Case Study of Lewisham
Cultural Diversity & Intercultural Realities:
Reflections in Policy

Jude Bloomfield  16.5.14
* **Battle of Lewisham 1977**

underlined need for unity to resist racism - All Lewisham Campaign against Racism and Fascism (ALCARAF)
mobilisation black, Asian and white youth council refused townhall to racist National Front,
but police refuse to ban NF march and divert and break up ALCARAF march

* **New Cross Fire 1981**

13 young black people died suspicion racially motivated attack for noisy party. Police inaction, press campaign v. young black people

**Autonomous black mobilization**

* **Murder of Stephen Lawrence 1994**

in neighbouring borough –

Macpherson Report vindicated belief police institutionally racist. Borough hosts Stephen Lawrence Memorial Centre
* **Lewisham’s ‘Superdiversity’ – no ethnic minority dominant**

  40% population diverse ethnicity, no dominant group:
  - Black Africans, Black Caribbeans, South and South East Asians - Bangladeshis, Pakistanis, Vietnamese, Chinese
  - 140 languages spoken, 1 in 3 Lewisham school children is bilingual, 61% new enrolments BAME
  - imperative to interaction and unified voices
  - faith diversity, higher proportion of Christians – Pentecostal churches growing; higher level secular beliefs in Lewisham than London or country, smaller nos. of Muslims, Hindus and Jews than London as a whole
Social & Economic Conditions facilitating de facto Interculturalism
Social & Economic Conditions facilitating Interculturalism 2

* Deindustrialisation - Loss railways, rolling stock, light manufacturing
  -> tertiary employment in City & Canary Wharf –main employers out of borough
  - > Council and Primary Care Trust biggest employers – 40%
  policy influence, incentive to diversify economy and develop cultural industries

* Influential presence artists and art institutions
  - radical, informal cultural milieu round Goldsmiths College and later Laban Centre
  very international, intercultural source of local innovation
**Political Culture and Leadership**

* Egalitarian intellectual and political influences
  - Radical youth and social workers trained at Goldsmiths 60s, 70s entered council as employees
  - Goldsmiths’ trained urban sociologists and anthropologists formed critical social research base
    Centre for Urban and Community Research, Michael Keith and Ben Gidley.

* Political Leadership – established mayor 2002
  Committed, stable leaders with greater power and legitimacy
  Steve Bullock of new urban left, committed to ongoing dialogue with citizens; re-elected three times doubling turnout 2002-10
  Chief Executive Barry Quirk in post 21 years; thinker on deliberative democracy and dialogue as negotiating interests

* Equalities framework - championing diversity as richness and place distinctiveness
  Social cohesion through ‘citizens’ empowerment’
  Strategically embedded across policy areas in council’s structure – equalities overarching body above directorates
  Transversal impact on engagement, local economic development, regeneration, community safety and youth justice
Community Engagement Strategy –
Toolkit for consultation – focus on diverse groups BAME, asylum seekers & refugees, gypsy, Roma & travellers; faith communities but also other kinds of diversity: gender, sexuality, disability, age groups

18 Local Neighbourhood Assemblies held 4 times a year, funding £15,000 each, promotes civic competences, fosters advocacy skills and strategic thinking, intercultural opportunity structure – participation ethnic minority & working class youth and women
Local Neighbourhood Assemblies as local intercultural dialogues
Local Neighbourhood Assemblies - an Intercultural Opportunity Structure

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Tradition Civil Society Partnership: fostered intercultural alliances

* Tradition of partnership working over 25 years
  - Exceptional level and consistency of Council Support for Arts and Youth organisations
  - Lewisham Strategic Partnership encouraged strategic practice, thinking and working

* Unifying umbrella organisations grouping smaller groups into forums creating more unified voice: e.g. LEMP- Lewisham Ethnic Minority Partnership; REAL Race Equality Action Lewisham and Faith in Lewisham network; Lewisham-wide Community Network and Community Development Partnership VAL - Voluntary Action Lewisham include forums on health, social care, youth

* Cross-sectoral, intercultural participation
  Second Wave youth arts on police committee; black community organisations involved in planning.
* Culturally diverse economy

“Enabling mixed economy development with pluralistic cultures and users to be at the centre of new city quarters; not just high value but essentially monocultural office, residential and commercial leisure developments.”

* ‘Creative Lewisham’ collaboration with Comedia – (Charles Landry and Phil Wood)
creative hubs – e.g. Deptford Creekside around Laban Dance Centre
Goldsmith graduates running galleries and cos. in Deptford High St.

* BAME business support service

community-based business service advisors, trained experts to serve disadvantaged and diverse business
Regeneration: ‘Knowing Lewisham’ Planning for the intercultural city

* Collaboration on planning with intercultural planner on
  The Intercultural City: Making the Most of Diversity project

  - Richard Brecknock, Australian planner – close relationship with John Miller, Planning Dept.
  - series of classes with planners on cultural literacy and intercultural planning

* ‘Knowing Lewisham’ report on intercultural planning needs

  - model of research, wide, varied consultation with diverse residents on needs and desires
  - highlighted need for intercultural spaces and seating in the public realm
  - proposed library as such a meeting place opening onto Deptford High St., new station, seating to enjoy multicultural atmosphere of market; also highlighted Lewisham Gateway and Catford Broadway
Deptford Lounge: the new library – an intercultural space
the new station in Deptford High St.
Convoys’s Wharf
* No conscious intercultural expression in planning in cultural forms of buildings, public art, historical narrative:
**Issues, Problems, Weaknesses**

* reliance on programming to make spaces intercultural
  Spaces not themselves drawing on diverse sources or symbols of different cultures
  Spaces of proximity but not mixing - Giffin Square; Multifaith Centre in Surrey Quays –

* cuts leading to loss of strategic direction –
  loss specialist services and personnel e.g. Creative Lewisham Agency 2006 cut;
  BAME business support service 2010 > generic community business support service.

* lack of planning control in large-scale development projects
  threat of gentrification in Convoy’s Wharf threatens diversity of market and High St.
  lack council’s power as developers’ override its negotiating role through informal influence with Mayor of London