied with the outcomes of the decanting process and the compensation they receive. This belief suggests a third, related conclusion: that the relationship between councils and decanted individuals is more complex than the one-sided dynamic presented elsewhere in academic literature. Councils do not simply impose their will on estate tenants but allow them enough agency to favourably negotiate the circumstances of their relocation.

The extent to which these conclusions can be trusted is obviously open to questioning. They may, for instance, only apply to the specific estates over which my interviewees enjoyed professional responsibility. This could certainly be the case if we do not wish to deny the validity of the considerable evidence gathered on residential experience on other estates in London mentioned in the literature review section of this paper, such as the Heygate and Aylesbury Estates in Southwark. These conclusions may moreover be overly limited by the perspectives of my interviewees, who, after all, are hardly likely to claim that they treat residents unfairly or thoughtlessly, or suggest that their work directly facilitates gentrification. With these limitations in mind, I would stress that these conclusions are mainly intended to be read as indicative, rather than conclusive in and of themselves. They suggest that there is more to the story of decanting, and, by extension, regeneration, than that presented by the commonly espoused case studies which currently form the central corpus of literature on these subjects; they suggest that councils do not have pernicious motives when engaging with residents, and that instigating conflict with residents is not at all in their interests; they suggest that existing narratives may be distorted by a vocal minority of unhappy residents who may not represent the beliefs and opinions of the majority of decanted individuals, who may in fact be satisfied with the outcomes of decanting; and they suggest that, if residents critical of decanting do, in fact, accurately reflect a majority opinion, that there is a worrying discrepancy between what council employees believe they are accomplishing in their roles and the outcomes that they are actually producing.

The findings presented here contain several implications for future academic research and policy innovations in this area. Firstly, since 'decanting' is a commonly used term in regeneration that nonetheless appears to carry different shades of meaning and implications to different people, I would suggest that it could only be beneficial for it to find its way into national and city-wide guidance on regeneration in order to clarify misperceptions surrounding its usage. Secondly, I would recommend that, in line with recommendations of Lees and Hubbard in their reporting, much more longitudinal research needs to be done on the long-term effects of decanting-induced displacement. However, this needs to be complemented by research which broadens perspectives on decants by considering a wider range of case studies in as much detail as has previously been afforded to those commonly analysed in regeneration discourse, including a much greater focus on estates outside of London. This goal could be facilitated by better monitoring of post-decanting satisfaction rates by councils, perhaps via periodical surveys of wellbeing and perceived changes to quality of life. A third ramification of this research relates to the direction of future research on decanting: if certain regeneration schemes are much more successful in placating displaced residents than others, it is surely worth launching comparative investigations which could uncover reasons why this may be the case, particularly if, as suggested by my interviewees, residential satisfaction is substantially dependent on the conduct of councils and their employees. Finally, I would like to suggest that, in line with the methodology of this research project, future studies of decanting should pay greater attention to the experiences and perspectives of regeneration professionals, which can only enrich

our understanding of the complexities of regeneration, displacement, and the spatial management of cities.

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Appendix A – Interview Guide [Council Employees]

1. Please describe your job (or former job, if no longer working in regeneration) and how long you have done it for.
2. How often do/did you use the term decanting in your profession?
   a. To what extent does the term decanting feature in internal policy guidance or communications?
   b. What are your thoughts on the term decanting?
3. In your opinion, what are the core aims of decanting?
   a. Do you consider your experiences with decanting to have been largely successful in achieving these intended aims?
4. Who decides how decanting is undertaken?
   a. To what extent is process influenced by government guidance?
   b. To what extent is process influenced by mayoral guidance?
   c. Do you think that sufficient government guidelines exist for outlining how decanting should work?
5. To what extent do you think the decanting process is considered when regenerations plans are first suggested in your borough/on specific project you worked on?
   a. To what extent do you think the decanting process is considered when regeneration plans are first drawn up?
6. Do you think developers on regeneration projects pay sufficient consideration to residents whom their plans required to be displaced?
   a. In your experience, how aware are developers of the decanting process?
   b. To what extent are developers involved in the decanting process?
7. In your experience, what are the main things which decanted residents tend to want from the process?
   a. How many decanted residents typically intend to exercise their right to return?
   b. How many decanted residents are typically able to exercise their right to return?

