

A CITY 'QUE PUEDE'

Dialogues on Migrant Infrastructures and Imagining a New City

by David McEwen

FOREWORD

The origins of this 'dialogue' (or more accurately 'series of dialogues') began as an investigation supported by the Civic Futures programme, a GLA fellowship to explore a community-led response to the pandemic. Joon-Lynn Goh and I undertook a piece of work informed by our own experiences and intuitions as migrants living and working in London. Originally inspired by ideas of safety, sanctuary and refuge, our work straddles activism, advocacy and practice - motivated by an idea to explore new urban imaginaries for the city and its future stewardship.

This investigative lens led us to speak to organisations and individuals working and living within a similar 'space' - our interviewees encompass migrant campaigners, community leaders, researchers and individuals working within state institutions (local government or the municipality). Through a series of discussions, we allowed participants to reflect on

their own experiences and from these conversations, identified commonalities and shared understandings centred on action/practice towards a collective vision of stewardship for London. By stewardship, we mean the capacity to imagine, live, work, share, govern, believe, build, plan and design.

My reflections are structured as a story told in three acts - each a snapshot of the rich discussions, conversations and dialogues shared with our very generous participants. While the story features a diverse range of characters, there are many overlapping threads, themes and experiences.

This document aims to tell share some of these stories: to identify common elements, emerging terminologies and the sites or spaces in which further action can be mobilised - stories that together signpost opportunities for new imaginaries.

OUR CAST

Vicky Alvarez, Seven Sisters Traders Market Association; **Mona Bani**, Revoke; **Geraldine Blake**, London Funders; **Farah Elahi**, GLA Community Engagement; **Yvonne Field**, The Ubele Initiative; **Jabez Lam**, Hackney Chinese Community Services; **Loubaba Mamluk**, University of Bristol; **Chelsea McDonagh**, Consultant on Gypsy Roma Traveller projects, Young Foundation; **Arman Nouri & Kwame Lowe**, Kin Structures.

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SETTING THE SCENE

London is a city shaped by migration. It is a physical, cultural and social environment designed and built off the efforts and the influence of migrants and diaspora communities. Legacies of migration touch all aspects of everyday life - music, food, language, streets, buildings, etc.

The city is sold globally on the benefits of diversity and multiculturalism - *'Diversity is our strength'* and *'London's diversity is what makes it so special'*, proclaims Sadiq Khan.

Recently, boroughs of sanctuary have emerged across London, including in Lewisham and Hackney - aiming to enshrine a benevolent and supportive approach to migration. However, the hostile environment, funding cuts, managed decline, gentrification, often directly interfere with the welcoming, diverse and inclusive image of the city that is promoted. As Yvonne Field identified during one of our conversations, "there isn't much [BAME] infrastructure left in the UK" - a consequence of funding cuts, over a decade of austerity - a period of 'managed decline' - the and rising land values owing to financial speculation. Yet

migrant-led infrastructures of care, support and sanctuary persist and continue to influence the way we live, work, learn and grow in the city. Sometimes these exist formally - perhaps as a constituted network or infrastructure organisation - sometimes as a space, such as a community centre, shop or market; other times as a series of themes, conversations or opportunities for collaboration. There still exists a perceptible gap/distance between cultures (of care, solidarity and community) created and cultivated by migrant-led organisations and those promoted by the state/local authorities (the 'civic' system').

Both currently play a role in shaping and informing the future stewardship of the city (and the country!). How then can we reflect on the radical 'cultures' and practices found in migrant infrastructures within the city in order to envision an alternative?

A Note on our perspective and abolitionist principles:

Within migrant movements resisting the UK's Hostile Environment Policy, you often hear the words – safety; sanctuary; dignity; justice; and no borders. These visions and longings describe a world that ceases to punish, exclude and dispose of impoverished, racialised, disabled and under-documented communities for profit and power. If we wanted to undo borders, what infrastructures and cultures would we need to build up for our collective safety, care and creativity? In the context of global climate change, war, conflict and city regentrification, re-imagining governance systems that accommodate an agency to move and stay is not only important, but necessary in order for us to skill-up as stewards fit for the challenges and opportunities of our time.

