DeRadicalisation
in Europe and Beyond: Detect, Resolve, Reintegrate

Spatial aspects of de-radicalisation processes in London

City Report

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This document is available for download at https://dradproject.com/

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Acknowledgements

About the Project

D.Rad is a comparative study of radicalization and polarization in Europe and beyond. It aims to identify the actors, networks, and wider social contexts driving radicalization, particularly among young people in urban and peri-urban areas. D.Rad conceptualizes this through the I-GAP spectrum (injustice-grievance-alienation-polarization) with the goal of moving towards measurable evaluations of de-radicalization programmes. Our intention is to identify the building blocks of radicalization, which include a sense of being victimized; a sense of being thwarted or lacking agency in established legal and political structures; and coming under the influence of "us vs them" identity formulations.

D.Rad benefits from an exceptional breadth of backgrounds. The project spans national contexts including the UK, France, Italy, Germany, Poland, Hungary, Finland, Slovenia, Bosnia, Serbia, Kosovo, Israel, Iraq, Jordan, Turkey, Georgia, Austria, and several minority nationalisms. It bridges academic disciplines ranging from political science and cultural studies to social psychology and artificial intelligence. Dissemination methods include D.Rad labs, D.Rad hubs, policy papers, academic workshops, visual outputs, and digital galleries. As such, D.Rad establishes a rigorous foundation to test practical interventions geared to prevention, inclusion, and de-radicalization.

With the possibility of capturing the trajectories of seventeen nations and several minority nations, the project will provide a unique evidence base for the comparative analysis of law and policy as nation-states adapt to new security challenges. The process of mapping these varieties and their link to national contexts will be crucial in uncovering strengths and weaknesses in existing interventions. Furthermore, D.Rad accounts for the problem that processes of radicalization often occur in circumstances that escape the control and scrutiny of traditional national frameworks of justice. The participation of AI professionals in modelling, analysing, and devising solutions to online radicalization will be central to the project's aims.

Executive Summary

This report investigates how Windrush Square, a public space in London (UK) is experienced by people from diverse demographic backgrounds, and how these everyday interactions and tensions shape experiences of social cohesion and alienation. This space was selected as a case study as it captures the underlying tensions of the UK's colonial past and its continuing impact in the present day. We first conducted three expert interviews to shed light on the role of the Greater London Authority in public space governance, landscape design and wellbeing of migrant populations, and community-led neighbourhood planning With the help of a local organisation, Friends of Windrush Square, we then conducted two focus groups (LABs I and II) with stakeholders of Windrush Square at the Black Cultural Archives, a space located in the heart of Windrush Square which played a significant role in the social history of Brixton residents and the transformation of the Windrush Square. We adopted a co-participatory approach in our research using pre-prepated question cards to co-produce ideas and solutions for best practice in Windrush square and the surrounding local community. Four main themes emerged from our labs: (1) Culture, heritage and commemoration, (2) Community oversity and ownership, (3) Everyday dynamics, and (4) Events. These themes intersected with each other to provide a meaningful and complex insight into the ways that we can disconnect from public spaces. We offer policy recommendations for increasing social cohesion and contributing to de-radicalisation processes drawn from our desk research, expert interviews, and LAB I and II findings.

"London is one of the most diverse cities in the world, with more than 300 languages spoken every day. Yet its statues, plaques and street names don't reflect our city's stories." (Mayor of London Sadiq Khan - GLA, 2023)

1. Introduction

This report contributes to a core goal of the D.Rad project: promoting initiatives that contribute to inclusion and cohesion across diverse societies. The specific aim is to explore how public space may serve as a space of encounter and interaction between people - especially young people - with different racial, ethnic and social identities. We centre on Greater London, the UK's largest[1], youngest,[2] and most diverse city, illustrated in Table 1, which compares the proportion of underrepresented ethnicities in London versus England. London is home to 35% of the country's non-UK-born population) (Kierans, 2022), as illustrated in Table 2, which compares the proportion of people born in the UK and outside the UK between London and England. We draw on qualitative research conducted in collaboration and partnership with the Friends of Windrush Square community group, based in the London borough of Lambeth. We specifically examine the challenges, tensions, and opportunities associated with the design and management of Windrush Square, and focus our analysis on four intersecting themes:

1. Culture, heritage and commemoration
2. Community oversight and ownership
3. Everyday dynamics
4. Events and relations beyond Brixton

Table 1: Ethnic breakdown of residents (London vs England) - as of 2021

Ethnic group	London	England
Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh	20.7%	9.6%
Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African	13.5%	4.2%
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	5.7%	3.0%
White	53.8%	81.0%
Other ethnic group	6.8%	2.2%

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[1] London has 8.8 million residents as of 2021 or 13% of the country's total population.

[2] From 2011-2021 the share of London's residents aged 25-34 rose by 1.7% (ONS, 2023).