Appendix B – Interview Guide [Developer/Housing Association]

1. Please describe your job (or former job, if no longer working in regeneration).
2. How much communication do you have with regeneration teams on local councils?
   a. To what extent do you or your company consider the decanting process when creating regenerations plans?
3. Do delays associated with undertaking decanting present a significant challenge to the implementation of regeneration schemes?
   a. To what extent is decanting considered/addressed (as a potential delay) when drawing up regen plans?
4. How do you strike a balance between what existing residents want and what prospective new residents might want from site?
5. To what extent are you involved with the actual regeneration process?
   a. Do you think that residents on housing estates which are undergoing regeneration generally approve or disapprove of the process?)

Appendix C – Consent Form

Project Title   Regeneration and Decanting

Researcher   Will Glover

Introduction

You are being invited to take part in a research project being undertaken by a master's student from the Bartlett School of Planning, University College London (UCL).

Before you decide whether or not to participate it is important for you to understand why the research is being conducted and what participation will involve. Please read the following information carefully, feel free to discuss it with others if you wish, or ask the research team for clarification or further information. Please take time to decide whether you wish to take part.

Why is this research being conducted?

The aim of this project is to better understand three principal objectives: how the term 'decanting' is used and understood in the context of estate regeneration; how decanting functions within the overall regeneration process; and the relationship developers have with decanting processes.

Why am I being invited to take part?

You have been identified as someone who has worked on estate regeneration schemes in London, either as a member of a local council or as an employee of a housing developer.

Do I have to participate?

Participation is entirely voluntary. If you do choose to participate and then change your mind, you may withdraw from the research at any time with no consequences and without having to give a reason.

What will happen if I choose to take part?

If you do choose to participate, you will be invited to an online video interview to explore the issues highlighted above. The interview will should last no longer than an hour at the absolute maximum and will be audio recorded (and transcribed at a later date). You will have the opportunity to see the interview transcript and agree any amendments with the researcher after the interview is concluded.

What are the advantages of taking part?

There are no immediate benefits for participating in this project and no financial incentive or reward is offered, however it is hoped that this project will help to inform how decanting functions within regeneration processes and what limitations of obstacles may hamper its effectiveness.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?

We anticipate no significant disadvantages associated with taking part in this project. If you experience any unexpected adverse consequences as a result of taking part in the project you are encouraged to contact the researcher as soon as possible using the contact details on page 2 of this information and consent sheet.

If I choose to take part, what will happen to the data?

The interview data will be anonymised at the point of transcription and identified by a general identifier (e.g. 'Planning officer A' or 'Planning consultant B' or a suitable pseudonym). A record of participant identities and any notes will be kept separately and securely from the anonymised data. All data and information affiliated with this project will be securely stored on an encrypted computer drive and physical documents will be stored securely on University property.

The data will be only used for the purposes of this research and relevant outputs and will not be shared with any third party. The anonymised data may be utilised in the written dissertation produced at the end of this project, and this dissertation may then be made publicly available via the University Library's Open Access Portal, however no identifiable or commercial sensitive information will be accessible in this way.

What will happen to the results of the research project?

It is anticipated that the data collected in this project will be included in the dissertation produced at the end of this project, submitted for the award of a Master's degree at University College London (UCL). You will not be personally identified in any of the outputs from this work, and attributions and quotations will be anonymised. If you would like to receive an electronic copy of any outputs stemming from this project, please ask the contact below who will be happy to provide this.