A note on Sanctuary Infrastructures (what sanctuary means to us):

As embedded participants in migrant communities, sites and spaces of sanctuary can be found in many varied forms. Be they physical infrastructures (the home, the shop, the market, the street), networks of people (colleagues, movements, campaign groups), companies, organisations (migrant-rights organisations, the union) or opportunities for collaboration.

ACT I - DIALOGUES

This first act captures thematic snapshots from the 9 discussions we held with our 'cast'. They represent common threads that (re-)appeared throughout our conversations, and reflections from myself and Joon-Lynn around migrant and sanctuary infrastructures in London. These summaries are intended to provoke further discussion on the value these infrastructures create in everyday life within the city and the dynamics and relationships between those working within and without 'the system', in order to inspire further reflections on how we can imagine new practices for stewardship in the city.

ON SANCTUARY AND SPACE

"This place...it is our sanctuary."

[Vicky Alvarez]

My understanding of sanctuary originates from spaces that encourage feelings of safety, recovery and refuge. Spaces that are mutually/collectively created or appropriated and where identity and culture can be freely expressed. Throughout our conversations, we prompted our interviewees to define what sanctuary means - to the individual, to the community, to London - hoping to map where these spaces, moments or sensations could be found. We also sought to interrogate the term 'sanctuary' - one that has become more widespread through the promotion of 'sanctuary cities' or 'sanctuary boroughs'.

For Vicky Alvarez, the Latin Village/Seven Sisters Indoor Market was a sanctuary for the local migrant, principally Latin American, community: *"The market is our sanctuary. It is a holy space where everyone feels safe - a place without barriers."* The market serves not only as a place of business or workspace, but a vital physical resource where care and support can be cultivated for those in need. The Chinese Community Centre Service, for Jabez Lam, serves a similar role: it is a *"focal point, not just in times of crisis - when a crisis happens, if youve got an organisation or centre, you have the chance to regroup."* For the young asylum seekers and refugees that Mona Bani at Revoke supports, sanctuary is a space free from the rules and restrictions present in the rest of the city, or the institutions that young people are forced to interact with: sanctuary is *"where you are physically and psychologically comfortable. Where you can put your feet up and heat up your food. Where you can be loud, smoke, and experience no fear of judgement."*

Yet sanctuary need not only exist in physical space: for Loubaba Mamluk, sanctuary is reflected in the indefinite leave to remain and a British passport - that is to say a security and a *"position in which your citizenship cannot be taken away from you."* The capacity for sanctuary to provide safety and security is shared by Farah Elahi and Chelsea McDonagh, who find sanctuary in their community and family. As Farah notes, sanctuary *"is deeply rooted to family, to mum"*. They are environments that are *"tied to people and safety - people trusting you creates safety and sanctuary."*

"Making space our own"

My architectural perspective has a tendency to immediately jump to the physical, to explain relationships, sensations and feelings through space or phenomena that happen in space. One recurring quality of the 'spaces of sanctuary' we discussed was the creation of 'informal spaces' (a term I am not fond of) - spaces where there exists a capacity to collectively create an environment that is 'our own' or shaped in 'our image'. These spaces are often appropriated spaces where new uses and activities are introduced by migrant communities. Feelings of ownership over a space and the ability to govern and shape its future creates an opportunity.

ON KNOWLEDGE AND LANGUAGE

"If you expose division or have been othered you see the world through two eyes: yourself and how others see you."

[Kin Structures]

Perception and sensitivity emerged as repeated themes throughout our conversations. It was perhaps best expressed in a conversation with Arman Nouri and Kwame Lowe from Kin Structures who shared the quotation above. There was an agreement that the lived experience of being a migrant or member of the diaspora community has cultivated an acute sensitivity that has informed working, living and social and cultural practices. This sensitivity reveals the frameworks, barriers and controls - both overt and disguised - that limit opportunities for migrant and diaspora communities.