Table 2: Country of birth (London vs England and Wales) - as of 2021

Country of birth	London	England and Wales
UK born	59.4%	83.2%
Europe	15.5%	6.9%
Africa	7.1%	2.7%
Middle East and Asia	13.0%	5.6%
The Americas and the Caribbean	4.2%	1.3%
Australasia and Oceania	0.7%	0.03

Our findings are situated against the backdrop of ongoing social, economic, and demographic change in London and the UK. Windrush Square lies in the heart of Brixton, Lambeth's largest neighbourhood, and holds a symbolic position in the history of migration to the UK. Invited by the national government to support key industries and rebuild post-war Britain, the arrival of the Empire Windrush ship to Tilbury Dock in June 1948, carrying 1,027 passengers - at least 500 of whom were from the Caribbean - is widely viewed as the beginning of UK multiculturalism (Zhang and Fox, 2020: 22). London's African and Caribbean population - collectively referred to as the Windrush Generation - surged over the following decades. Brixton, the epicentre of London's African and Caribbean community and the largest urban neighbourhood in Lambeth, is renowned for its distinctive culture and musical history, and alongside huge numbers of daily visitors, has also seen a recent influx of domestic migrants, leading to high rent and new development projects, forcing out shops owned by members of the African-Caribbean community (Gritsch, 2019: 1457; King, 2022). In developing specific recommendations for neighbourhood-level organisations and policymakers, this report points out that understanding these wider social processes is essential to ensuring that public spaces are made truly accessible and are enjoyed by residents and visitors of all backgrounds.

The report further acknowledges the role of 'fast-burn' and 'slow-burn' crises in shaping public space use and access. Fast-burn crises refer to unexpected phenomena which, notwithstanding a multitude of possible underlying causes, appear as spontaneous; slow-burn crises in turn refer to more gradual shifts which are often shaped by a combination of social, political, and economic forces (Seabrooke and Tsingou, 2019). The Windrush Scandal has aspects of both: it entered the national public consciousness in 2018, yet is traceable to the Conservative government's 2012 'Hostile Environment'[3] legislation, which sought to inhibit access to public services for undocumented migrants. This resulted in the illegal detainment and denial of rights of hundreds of Commonwealth citizens, with many losing their jobs and homes, threatened with deportation or they were wrongly deported (JCWI, 2023). This crisis and related policy measures, if ostensibly beyond the realm of spatial planning and urban development, has important implications for how spaces like Windrush Square commemorate the contribution of, and struggles faced by, the Windrush Generation; the need for community organisations with diverse memberships to participate in decisions relating to public space; the potential for spaces to serve as a site of everyday vibrancy and cohesion, and the kinds of cultural gatherings and political events that take place. In what follows, the report first lays out its

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[3]   The term was first used under Labour in 2010.

methodological perspective and methods, followed by a section on urban space design and management in Greater London and Lambeth. The ensuing section first introduces an over-view of Windrush square from a historical point of view, followed by the findings from the D.Rad LAB I and LAB II, held in Brixton in May 2023. The final section lays out our policy recommendations leading to an overall discussion and conclusion from our research.

2. Description of methods

2.1. Stage 1: Diagnostic and case study selection

In order to identify examples of high-quality public space planning, design and management, and to situate the report's findings within a city-wide, national and global context, we initially conducted a review of salient research, policy and news outputs, and conducted three expert interviews pertaining to:

1. landscape design and the wellbeing of migrant populations;
2. community-led neighbourhood planning; and
3. the role of the Greater London Authority in public space governance.

This initial diagnostic highlighted a range of public spaces in London and across the UK which possess features of best practice, either in terms of their design (e.g., the layout of benches) or in allowing for local oversight over planning and management decisions. However, data further highlighted inconsistent regulation and irregular dynamics in the everyday use of these public spaces. A Centre for London report analysing ten examples of London's public spaces outlined a number of complexities surrounding the ownership of the land under Windrush Square (among other cases), alongside concerns about how the space is managed (Bossett et al., 2019). We then conducted desk research regarding the communities, social centres and civil societies active in the area. This led us to get in touch with these groups and key gatekeepers within these communities in Brixton and wider Lambeth. Drawing on this and additional sources, we selected Windrush Square as our central case study.

2.2. Stage 2: Identifying users and stakeholders

Following the wider desk research about active communities in the Windrush Square and the surrounding areas in London, we identified the Friends of Windrush Square (FoWS) as the most important stakeholder in the area due to its significant community activity in and around the Square. This report is thus based on the generous and enthusiastic collaboration of the Friends of Windrush Square, which was integral to the production of this report. A review of online materials, including relevant websites and blogs, showed that FoWS were formerly a sub-committee of the Brixton Society: a charity dedicated to 'shape the future of Brixton' by promoting a deeper understanding of its history and built environment (Brixton Society, n.d.). After initial communication with the Brixton resident, Windrush descendant, and community organiser Ros Griffiths, it was revealed that FoWS comprises a collection of residents and members of organisations either adjacent to the square itself (e.g., Brixton Tate Library, Ritzy Cinema, and the Black Cultural Archives) or based in Brixton or elsewhere in London and with a direct stake in wider neighbourhood life (e.g. Black Culture Market and/or Repowering

London).[4] Following two initial informal site visits, the project team were invited to participate in a FoWS committee meeting held at the Black Cultural Archives in April 2023. This provided an opportunity to learn more about the 'Reimagining Windrush Square' campaign (detailed further in Section 4), and to outline the goals of our research. Consequently, the D.Rad LAB I and II took place in the Black Cultural Archives, first, because of the place's significant role in the social history of Brixton residents and the transformation of the Windrush Square. Second, it took place there because the members of FoWS used the space effectively and felt safe and comfortable in this place.