Contact Details

If you would like more information or have any questions or concerns about the project or your participation, please use the contact details below:

Primary contact	Will Glover
Role	MSc student
Email	will.glover.21@ucl.ac.uk

Supervisor	Frances Brill
Role	MSc dissertation supervisor
Email	fnb22@cam.ac.uk

Concerns and / or Complaints

If you have concerns about any aspect of this research project please contact the MSc student contact the student in the first instance, then escalate to the supervisor.

Informed Consent Sheet

If you are happy to participate, please complete this consent form by ticking the boxes to acknowledge the following statements and signing your name at the bottom of the page.

Please give the signed form to the researcher conducting your interview at the interview. They will also be able to explain this consent form further with you, if required.

1.	I have read and understood the information sheet.	☐
2.	I agree to participate in the above research by attending a face-to-face interview as described on the Information Sheet.	☐
3.	I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary.	☐
4.	I understand that I may withdraw at any time without giving a reason and with no consequences.	☐
5.	I agree for the interview to be audio recorded.	☐
6.	I understand that I may see a copy of the interview transcript after it has been transcribed and agree any amendments with the researcher.	☐
7.	I understand that the intention is that interviews are anonymised and that if any of my words are used in a research output that they will not be directly attributed to me unless otherwise agreed by all parties.	☐
8.	I understand the data from this project will be considered for repository in the UCL Open Access repository as described on the Information Sheet but that this will be anonymised data only.	☐
9.	I understand that I can contact the student who interviewed me at any time using the email address they contacted me on to arrange the interview, or the dissertation supervisor using the contact details provided on page X of the information sheet.	☐

Participant name: **Signature:**   **Date:**

Researcher name: **Signature:**   **Date:**

Appendix D – Risk Assessment Form

RISK ASSESSMENT FORM

FIELD / LOCATION WORK

UCL

DEPARTMENT/SECTION: BARTLETT SCHOOL OF PLANNING
LOCATION(S): LONDON
PERSONS COVERED BY THE RISK ASSESSMENT: WILL GLOVER

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF FIELDWORK (including geographic location): INTERVIEWS

COVID-19 RELATED GENERIC RISK ASSESSMENT STATEMENT:

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by coronavirus SARS-CoV-2. The virus spreads primarily through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Droplets fall on people in the vicinity and can be directly inhaled or picked up on the hands and transferred when someone touches their face. This risk assessment documents key risks associated fieldwork during a pandemic, but it is not exhaustive and will not be able to cover all known risks, globally. This assessment outlines principles adopted by UCL at an institutional level and it is necessarily general. Please use the open text box 'Other' to indicate any contingent risk factors and control measures you might encounter during the course of your dissertation research and writing.

Please refer to the Dissertation in Planning Guidance Document (available on Moodle) to help you complete this form.

Hazard 1: Risk of Covid -19 infection during research related travel and research related interactions with others (when face-to-face is possible and/or unavoidable)
Risk Level - Medium /Moderate

Existing Advisable Control Measures: Do not travel if you are unwell, particularly if you have COVID-19 symptoms. Self-isolate in line with NHS (or country-specific) guidance.
Avoid travelling and face-to-face interactions; if you need to travel and meet with others:
- If possible, avoid using public transport and cycle or walk instead.
- If you need to use public transport travel in off-peak times and follow transport provider's and governmental guidelines.
- Maintain (2 metre) social distancing where possible and where 2 metre social distancing is not achievable, wear face covering.
- Wear face covering at all times in enclosed or indoor spaces.
- Use hand sanitiser prior to and after journey.
- Avoid consuming food or drinks, if possible, during journey.
- Avoid, if possible, interchanges when travelling - choose direct route.
- Face away from other persons. If you have to face a person ensure
that the duration is as short as possible.
- Do not share any items i.e. stationary, tablets, laptops etc. If items need to be shared use disinfectant wipes to disinfect items prior to and after sharing.