As Chelsea reflects on the subject of treatment of the traveller community: *"what do you see that other people don't see... you don't ride or die in the system, if it doesn't serve you, the survival of the system doesn't interest you: "its their thing, this isn't ours."* Jabez illustrates this dynamic (where the system or institution is most clearly framed as the local authority) as: *"The Council is a sponge cake with raisins. When you cut them in half, raisins are the bottom, some in the middle, none at the top - all white. Even being at the bottom, you know how the system works."*

With an understanding of these structures/barriers, comes the potential identification of fissures within the system that can become the basis for mobilisation and further pressure. As Jabez recalls on the influence of the struggles of black communities in the 1980s, a collective reflection on what it meant to be black allowed for the development of a common language, an influential process that inspired struggles of the Chinese community and other migrant and diaspora communities. Sensitivity provokes a different basis for knowing - informed or inherited from past individual and shared life experiences, an awareness of different cultures and identities.

Yvonne captures this dynamic as different ways of knowing: an 'institutional' knowing and a 'sense' knowing (what the gut knows). This then allows for different ways of learning and manifesting, for instance through Ubele's learning programmes where participants can *"breathe and not have to explain"*, where a space is created to be *"unapologetically black, to not have to explain everything."* The value of a different knowing is encapsulated by Vicky where *"by understanding us more, by allowing us to be involved in a more meaningful way, we can create a little seed that is going to do something more beautiful."*

Inherited Trauma and the Suppression of Intuition

The continued trauma provoked from living within a system that is there to oppress those with different lived experiences was a recurring theme throughout our conversations.

Reflecting on their experiences working within state institutions, Mona, Arman, Geraldine and Farah agreed that working within a highly rigid, formal and insitutional system proved (and continues to prove) incredibly challenging. Many working practices serve to exclude - to reject difference or change, ultimately suppressing lived experience and knowledge and limiting opportunities to use our intuition.

Arman and Kwame at Kin Structures describe this environment as one in which there is *"less space to recognise multiplicities"*, where people, cultures and knowledge are *"marginalised, repressed and excluded by institutions."* (They offer a rallying call - there is no choice but to 'push back on them'). Farah refers to this process as the *"dehumanisation of communities"*. The effect of this foreclosure of divergent opinions, thoughts and ways of living is a pressure to conform, to behave. For Mona, who shared reflections on her experience working for the cabinet, the environment is one *"detached and removed from the everyday"*, an environment in which *'no-one thinks for themselves, no-one comes up with ideas on the spot'*. She describes the system further: *"You are screening for smart people who are not creative, free thinkers. That's a personality trait and culture that exists, there's not enough infiltration or culture/people to go against it."*

The suppression of instincts specifically became a recurrent theme - as Farah suggests, *"people cut off instincts when they are not whole, cut off from heart, you lose your sense of sensemaking."* For Geraldine, who manages a secondment programme within the migration team at the GLA, one of the key components is to encourage the use and value of *"instinct, gut feeling and conviction."* Core principles in Revoke's work with young adults emphasise *"immediacy, urgency, humanity"* as a trauma-informed and abolitionist approach. For Mona, the approach is *'intuitive and pragmatic'*. This need for compassion (as an approach and pedagogy) has a basis in neurology - it helps repair the brain following experiences of trauma, helping heal PTSD and avoid the trigger of a flight/fight state.