2.3. D.Rad LABS I and II: Participants and Procedure

The project team coordinated two research LAB sessions at the Black Cultural Archives on the 17th and 31st of May 2023 respectively, with the support of FoWS members as participants and in aiding additional recruitment. In each lab, after an initial welcome from Ros Griffiths and the D.Rad project team, three core aims were stated: (1) to get to know each other; (2) to understand Windrush Square's position in Brixton; and (3) to co-produce ideas and solutions for best practice in the local neighbourhood and surrounding areas. First, the researchers established ground rules and provided participants with the opportunity to ask questions before they consent in writing to participate in the labs. The labs were recorded following consent. Facilitators also took notes during the labs. After a round of initial introductions, participants were divided into two groups of four-five people, with a member of the D.Rad team facilitating the discussion each time, which on the whole lasted about three hours. Pre-prepared question cards were selected at random for each lab, read aloud by the researcher in each table by Staples and Ozduzen and these were discussed among each group. Each LAB concluded with a collective reflection on takeaways and learnings from the sessions, and the researchers and research participants agreed that findings would be shared with FoWS in order to support their ongoing efforts to reimagine and reclaim Windrush Square. The active interaction and collaboration between researchers and the research participants in both of the LABs created an inclusive and open discussion and safe space in Black Cultural Archives. Participants were thanked for their time and were provided with a £25 Amazon voucher to acknowledge their labour in participating. Thematic analysis was conducted using the recordings and notes.

2.3.1. LAB I

11 participants (FoWS members) took part in LAB I, which consisted of two focus groups conducted simultaneously by the D.Rad researchers. Participants of LAB I reported being members of a variety of community or civil society organisations which are tied to Windrush Square, or being active in engaging in socio-economic and political issues surrounding Windrush Square.

2.3.2. LAB II

9 participants (FoWS members) residing in the area (South London) participated in LAB II, which consisted of two focus groups conducted simultaneously by the D.Rad researchers. Participants were all descendents of the Windrush Generation and members of underrepresented communities. While all the participants recounted their practices and experiences of

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4   A centre dedicated to preserving and celebrating African and Caribbean heritage.

the public space from a historical point of view that covered different periods of their life span, three out of nine participants were part of the youth.

3. Description of spatial characteristics and city context

3.1. Urban space design, planning and management across Greater London and the borough of Lambeth

"Many of Lambeth's neighbourhoods are already known and valued for their mixed communities that include both young and old, people with and without disabilities, a variety of income levels and the full range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The 'lifetime' neighbourhoods of the future need to maintain and improve this mix while providing high-quality, well-serviced residential environments with a sense of place, in which people and families wish to settle and prosper" (Lambeth Council, 2021: p. 28).

This section focuses on how decisions pertaining to public space design and management are made across Greater London and in the London Borough of Lambeth. Greater London covers 1,572 km and consists of 33 political-administrative districts including the City of London, 12 Inner London and 20 Outer London boroughs. The Greater London Authority (GLA) was established in 1999 following a referendum held in conjunction with the 1998 local elections. It consists of two political branches including the Mayor of London and 25 London Assembly members and is responsible for spatial development in partnership with local borough authorities. The city boasts the UK's highest average annual income[5] and performs well on macroeconomic indicators such as productivity (Bennett, 2022). However, the high cost of living, longer commuter travel times, and relatively high levels of pollution undermine general well-being and particularly affect deprived outer neighbourhoods (Bela et al., 2020). There is also significant income inequality: Inner London boroughs are typically wealthier than Outer London, with the mean wage in the poorest borough nearly £45,000 lower than the richest (Trust for London, 2021).

The borough of Lambeth, the focus area of our case study, is situated in Outer London, bordering the borough of Wandsworth to the west, Merton to the south-west and Croydon to the south (illustrated in Map 1). It is today one of London's most diverse boroughs: 43% of the borough's population is Black, Asian or multi-ethnic, with Black/Black British African ethnic identities making up 12%, and Black/Black British Caribbean ethnic identities accounting for 10% of residents - the second-largest proportion of Black Caribbean people in the city (Lambeth Council, 2022). Average earnings in Lambeth are higher than the London average, and the borough ranks 19th/32 in terms of poverty rates (Trust for London, 2022). However, child poverty exceeds the national average, and the average house price is 14 times the average annual salary (Cottell et al., 2022). Moreover, despite recording London's highest proportion of REMAIN votes in the 2026 Brexit referendum (ITV, 2016), recent years have seen a decline in feelings of cohesion, with fewer Lambeth residents agreeing that the area is a 'place where people from different backgrounds get on well together' (Lambeth Council, 2022: 39).

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[5]   £42,001 vs the £31,447 national average.

Map 1: London Boroughs

Source https://www.britain-visitor.com/london/london-boroughs

3.2. Public space design and planning in Greater London and Lambeth

Greater London features an array of public spaces of varied sizes and functions, collectively constituting "the places where London's citizens and communities meet and mingle" (Bassett et al., 2019: 36). This includes significant green space, with over 3,000 parks equating to 18% of the total land area. Access to such spaces is consistently linked with physical and mental health benefits, improved social connections and belonging, and migrant well-being and integration (Public Health England, 2020; Rishbeth & Birch, 2021), conferring a health benefit equivalent to £950m annual savings for the National Health Service (Ellis and Co, 2021).

Both the GLA and Local borough authorities have a role in public space planning and design. The London Plan, first published in 2004, represents the GLA's overarching spatial development strategy, and establishes the standards for planners and developers to ensure that the public realm is "accessible, usable for all and that developments and the social infrastructure they provide … address the needs of London's diverse population" (GLA, 2004). The 2021 London Plan similarly requires developers to create "places where everyone is welcome, which foster a sense of belonging, which encourage community buy-in, and where communities can develop and thrive" (GLA, 2021: p.14); and "puts improving health and reducing health inequalities at the heart of planning" through the promotion of walking and cycling (Ibid: 18). The GLA's (2019) Countering Violent Extremism strategy further notes that a lack of 'neutral spaces' undermines the possibility for intercommunity dialogue, and sets out plans to increase the number of such spaces. Alongside the GLA, London's 32 borough councils oversee a range of areas including education, social services, waste management, libraries and recreational facilities, and are expected to set out plans for the spatial development of their areas. The Lambeth Local Plan 2020-2035 notes that parts of Brixton lack access to open space and green infrastructure, and highlights the need to safeguard and promote the neighbourhood's

"distinctive, multicultural and diverse major town centre" through the 'creation of high-quality, safe, accessible and animated public spaces' (Lambeth Council, 2021: p. 277).