- If meeting in a group for research purposes ensure you are following current country specific guidance on face-to-face meetings (i.e rule of 6 etc.)

- If and when possible meet outside and when not possible meet in venues with good ventilation (e.g. open a window)

- If you feel unwell during or after a meeting with others, inform others you have interacted with, self-isolate and get tested for Covid-19

- Avoid high noise areas as this mean the need to shout which increases risk of aerosol transmission of the virus.

- Follow one way circulation systems, if in place. Make sure to check before you visit a building.

- Always read and follow the visitors policy for the organisation you will be visiting.

- Flush toilets with toilet lid closed.

-'Other' Control Measures you will take (specify):

NOTE: The hazards and existing control measures above pertain to Covid-19 infection risks only. More generalised health and safety risk may exist due to remote field work activities and these are outlined in your Dissertation in Planning Guidance document. Please consider these as possible 'risk' factors in completing the remainder of this standard form. For more information also see: Guidance Framework for Fieldwork in Taught and MRes Programmes, 2021-22

Consider, in turn, each hazard (white on black). If **NO** hazard exists select **NO** and move to next hazard section.

If a hazard does exist select **YES** and assess the risks that could arise from that hazard in the risk assessment box.

Where risks are identified that are not adequately controlled they must be brought to the attention of your Departmental Management who should put temporary control measures in place or stop the work. Detail such risks in the final section.

ENVIRONMENT	The environment always represents a safety hazard. Use space below to identify and assess any risks associated with this hazard
e.g. location, climate, terrain, neighbourhood, in outside organizations, pollution, animals.	Examples of risk: adverse weather, illness, hypothermia, assault, getting lost. Is the risk high / medium / low ? Adverse weather, illness LOW RISK

CONTROL MEASURES	Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk

	work abroad incorporates Foreign Office advice
	only accredited centres are used for rural field work
x	participants will wear appropriate clothing and footwear for the specified environment
	refuge is available
	work in outside organisations is subject to their having satisfactory H&S procedures in place

	OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

EMERGENCIES	**Where emergencies may arise use space below to identify and assess any risks**
e.g. fire, accidents	Examples of risk: loss of property, loss of life

CONTROL MEASURES	**Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk**

	participants have registered with LOCATE at http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/
x	contact numbers for emergency services are known to all participants
x	participants have means of contacting emergency services
	a plan for rescue has been formulated, all parties understand the procedure
	the plan for rescue /emergency has a reciprocal element
	OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

FIELDWORK   1   May 2010

EQUIPMENT	**Is equipment used?**	**NO**	**If 'No' move to next hazard** **If 'Yes' use space below to identify and assess any** **risks**
e.g. clothing, outboard motors.	Examples of risk: inappropriate, failure, insufficient training to use or repair, injury. Is the risk high / medium / low ?		

CONTROL MEASURES	**Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk**

	the departmental written Arrangement for equipment is followed
	participants have been provided with any necessary equipment appropriate for the work
	all equipment has been inspected, before issue, by a competent person
	all users have been advised of correct use
	special equipment is only issued to persons trained in its use by a competent person
	OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

LONE WORKING	Is lone working a possibility?	NO	If 'No' move to next hazard
			If 'Yes' use space below to identify and assess any
			risks
e.g. alone or in isolation lone interviews.	Examples of risk: difficult to summon help. Is the risk high / medium / low?		

| CONTROL MEASURES | Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk |

	the departmental written Arrangement for lone/out of hours working for field work is followed
	lone or isolated working is not allowed
	location, route and expected time of return of lone workers is logged daily before work commences
	all workers have the means of raising an alarm in the event of an emergency, e.g. phone, flare, whistle
	all workers are fully familiar with emergency procedures
	OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