Negotiating the system - Speaking the language

A methodology Kin Structures have adopted to effect change within existing institutions is to tactically negotiate the system, to make use of inherited *'knowledge from ancestors'* while utilising *'tactics that come from being British'*. The need to 'negotiate the system' or 'speak the language' was shared by other participants. Adopting specific practices, behaviours, terms and languages often proved critical not only to meet the needs or aspirations of migrant and marginalised communities, but even for survival. For Jabez, this is particularly important in accessing the funding required to sustain organisations and the work they deliver: *"you use their language to look for funding."* You use statistics and numbers to demonstrate how many people benefit, how you bring value. As Loubaba contends, *"they don't understand so don't accept it"*. For Chelsea and members of the traveller community, discrimination, prejudice and racism has become so institutionalised that *"to navigate the system is sometimes literally a case of putting on an english accent."*

Working from 'within' the system, Farah suggests there is a paucity of 'intellectual freedom' resulting in the need to *"know how the beast works to be able to make the change within - feels out of step. Deliver programmes not because of vision but because it makes tactical sense."*

She acknowledged that she 'struggled to 'speak like them''. Vicky's experiences have proven equally challenging: *"Work the system? No! The system is created to hate you. Fuck the system, its not fit for purpose. The mentality of people has changed but the politics are the same."*

PRACTICE

Justice, recognition, respect.

"Migrant justice is much broader than racial justice" suggests Arman and Kin Structures. The fight for justice, recognition and respect is an almost ubiquitous one among our interviewees. This struggle has been a long and enduring one. Vicky frames the universal struggles her and other Latin American refugees and traders have faced in an imposed hostile environment, *"we have all experienced the hostile environment, the feeling of being the unwanted ones, we are the problem: We though that was the case, we thought we had to be so submissive."*

Jabez credits much of the development of HCCS with the struggles of the black community in the 1980s, highlighting their fight for justice, recognition and respect inspired other minoritised communities, including the Chinese community. He highlights the primary focus between communities is fighting the 'prejudice of authority'. This has opened the opportunity for the centre to support communities beyond the Chinese community - it has become the first community centre for east and south east Asian countries.

For Vicky, the struggle is clear: *"Everything they said was bullshit."* Through the relentless struggle of the traders and local migrant communities, *"we have gained respect, gained acknowledgement."*

'Family' - cultivating a sense of community and care

Closely related to the conception and creation of 'sanctuary', a recurring theme in discussions was the significance of a sense of 'family' - defined beyond conventional understandings of the 'nuclear' family - of an expanded community and the responsibility to care for one another. This 'familial' practice of care directly challenges the top-down cultures of care (childcare, health and wellbeing, financial, social, education) that are imposed on us, and instead rely on a more intuitive, less formal system with a shared recognition that we each have a role and responsibility to support one another.

For Loubaba and Chelsea, sanctuary is found in family - extending beyond blood ties to friends, migrant family, partners, even self and self belief. At Latin Village, traders grew into a family - one that brought together individuals who 'shared the same precarious situation'. For the young people at Revoke, close familial dynamics are cultivated intuitively through caring for one another - they are very *"capable of organising themselves and each other, constantly together, sharing supporting."* They may mistrust the world but have cultivated very strong bonds with each other.

Chelsea offers one of the most compelling experiences of an infrastructure of care oriented around radical conceptions of 'family'. For members of the traveller community- *"its less about the individual, more about the family."* She suggests that *"it is meaningless and pointless of trying to work within the system - one where things might change for a bit, but nothing changes, instead the focus is on community organising of those like-minded. This way we can create a supportive space for those who fall foul of the system."*

For those who find themselves on the outside, who are excluded or ostracised, our contemporary social and political environment has left them *"so unforgiven, in a society that is so unforgiving. There is no room for forgiveness in a society that judges so harshly."*

Legacy and Succession - "A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots."

[Marcus Garvey]

These characteristics are crucial to the work Geraldine Blake organises at the GLA, it is important to ensure there is an impact to the secondment programme and influence can be felt beyond election cycles where much is liable to shift and change. For her, legacy and impact is informed by collaboration that *"relies on relationships, on establishing a collective memory."* Within community organisations, succession in particular can prove an issue. As Jabez identifies, at HCCS *"all the current members were founding members from the 80s. Legacy and succession are two key concepts."* There is a need for the centre to *"move with the times"* and shift and evolve the types of services that are provided to support the needs of growing and changing communities.