The COVID-19 pandemic and surrounding policies have caused further migration shifts as a result of travel restrictions, loss of employment opportunities and office closures, exacerbating existing inequalities in people's access to public space (GLA, 2022; Burnett et al., 2021). At the same time, London has seen a growing number of 'pseudo-public' spaces, with the majority of new or planned developments containing privately-owned space (Jacobs, 2017), and over fifty parks at threat following national reforms that permit building on green space (Roberts, 2022).

3.3. Public space ownership, regeneration and regulation in London and the borough of Lambeth

Socio-economic disparities across London are reflected in the primacy of large, central spatial redevelopments and the relatively limited inattention to outer London regeneration. The GLA is directly involved in public space redevelopment: first under mayor Kevin Livingstone (2000-2008) who initiated the 100 Public Spaces Project, and subsequently under Mayor Boris Johnson (2008-2016), who launched London's Great Outdoors, which saw improvements to 260 public spaces. However, such initiatives have tended to prioritise large, iconic spaces such as Trafalgar Square,[6] with its central and touristic location surrounded by historic buildings[7] making it a 'meeting place between the east and west of the capital' (Clark, n.d.). Under Prime Minister Blair (1997-2007), traffic congestion reduced everyday usage and the square was highlighted as a flagship site for urban regeneration, as Minister for London Keith Hill declared: 'The Government is determined to bring about an urban renaissance. We want to create civilised cities … The Trafalgar Square design – is fully in tune with our objectives' (cited in Escobar, 2014). The square was redeveloped and partly pedestrianised and today receives 15 million tourists annually and it regularly hosts major political, cultural, and commemorative events (Clack, 2015; Jagganath, 2018).[8] However, evidence indicates that young people from Outer London do not make use of the square, preferring to "stick to their postcodes" (Davis, 2012).

Another concern pertains to the limits to direct involvement of local authorities and residents in the oversight and regulation of public space, alongside a growing trend towards privatisation. Local Place Plans are intended to reflect the express wishes of citizens and involve a consultation phase; similarly, local councillors are elected every four years, who are responsible for representing citizens at the ward (neighbourhood) level. London has also recently seen a surge in the number of neighbourhood and residents' organisations, with 600 Friends

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[6] The name Trafalgar Square derives from the central column, designed in the 1830s and finished in 1840, depicting Admiral Nelson in commemoration of the 1805 victory at the Battle of Trafalgar during the Napoleonic Wars.

[7] Including the church of St Martin-in-the-Fields and South Africa House to the east, Canada House to the west, and the National Gallery to the north.

[8] From suffrage rallies (1910s/20s) and anti-war protests (1960s), more recent examples of activism in and around Trafalgar Square include the 100,000-strong Women's March (2017), anti-austerity marches (2016, 2022), climate change activism (2020), anti-lockdown protests (2020, 2021), Black Lives Matter protests (2020), far-right protests against Black Lives Matter protests (2020) and protests against "illegal" immigration (2022).

of Parks Groups with at least 100,000 members (Parks for London, 2023). The Lambeth Local Plan points to the role of public space in producing safe, healthy and self-reliant communities, and highlights that neighbourhood planning tools have been used for the South Bank and Waterloo area, with pending community-led plans in a range of other areas. However, research conducted by the Centre for London notes weak local authority oversight, limited public consultation, and inconsistent management protocols in many of London's public spaces, such that access is often dependent on landowners' attitudes, with certain areas subjected to over-policing or otherwise being made 'less public' than others (Bossett et al., 2019, 7).[9]

4. In-depth analysis of case study: Windrush Square

4.1. Overview

4.1.1 Introduction to Windrush Square

To highlight the history and role of a specific public space in Greater London (please refer to Map 2 for a contextualisation of our chosen space in relation to Greater London), this section introduces the case of Windrush Square (illustrated in Figure 1) in Brixton and the motivation for selecting this space as a case study. We then outline the four intersecting themes which emerged through our research. Themes (1) and (2) will later be elaborated in relation to the Community Research Lab (LAB I); themes (3) and (4) will be discussed in relation to the Youth Research Lab (LAB II).

Map 2: The district of Brixton (HFS London, n.d.)