FIELDWORK   2   May 2010

ILL HEALTH	The possibility of ill health always represents a safety hazard. Use space below to identify and assess any risks associated with this Hazard.
e.g. accident, illness, personal attack, special personal considerations or vulnerabilities.	Examples of risk: injury, asthma, allergies. Is the risk high / medium / low? Injury, asthma
CONTROL MEASURES	**Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk**

	all participants have had the necessary inoculations/ carry appropriate prophylactics
	participants have been advised of the physical demands of the research and are deemed to be physically suited
	participants have been adequate advice on harmful plants, animals and substances they may encounter
x	participants who require medication should carry sufficient medication for their needs
	OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

TRANSPORT	Will transport be required	NO	X	Move to next hazard
		YES		**Use space below to identify and assess any risks**
e.g. hired vehicles	Examples of risk: accidents arising from lack of maintenance, suitability or training Is the risk high / medium / low?			
CONTROL MEASURES	**Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk**			

	only public transport will be used
	the vehicle will be hired from a reputable supplier
	transport must be properly maintained in compliance with relevant national regulations
	drivers comply with UCL Policy on Drivers http://www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/docs/college_drivers.php
	drivers have been trained and hold the appropriate licence
	there will be more than one driver to prevent driver/operator fatigue, and there will be adequate rest periods
	sufficient spare parts carried to meet foreseeable emergencies
	OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

DEALING WITH THE PUBLIC	Will people be dealing with public	NO	If 'No' move to next hazard If 'Yes' use space below to identify and assess any

	risks
e.g. interviews, observing	Examples of risk: personal attack, causing offence, being misinterpreted. Is the risk high / medium / low?

CONTROL MEASURES	**Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk**

☐	all participants are trained in interviewing techniques
☐	advice and support from local groups has been sought
☐	participants do not wear clothes that might cause offence or attract unwanted attention
☐	interviews are conducted at neutral locations or where neither party could be at risk
☐	OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

FIELDWORK 3 May 2010

WORKING ON OR **NEAR WATER**	**Will people work on** **or near water?**	**NO**	**If 'No' move to next hazard** **If 'Yes' use space below to identify and assess any** **risks**
e.g. rivers, marshland, sea.	Examples of risk: drowning, malaria, hepatitis A, parasites. Is the risk high / medium / low?		

CONTROL MEASURES	**Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk**

☐	lone working on or near water will not be allowed
☐	coastguard information is understood; all work takes place outside those times when tides could prove a threat
☐	all participants are competent swimmers
☐	participants always wear adequate protective equipment, e.g. buoyancy aids, wellingtons
☐	boat is operated by a competent person
☐	all boats are equipped with an alternative means of propulsion e.g. oars
☐	participants have received any appropriate inoculations

	OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

MANUAL HANDLING (MH)	**Do MH activities take place?**	**NO**	**If 'No' move to next hazard** **If 'Yes' use space below to identify and assess any** **risks**
e.g. lifting, carrying, moving large or heavy equipment, physical unsuitability for the task.	Examples of risk: strain, cuts, broken bones. Is the risk high / medium / low?		

CONTROL MEASURES	**Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk**

	the departmental written Arrangement for MH is followed
	the supervisor has attended a MH risk assessment course
	all tasks are within reasonable limits, persons physically unsuited to the MH task are prohibited from such activities
	all persons performing MH tasks are adequately trained
	equipment components will be assembled on site
	any MH task outside the competence of staff will be done by contractors
	OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

SUBSTANCES	Will participants work with	NO	If 'No' move to next hazard
			If 'Yes' use space below to identify and assess any
	substances		risks
e.g. plants, chemical, biohazard, waste	Examples of risk: ill health - poisoning, infection, illness, burns, cuts. Is the risk high / medium / low?		
CONTROL MEASURES	Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk		

	the departmental written Arrangements for dealing with hazardous substances and waste are followed
	all participants are given information, training and protective equipment for hazardous substances they may encounter
	participants who have allergies have advised the leader of this and carry sufficient medication for their needs
	waste is disposed of in a responsible manner
	suitable containers are provided for hazardous waste
	OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