When the centre was first set up, the priority was about providing support for language learning and translation. For instance, creating an accessible interface to communicate with authority, access benefits, healthcare, etc. To best serve its present community however, Jabez identifies a need to *"redefine the centre"* so the dynamic and relationship is not just about accessing emergency support (*"when you have problems"*).

The way to achieve this, Jabez proposes, is to reflect on the legacy of the space and organisation - it requires a greater understanding of the needs of young people. For Vicky and the traders at Seven Sisters, an additional characteristic is highlighted, legacy and succession can be manifested in the transmission of traditions and rituals: *"traditions are so important, never let your culture die - you have to share it."*

You're already doing it!

A consistent reminder throughout our conversations was how instinctively migrant or sanctuary infrastructures would develop. Filling a void left by institutions leads to instinctive bottom-up responses derived from immediate need - networks of support, cultures of care and infrastructures of collaboration are created naturally, informally on an everyday basis. As Mona suggests, this may not be 'conscious or structured', but rather provoked by growing up/living in a politicised environment.

For Mona, the capacity to change and influence has come from self-reflection: *'I'm not sure I can change the system, but I can on a micro-level. I can make change through the power that I have, I make decisions, I distribute my own resources. I'm able to collaborate across organisations and create an impact.'*

At Latin Village and migrant businesses in Elephant and Castle, recently arrived migrants would visit - on an almost every day basis - looking for immediate and urgent support. They would find this assistance in markets, restaurants or offices where members of the migrant community would help access accommodation, job opportunities, benefit and immigration support, translation, navigating UK bureaucracy, etc. As Vicky proposes, these infrastructures develop naturally, they are *"created out of need, out of needing to be better off"*.

Within the traveller community, as Chelsea shares, support for one another financially or with childcare (for instance) happens without a second thought. The infrastructures, even if not formally identified or defined, exist regardless - *"if I don't have a space, I will find one or make one...it's hard to see from within the system, but you're already doing it!"*

ACT II - MONOLOGUE - SEVEN SISTERS AND THE LATIN VILLAGE

This second act is a monologue, my monologue. It is a brief account of my history, my vision of sanctuary, and one particular project that has been central to who I am and what I do - the campaign to save seven sisters market and deliver the wards corner community plan!

MYSELF

I am a migrant. I left Cali, Colombia - where I was born - at the age of two after my parents decided to seek a life outside the country following a number of recurring instances of extreme violence in their everyday lives. My journey has led me through many different countries, people, cultures, yet central to how I see myself has been my experiences as a Latin American migrant. As I have grown older, developing and exploring this identity has been crucial in understanding my own past and those of my parents and family.

MY SANCTUARY

My story at Seven Sisters is one about (re-)discovery and the cultivation of an identity I have grown distant from. It is the story of finding my sanctuary. From the very first time I stepped into the Latin Village, I felt I had found somewhere utterly unique. The sensations were overwhelming - the market has its own climate, smells of Colombian food (of empanadas, arepas, bandeja paisas) fill the air, and salsa music and Spanish form the backdrop to a social and cultural life completely shaped by the migrant communities occupying the space. Vicky, Fabian, Fernando, Millie, Patrick, Mohsen, Ben, Mirca and her dad Francisco - and the traders from over 21 nationalities - have created something completely magical. The sense of freedom to express one's own identity and culture was pervasive. The impact could be seen in the children running around the market throughout the day and night, supervised and cared for by the entire community of traders while their parents worked.

To think this market, this space and this community could be taken away from us to make way for a big, banal luxury residential development (to be 'luxury flattened' as my colleague Ben would say) was a difficult idea to come to terms with.