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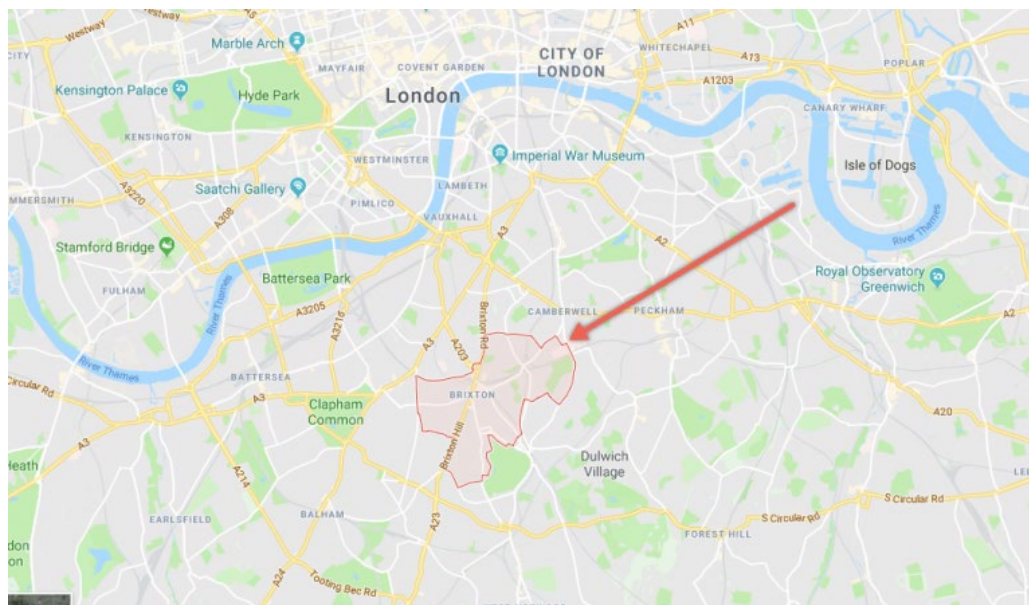
[9] The six recommendations offered by the report are: (1) restricting behaviour in public space only in ways necessary for safe management; (2) creating opportunities for informal stewardship; (3) greater ongoing oversight by local authorities; (4) increased public consultation, especially in instances when planned usage diverges from the public interest; (5) ensuring that the rules governing public space usage are transparent and accessible; and (6) encouraging private events in such a way that does not overly limit public usage (Ibid).

Windrush Square first received its name in 1998 in honour of the arrival of the Empire Windrush, which docked in Essex in 1948. In 2010, as part of the Mayor of London's 100 Public Spaces Initiative, funding was received to merge Windrush Square with the adjacent Tate Library Gardens, and, following a Lambeth council opinion poll, residents, organisations and businesses opted to keep the name Windrush Square. The 2010 redesign was ostensibly intended to create 'a central plaza to serve the wider needs of Brixton's communities' (Bassett et al., 2019). There is significant evidence of autonomous activities such as waste collection (Quinn, 2016), with the Friends of Windrush Square (FOWS) representing the major community stakeholder today.

Figure 1: Layout of Windrush Square following 2010 redesign (Bossett et al., 2019)
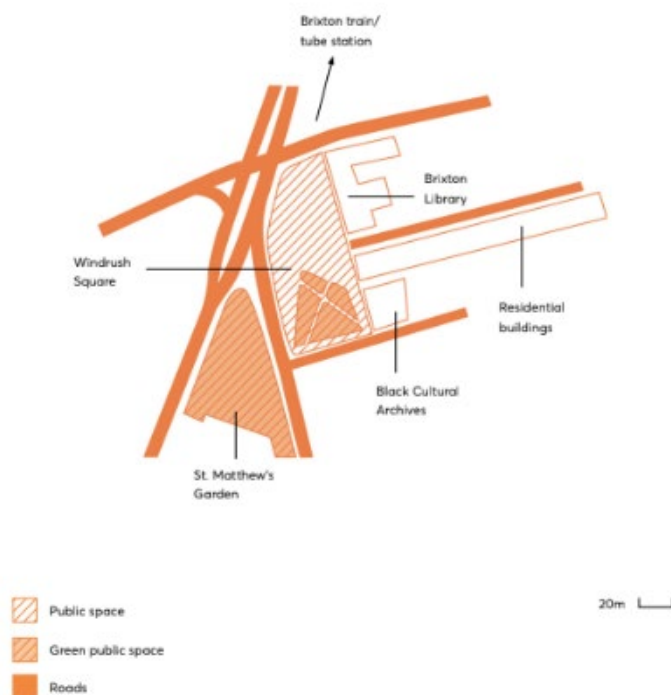
Windrush Square is owned and managed by Lambeth Council, with a range of sub-teams sharing responsibilities for areas such as maintenance and events, although waste collection and anti-social behaviour regulation have been privately outsourced (Bassett et al, 2019). The Lambeth Local Plan emphasises the importance of culture, liveability, inclusion, and sense of place for its public spaces (Lambeth Council, 2021, p. 36). The Lambeth Local Plan describes Windrush Square as among Brixton's most significant public spaces and asserts that legal protections are in place to preserve its character.

Windrush Square sees regular footfall and evidence suggests that most visitors feel safe there (Bassett et al., 2019). Furthermore, the square sits on Common Land, meaning it is a designated park and 'no structure encroaching on the open nature of the space can be built' (Ibid: 64). This openness was noted as a major benefit of the 2010 redesign, with good lighting, pedestrianisation, a large central sculpture usable for seating, and a degree of green space seen as creating a 'coherent' and accessible public realm (Eid et al., 2021).

Importantly, Windrush Square draws interest outside of its local community and borough, particularly around social inequalities. The Square hosts frequent rallies, gatherings and protests, often centring on issues which resonate in and beyond Brixton, such as gentrification, racism and migration (Zhang and Fox 2020: 22-23; Socialist Worker, 2021). Evidence indicates that

protest permissions are usually granted by police, provided participants remain within the square and do not encroach upon surrounding roads (Metropolitan Police, 2020). Gatherings involving national and international social movements such as Black Lives Matter, who during 2020/21 organised a number of Brixton-based protests, are attracted to the square, owing to the potential for national media exposure.

This space was selected as a case study for several reasons. Primarily, it reflects the multicultural fabric of London and is situated in a borough of which 63% of its residents identify their ethnicity as other than white British and 41% are young adults between 20-39 years of age (Lambeth council, 2022c). Second, as in reference to its name, this space captures the underlying tensions of the UK's colonial past and its continuing impact in the present day.