OTHER HAZARDS	Have you identified any other hazards?	NO	If 'No' move to next section
			If 'Yes' use space below to identify and assess any
			risks
i.e. any other hazards must be noted and assessed here.	Hazard:		
	Risk: is the risk		
CONTROL MEASURES	Give details of control measures in place to control the identified risks		

Have you identified any risks that are not	NO	N O	Move to Declaration
adequately controlled?	YES		Use space below to identify the risk and what action was taken

DECLARATION	The work will be reassessed whenever there is a significant change and at least annually. Those participating in the work have read the assessment.

Select the appropriate statement:

x	I the undersigned have assessed the activity and associated risks and declare that there is no significant residual
	risk
	I the undersigned have assessed the activity and associated risks and declare that the risk will be controlled by
	the method(s) listed above

NAME OF SUPERVISOR

Appendix E – Ethical Clearance Form

Submission Details

Question #1

1

Response is required

*

Please select your programme of study.

MSc Spatial Planning

Question #2

2

Response is required

*

Please indicate the type of research work you are doing.

☑ Dissertation in Planning (MSc)

☐ Dissertation in City Planning (MPlan)

☐ Major Research Project

Question #3

3

Response is required

*

Please provide the current working title of your research.

Decanting on Estate Regeneration Schemes in London: Professional perspectives on responsibility and objectives

Question #4

4

Response is required

*

Please select your supervisor from the drop-down list.

Brill, Frances

Research Details

Question #5

5

Response is required

*

Please indicate here which data collection methods you expect to use. Tick all that apply.

☑ Interviews

☐ Focus Groups

☐ Questionnaires (including oral questions)

☐ Action research

☐ Observation / participant observation

☐ Documentary analysis (including use of personal records)

☐ Audio-visual recordings (including photographs)

☐ Collection/use of sensor or locational data

☐ Controlled trial

☐ Intervention study (including changing environments)

☐ Systematic review

☑ Secondary data analysis

☐ Advisory/consultation groups

Question #6

6

Response is required

✳

Please indicate where your research will take place.

UK only

Question #7

7

Response is required

✳

Does your project involve the recruitment of participants?

'Participants' means human participants and their data (including sensor/locational data and observational notes/images.)

◉ Yes ○ No

Appropriate Safeguard, Data Storage and Security

Question #8

8

Response is required

✳

Will your research involve the collection and/or use of personal data?

Personal data is data which relates to a living individual who can be identified from that data or from the data and other information that is either currently held, or will be held by the data controller (you, as the researcher).

This includes:

- Any expression of opinion about the individual and any intentions of the data controller or any other person toward the individual.

- Sensor, location or visual data which may reveal information that enables the identification of a face, address etc. (some postcodes cover only one property).
- Combinations of data which may reveal identifiable data, such as names, email/postal addresses, date of birth, ethnicity, descriptions of health diagnosis or conditions, computer IP address (of relating to a device with a single user).

○ Yes ● No

Question #9

9

Response is required

✻

Is your research using or collecting:

- special category data as defined by the General Data Protection Regulation*, and/or
- data which might be considered sensitive in some countries, cultures or contexts?

*Examples of special category data are data:

- which reveals racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership;
- concerning health (the physical or mental health of a person, including the provision of health care services);
- concerning sex life or sexual orientation;
- genetic or biometric data processed to uniquely identify a natural person.

○ Yes ● No

Question #10

10

Response is required

✻

Do you confirm that all personal data will be stored and processed in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR 2018)?

◉ Yes

◯ No

◯ I will not be working with any personal data

Question #11

11

Response is required

＊

I confirm that:

☑ The information in this form is accurate to the best of my knowledge.

☑ I will continue to reflect on, and update these ethical considerations in consultation with my supervisor.

BPLN0039_TXRR3

FINAL GRADE

/100

GENERAL COMMENTS

Instructor

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