LATIN CORNER AND SAVE LATIN VILLAGE

My first day at the market was in September 2015, where I ran into Mirca in her dad's pirate DVD and music shop in one corner of the market. This unit was particularly unique - while her dad served customers at the front of the shop, for two days a week Mirca would help members of the community with any issues they may have, principally communicating with the council, translation, and accessing benefits. All the while, children would run in and out, grabbing toys, books and games Mirca kept beside her desk to keep them entertained. Mirca was my introduction to the campaign to save the market, to save the 'Latin Village'.

The history of the battle to save Wards Corner and Seven Sisters Indoor Market (Latin Village or Pueblito Paisa) is a long one - it dates back to 2003 when the site was listed for redevelopment. Plans to demolish the historic Wards buildings and the Market – an Asset of Community Value recognised by the UN as a unique cultural centre for London's Latin American communities – mobilised a grassroots campaign by local residents, market traders and local businesses. Over the years, we have staged mass community events and protests, ran legal campaigns, and fundraised. Crucially, we also developed an alternative Community Plan - informed by the same ethos of bottom-up, community-led design, ownership and self-creation - to restore and manage the Wards building and the Market ourselves, to benefit people living and working locally.

SI SE PUEDE - THE WARDS CORNER COMMUNITY PLAN

The Community Plan offers an alternative to extractive modes of urban regeneration and development which often displace the residents and businesses they seek to benefit. It proposes the community-led refurbishment of Seven Sisters Indoor Market and historic Wards Buildings to create a new cultural & social hub for everyone. The indoor market - popularly known as the Latin Village or Pueblito Paisa - has long been an important and celebrated space for Tottenham's residents and members of black and racially minoritised communities. By refurbishing the existing building in a sensitive and sustainable way, we will protect the market and retail units on the ground floor while creating new space for local businesses and SMEs, community organisations, childcare and support services on the currently empty first and second floors.

Supporting the needs of low-income and black and minoritised groups in the area is the Community Plan's main priority, understanding that the N15 ward is within the 20% most deprived by IMD, income, and education, as well as one of the most ethnically diverse areas in the country.

Over the last twenty years, the plan has evolved by speaking to traders and members of the local community to understand what the needs and aspirations of Seven Sisters and Tottenham are. From these conversations, we have developed a set of principles that have guided both the design of our plan and influenced how the building will be collectively and democratically run to best serve the community.

- 1. Rehouse all existing market traders** - Owing to the incredible efforts of traders, the Latin Village is a vibrant and successful market with every unit occupied and a waiting list of prospective tenants. The continued support of traders is crucial: all existing traders will be rehoused in refurbished units - designed in collaboration with traders - to celebrate the unique value that their businesses create.

- 2. Refurbish the building and celebrate the area's heritage, culture and identity // Reflect the diversity of the area** - The Wards building is an important heritage asset: for over 100 years it has served as a key local historical landmark. The Seven Sisters Indoor Market in particular serves as a vital hub for BME, Latinx, and working class communities across North London and beyond, representing more than 20 nationalities, 60 businesses and 150 jobs. By sensitively restoring the building for and with the community, the Plan celebrates Seven Sisters and Tottenham's unique and diverse character.

- 3. Improve the public realm; foot of the high road** - Located at the foot of Tottenham High Road in between Seven Sisters Underground and Overground Stations, the Plan offers an opportunity to re-establish Wards Corner as a new community gateway for Tottenham. The designs for the Community Plan include new entrances into the building and a de-cluttered public realm to improve the pedestrian and cycle experience, and encourage active and sustainable modes of transportation.

- 4. Create an inclusive space for all** - Designs for the renovated building have been developed with inclusivity in mind, acknowledging that to serve all of Tottenham, the design must respond to the various and diverse needs of its users. All businesses, workspaces and community facilities are accessible, with the design accommodating access to the community spaces even while the market is closed.
- 5. Set rents for traders at genuinely affordable levels** - We will create an environment that eliminates barriers to trade for existing businesses, local residents and organisations needing a space. Conventional developments tout 'affordable' rent that often proves anything but - the plan will ensure that rents will be set at levels that are genuinely affordable to encourage the growth and development of the local economy.
- 6. Serve as a catalyst for community wealth building & Create a model for future bottom-up development** - By managing the building collectively for the community, we can ensure that profits generated will be reinvested to keep rents remain as low as possible, to fund support for existing and new businesses and we create new opportunities to provide services to help local people. We want the building to serve as an example of what bottom-up development can achieve and become a catalyst for further community projects in Tottenham.