4.2. Findings

4.2.1 Community Research Lab (LAB I)

Culture, heritage and commemoration

LAB I participants emphasised the symbolic value deriving from the Windrush Square's geographical prominence in the neighbourhood: "I think it is important to have a public square right in the middle called Windrush Square, because of the contribution of the community that settled here".' Since 2010, Windrush Square features an increasing variety of features - including textures and floor materials - which explicitly commemorate the Windrush Generation. There have since been additional installations, including the UK's first memorial dedicated to African and Caribbean service personnel, and the Cherry Groce Memorial Pavilion in honour of Cherry Groce, a migrant from Jamaica who was shot by police in her Brixton home in 1985.

Notwithstanding these existing features, several design-related and management issues were noted as limiting the potential for Windrush Square to meaningfully reflect Brixton's multicultural history as a 'showroom for the community', and as a major cultural and tourist destination. Participants expressed the view that current features are disjointed and lack an overarching logic, with limited signage explaining the history to those not already familiar with it: "some people have no idea of the culture, history and legacy of the place". Furthermore, the square continues to feature a bust of Henry Tate, first unveiled in 1905, in front of Brixton Library (Urban, 2020c). While research shows that Tate was not personally implicated in colonial slavery (UCL, 2022), the links between the transatlantic slave trade and the broader sugar industry are incontrovertible (The Guardian, 2007) and local sentiments about Tate's ongoing prominence in the square are mixed. Moreover, despite recognising the rapid regeneration of Brixton and the increase in daily visitors, potential downsides associated with gentrification were also noted by participants, such as "displacement" and "loss of culture". This creates an additional urgency that Windrush Square serves this commemorative role.

Community oversight and ownership

LAB I revealed the desire for local organisations to have a direct say over the management and regulation of Windrush Square. The Friends of Windrush Square constitutes an independent network of residents, activists and business representatives, with a mission statement to "protect, preserve and promote the heritage, function, and architecture of Windrush Square" (Brixton Blog, 2022). In 2022, FoWS launched the Reimagining Windrush Square campaign, intended to ensure that the local community has a direct input into future plans and to "reclaim

the square and develop it into an inclusive and welcoming destination for everyone" (Ibid). The active presence and collaboration of organisations located on Windrush Square, such as Black Cultural Archives, was noted as a major asset in these efforts.

However, LAB I revealed a sense of the limited opportunities afforded to voice concerns about the square and influence decision-making. Participants pointed to the continued closure of public toilets (out of service since the 1980s), as a sign that the regeneration of Windrush Square completed in 2010 was "design-led" rather than "people-led". Participants related this to a lack of community space more generally: "No real community owns anything in Brixton. Whoever you are, young, old, black, white, what do you own?" as well as to the broader issue of political representation: "There is always inequity between the council and everybody else", which was raised by most of our participants as a concern. Windrush Square sits within the Brixton Windrush Ward, with two councillors representing the Labour & Cooperative Group who hold surgeries in the Brixton Tate Library (Lambeth Council, 2022b). However, the absence of councillors as a permanent accompaniment to FOWS was noted: "Councillors turn up when they have memorial services, but they're not necessarily present all the time". Ultimately, participants emphasised that groups such as the Friends of Windrush Square must be perceived as "stakeholders" as opposed to "customers". LAB I thus accounts for the many ways the residents and activists of the square wish and aim to reclaim ownership of it and make it 'people-led'.

4.2.2. Youth Research Lab (LAB II)

Everyday dynamics

While concerns about anti-social behaviour around the Windrush Square were noted during LAB II, some LAB participants, including young people, suggested that Windrush Square was, in general, 'quite an easy place to be'.

Similar to other participants, our young participants in the LAB II reported the lack of sufficient engagement by the Lambeth Council. One of the young participants recounted that 'the council does the bare minimum of what they are supposed to do… I honestly think they could do a lot more, especially to control gentrification, because you are going to end up pushing many people out of this area'. In addition to concerns about further/future gentrification and commercialisation in the area, other design and management challenges were also noted by the research participants. Notwithstanding the space's openness and inclusivity, participants described the seats in the square as 'awkward and uncomfortable', and some felt that the regeneration project was 'not really designed for people to convene'. The previous fountain in the square was replaced by a 'rather underwhelming floor fountain that sporadically spurts out a light sprinkling of water' (Urban, 2020b), and observers have suggested the square often appears deserted, dubbing it 'Windswept Square' (Urban 75, 2010). Moreover, while Byelaws under the Public Health Act 1875 and Open Spaces Act 1906 formally prohibit skating and skateboarding, skateboarding remains a 'daily occurrence' in Windrush Square (Minton, 2018: p. 91).

Residents have also reported drug-dealing and property damage in the area, with police responding with targeted patrols (Metropolitan Police Safer Neighbourhoods Team, 2023). A balance was noted by participants in terms of effective law enforcement and avoiding the racial profiling of local youth: "there has to be a balance when it comes to policing and regulating the area, it cannot be overly policed to the point where people don't want to be in the area",

and "if you have these kids being policed as if they're automatically criminals…they're going to become hostile to everyone". Our young female participants noted that they generally felt secure in the area. Security and perceptions of safety were further discussed in relation to the installation of security bollards around the square in September 2020, with several participants feeling that they fundamentally altered the sense of place.[10] Ultimately these issues were perceived by our LAB II participants as undermining the potential to create a vibrant and secure space usable by young and old alike.

Windrush Square sees regular organised cultural and social events, permission for which is granted by the Lambeth Planning Applications Committee (Bassett et al., 2019). However, LAB II participants noted that the planning permission process is somewhat opaque, with examples of local organisers adhering to the procedure clashing with externally organised events: 'it's never clear if it's an authorised gathering …no-one knows whether they have asked to be there'. This perceived lack of transparency was seen to be exacerbated by the high turnover of Lambeth council staff, many of whom are not residents in the area. As a potential solution, participants considered the installation of a permanent, regularly updated information point in the square itself: "it would be nice if on the noticeboard somewhere, it said 'if you want to use this space you need to contact X Y Z'". Additionally, LAB II participants reflected that these events which have interest within and beyond Brixton had the tendency to 'take over Brixton' and adversely affect the local community. Ultimately participants recognised that events must balance local and external uses and needs.

Figure 2: Metropolitan Police Map Highlighting Windrush Square as Designated Assembly Area (July 2020)

4.3. Synthesis

This section gives a synthesis of the findings of the D.Rad LABS I and II and offers some general reflections on the challenges and opportunities for community oversight over public space. We begin by summarising the four emerging themes.

Culture, heritage, and commemoration: D.Rad LABs I and II identified concerns about the disjointed and uncoordinated character of existing commemorative features, a need for dialogue on how the story of the WIndrush Generation is told, and for wider public engagement

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[10] One local councillor publicly admitted they had not read the relevant report (Cobb, 2020). Lambeth Council later confirmed "There is no current specific threat linked to the Windrush Square installation." (Cobb, 2022).

and education about the significance of Windrush Square within that history, harking back to colonialism.

Community oversight and ownership: The D.Rad LABs I and II revealed enthusiastic and persistent interest among residents and community organisations in ensuring that Windrush Square remains a quality and well-used public space, as well as a notable sense of disconnect with local government institutions, politicians and policymakers. The LABs also revealed concerns about the degree of community consultation in decision-making as these decisions would relate to the square's current and future use, exacerbated by concerns about the commercialisation and gentrification of public space across Lambeth, relative to a lack of authentic 'community' spaces.

Everyday dynamics: The D.Rad LABs I and II discussions focused on everyday dynamics on Windrush Square, revealing concerns about its layout and ambiguities surrounding regulation and enforcement. Windrush Square sees regular footfall and evidence suggests that most visitors feel safe there (Bassett et al., 2019). Furthermore, the square sits on Common Land, meaning that it is a designated park and 'no structure encroaching on the open nature of the space can be built' (Ibid: 64). This openness was noted as a major benefit of the 2010 redesign, with good lighting, pedestrianisation, a large central sculpture usable for seating, and a degree of green space seen as creating a 'coherent' and accessible public realm (Eid et al., 2021). Yet, the LABs revealed a sense of lack of clarity regarding the role of local organisations in responding to issues such as anti-social behaviour, and a view that Windrush Square has untapped potential to serve as a space of encounter and interaction between people of different socio-economic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds and ages.

Events: The participants of the D.Rad LAB I and II discussed the range of organised social, cultural and political events occurring in Windrush Square. Despite its popularity for these events, involving a wide range of organisations including from beyond the neighbourhood of Brixton, ambiguities were noted regarding permission procedures, leading in some instances to a lack of coordination and even competition. A more recent decline in local cultural events relative to externally-led political events was also noted, with protests and gatherings occasionally 'spilling over into Brixton' and affecting wider neighbourhood dynamics.

Overall, the issues identified across the four thematic areas intersect in ways which may reinforce a sense of alienation and disconnection from public space. For example, concerns about a general lack of awareness of the cultural significance of Windrush Square (theme 1) directly intersect with the issue of anti-social behaviour at the everyday level (theme 3), with issues such as public urination on memorials understood from this perspective by our participants: "They have no respect because they don't actually understand or know what it's about". Equally, our findings point out concerns about lack of meaningful community involvement in decision-making (theme 2), including a perceived lack of consultation regarding the installation of security bollards (theme 3). If these challenges are negatively reinforcing, so too may be the solutions: for example, provision of clear and transparent information about event organisation (theme 4) can help to improve a sense of place (theme 3) and create a deeper sense of community ownership (theme 2).

Our participants' experiences further reveal important temporal dynamics, including how the passing of time transforms the ways in which people navigate space. While potential tensions between young and old were noted in terms of 'anti-social' behaviour, the general feeling was that young people have an equal right to use the space, and that their experiences inevitably shapes how they move through and interact with Windrush Square and the wider

neighbourhood: "When I was a young person, I saw Brixton in a different way as I see it now. It was more about being a rebel. Now I'm older, I want to build the place and secure it for the future." As such, the generally agreed goal among our research participants was a "coordinated design which takes on the young and the old" and which creates opportunities for inter-generational cohesion and exchange to make a better future and build a better place.