- 7. Provide new space for much needed community and facilities for community** - The Community Plan brings back into use two vacant floors, creating new space for local organisations to deliver support services for Tottenham including creche, childcare, rights and advice programmes. The need for these spaces has only grown following the continued loss of these vital resources over the past decade owing to the closure of community amenities and persistent funding cuts.

- 8. Create a sustainable scheme Refurbishment and Retrofit rather than demolition** - We accept that the only way to meaningfully address the current climate emergency - and the disproportionate impact the built environment industry plays in it - is by making use of existing buildings through refurbishment and renovation. As a result, the plan proposes the renovation of all the existing buildings, protecting their historic value and also allowing for a scheme that is an exemplar in sustainability and reduced carbon emissions.

ANOTHER CITY IS POSSIBLE

The campaign has achieved numerous successes over the years, including a successful judicial review, gaining planning permission (twice) for the Community Plan and demonstrating its financial viability.

In August 2021, the developer withdrew its proposals, building owner Transport for London committed to a community-led development and Haringey Council announced its support for the Community Plan.

With the threat of demolition finally gone, we have shifted focus to developing the new Wards Corner CBS as the delivery vehicle for the Community Plan. A major fundraising effort is underway to resource a bid to Transport for London for a long lease of the Wards building, including advancing design and other technical work, a business and financial plan, community and trader engagement and organisational development.

ACT III - ON IMAGINATION

This final act looks to the future. From my own experiences and the many illuminating conversations I have had with Joon-Lynn and our cast, I have highlighted some potential sites of intervention. Universally, these call for imagination - they are a provocation to think and dream beyond what we have to create an future in which the lessons of lived experience can be applied to areas, sites and spaces where they do not currently exist.

NEW URBAN IMAGINATIONS

Community and neighbourhood planning - that is to say radical urban alternatives - can be a way of catalyzing collective ideas for what a space, a building or neighbourhood that reacts and represents its community can be. As Farah proposes, as migrant and diaspora communities, we "*shape our built environment via community plans, business and trade, religion*". The 'Place to Call Home' report authored by the Ubele Initiative is a reaction to the Localism Act 2010 that ultimately failed to empower communities to shape their neighbourhoods as initially presented by the coalition government.

Through the lens of BAME communities, the report highlights issues and opportunities for organisations and local authorities to recognise and support BAME spaces and infrastructures. This ambition is further supported by the Agbero 2100 network Ubele are establishing, linking together BAME organisations throughout the country to encourage the collective management of spaces, centres and other built assets - promoting a vision of community wealth building. The Wards Corner Community Plan is an example of how migrant-led efforts can coalesce the experiences and aspirations of traders, residents, supporters, businesses to present an alternative spatial proposition that challenges existing models of development in the city. The energy that has driven the plan from the outset is one that is unique to the migrant-experience. Vicky, as one of the central figures in the plan from the outset, frames the motivation as the need to *"transform and expand what we have and what we want. Not to be afraid to ask - we cant afford to be afraid."*

TRUST BUILDING, INTUITIVE PRACTICES AND CREATING SPACE FOR POWER

"We have to make institutions in our image"

Yvonne issues a rallying cry: *"We can hold the power, there is power in convening these spaces (for leadership, collaboration and participation). It is always white people holding these spaces."* Similarly, to shape institutions in our image, Kin Structures emphasise the need for a space to *"speak to those who are most disenfranchised"*, to consider *"not just migration but migration from centres of people of colour"*, from those 'excluded from British Cultures.' Loubaba advocates for 'trojan horse tactics' where power comes from radical proposals presented in a way that is politically pragmatic to those in power - *"we can interpret and invite a different understanding."* For Farah, within institutions this can be achieved with a 'strong back - soft front' approach to counter bureaucratic inertia and dogma. Chelsea reminds us that *"if you haven't grown up in a space like this, its hard to see things differently - you have to create a space with intent."*