Findings also shine a light on how a range of crises affect public space use. Among the most pertinent 'fast-burn' crises discussed during the LABs I and II included the unprecedented wave of youth-led BLM protests throughout 2020 (and their aftermath), which have continued to raise questions about who gets to use the space and why; and the COVID-19 pandemic (and associated policy measures), which provided a timely reminder of the importance of accessible and green community space. Relevant slow-burn crises include a national identity crisis (Ferdjani, 2022), manifested in public debates about the UK's place in the world, growing political polarisation and hard-line immigration policies culminating in discriminatory outcomes, such as those surrounding the Windrush Scandal; and the unforeseen negative outcomes of gentrification in London: "we understand the concept of gentrification and what it's supposed to bring. The reality is sometimes a lot different". While often detrimental, crises can also bring opportunities for groups like Friends of Windursh Square. For example, media and political attention surrounding the Windrush Scandal is likely to create further opportunities to contribute to a national debate about heritage in the built environment (Grimwood, 2021). Understanding these intersecting crises is essential to ensure that Windrush Square becomes a nationally-recognised public place which is accessible to, and recognises, the contribution of the Windrush Generation and the UK's wider migrant population to urban and everyday life. This recognition would further highlight the UK's colonial past, particularly within the current political context which often seeks to minimise the negative impacts of the British empire, as illustrated by the UK equalities minister seeking to rebalance UK national school curricula by incorporating the benefits of the British empire (Alibhai, 2022). This minimisation is also reflected within general attitudes, with a YouGov poll which surveyed 1,600 UK adults, finding that 32% of respondents reported that the British empire was something to be proud of, and 33% of respondents believed that countries which were colonised by the British empire were better off for being colonised (YouGov, 2019). Public spaces such as Windrush Square allow for the continuation of these dialogues for both understanding the past and also building a roadmap for cohesion in diverse communities. Importantly, WIndrush Square is an example of how public spaces can begin to share the neglected stories of a diverse population in London and the UK.

5. Policy recommendations

We propose the following policy recommendations in relation to the four thematic areas of discussion outlined in Section 4, built on our desk research, interviews with experts and the two D.Rad LABs in Brixton.

Culture, heritage and commemoration: In 2023, the Mayor of London launched the Commission for Diversity in the Public Realm in order to ensure "that the capital's population and history are celebrated and commemorated' (GLA, 2023). The installation of monuments and other design features as part of this work must be done in a coordinated manner which balances past and future. The commission must also create additional opportunities for local people to have a say on how urban design reflects local history.

Community oversight and ownership: Opportunities for the development of community-led neighbourhood plans must be increased. The GLA and local borough authorities should develop a strategy that actively includes the perspectives of local groups such as Friends of Windrush Square. Opportunities for funding or to access relevant expertise should be provided in order to expand their capacities to develop coherent and feasible plans.

Everyday dynamics: The GLA released the Public London Charter (2021), which establishes the rights and responsibilities for users, owners and managers of new and redeveloped public space 'irrespective of land ownership'. To redress existing ambiguities in terms of regulation, more should be done to create and publicise management plans for existing spaces. Moreover, decisions about security should be taken in consultation with local groups, with less-invasive designs prioritised in order for spaces to retain their distinctive character.

Events and relations beyond Brixton: The processes and procedures for event planning must be made simpler and more transparent. This can be done through appropriate signage in the square and the surrounding areas and well-publicised online processes using websites, blogs and more importantly social media platforms.

While this report is intended to reach a policy audience, it also highlights the importance of intra- and inter-organisational cohesion and the potential for universities and other similar institutions to facilitate reflection and coordination between different actors. D.Rad LABs revealed that it is local organisations which 'give life to the square', yet that inter-organizational collaboration was often limited by resource and capacity issues. Participants were generally appreciative of the opportunity to collectively and constructively discuss challenges and solutions. Representative of the general view, one research participant noted that "we need to come together and talk more about these issues, across difference". Our Lab participants also advanced a range of transformative ideas including collaboration with Transport for London on signage in the square and at Brixton Station, establishing a café and information kiosk, and deeper partnership with the Windrush Anchor project which seeks to retrieve the anchor from the Empire Windrush ship and install it in the square as a 'physical touchstone'. The university's role in this study and in connecting to other community organisations was also noted: "I hope that this is the start of many conversations, going to other places and other cities and saying to them 'own your own space, bring the community back to these spaces'."

6. Conclusion

This report is based on the idea that public space is essential in creating cohesion, a sense of belonging and inclusion in diverse societies. This is a pressing issue in Greater London, the UK's most diverse city, but is applicable to urban areas across the country. Since 2013/14, there has been a steady decline in neighbourhood-level cohesion, with young people especially unlikely to affirm that their local area serves as a place where people of varied backgrounds get on with each other (DCMS, 2021). Against a broader backdrop of political polarisation pertaining to a perceived loss of national identity, civil cohesion is also increasingly an issue of racial injustice (de Zylva, Gordon-Smith, & Childs, 2020).

Windrush Square has emerged as a central space for commemoration of the contribution of the UK's migrant community - in particular those of African and Caribbean descent - to social life in the UK. The Friends of Windrush Square, constituted of residents and a wider network of community organisers and business-owners, demonstrate an acute concern for this public

space, which we argue to be representative of local community engagement in the decision-making processes of public spaces on a global scale. Their reflections on the design of the space, with particular reference to its most recent redevelopment, acknowledges certain positive features including the space's openness. However, a series of crucial design and management challenges were identified with both everyday and long-term implications. Related recommendations in this report are intended to support such organisations to make spaces like Windrush Square more accessible, in such a way that it aligns with the social and cultural character of the wider neighbourhood.

The report thus speaks to a number of other themes being addressed in the D.Rad project, including the social and psychological dimension of (de)radicalisation, as well as the role of social media in transforming how residents navigate space. Findings should be placed in dialogue with experiences and analysis of similar dynamics across a range of European and non-European cities, especially those with comparable histories of migration.

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8. Appendix: Summary of expert interviews

Organisation	Area of expertise	Date of interview	Online / in-person
Locality	Neighbourhood Planning Officer	18 April 2023	Online
University of Sheffield	Senior Lecturer in Landscape Architecture	19 April 2023	In person
Greater London Authority	Senior Strategic Planner, London Plan	1 June 2023	Online