Re-introducing intrusive and instinctive practices - derived from the lived experience of migrants, diaspora communities and people of colour - into formal or institutional environments/systems is a challenging one. As Farah puts it *"intuition is harder to adopt in formal institutions - how is it something we can cultivate. How do i learn to ride the waves?"*

How do I learn to wield its powers rather than resenting or resisting it - to work with it in a productive way? We need a political fluency and understanding the levers." For Loubaba, terms are an issue, they talk to and about different outcomes (eg diversity and inclusivity). In resettlement programmes, what are the determinants/indicators of success? *"What does settling in/integrating mean? It doesn't mean erasing someone's culture, it doesn't mean doing things the british way."* Rather, definition and creation of a new language requires a 'conversation'. As Mona highlights, growing up she encountered dualities that characterise the experience of migrants and minoritised communities - eg between school/ work and home. There is sometimes the use of pseudonyms, the presence of 'different universes'. This perspective is one she adopts in her practice, one that *"enables me to see it in young people - they occupy a double world."*

LEADERSHIP

The role of leadership was identified as a vital characteristic in conversations about an alternative migrant-led stewardship of the city. For Arman and Kwami of Kin Structures and Jabez, the platforming, promotion and cultivation of people of colour and migrants was vital - and already forms a key aspiration of their work. For Jabez in particular, representative community workers and community leaders presents one of the strongest ways of effecting the systemic change required. The benefits of this are already perceptible in the increased diversity of local authority officers, heads and chief executives, influencing institutional working practices. Loubaba summarises the opportunity that leadership presents to re-introduce intuitive practices: *"the language of lived experience leadership articulates a lot of instinct. It is a decolonising practice and moment of practice changing"*. Leadership development

is a significant element of Yvonne and Ubele's work. This is co-ordinated through educational and enterprise delivery programmes (including Erasmus programmes), emphasising International collaboration. Through this, Ubele have reached over 800 participants in 25 countries. For Ubele, leadership development is an expression of lifelong learning and education. Through leadership, you can "*change agency, skills and strategy.*"

CULTIVATING AND NURTURING

(Secondments/Placements, Funding, Educational Programmes)

One of Kin Structures's core aims is to sustain and build cultural infrastructure throughout the city. As an organisation involved in cultural and community development, one tool they use is to design opportunities within existing institutions to platforming migrants and people of colour, for instance through residencies, programming and curation. For Geraldine, who coordinates secondments within GLA departments for community organisations, there is a difficulty operating within an institution in which "*everything moves so slowly*", but its influence has been very positive, successfully creating spaces for "*imagination, passion and detailed knowledge.*"

Yvonne and Ubele have sought to cultivate by creating spaces to be *"unapologetically yourself - not need to code switch to speak a different language, to not have to explain everything. Something about this space provides sanctuary, can be looked after, be free, be nurtured."* This has been instituted through the educational, funding (such as the Phoenix Way grant body), leadership and community development programmes the organisation has run. Ubele has also sought to establish networks and global support systems to allow for the sharing of experiences and stories of migration and diaspora communities throughout the UK, Europe and beyond. Yvonne identifies the need for social activities and the promotion of opportunities to rest and repair as vital to the nurturing process - *"chances to play, to acknowledge wellbeing and support."* For Vicky and the traders at Latin Village, cultivation and nurturing is a method for transferring values and practising empathy:

"I have planted seeds in people that have nurtured and created many things. The community should have what the community deserves - respect. This has been fought from the heart. When it comes from the heart, no one can tell you you're wrong".

[Act II - Monologue - Seven Sisters and The Latin Village]