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To cite this article: Sharda Rozena & Loretta Lees (2023) The everyday lived experiences of Airbnbification in London, Social & Cultural Geography, 24:2, 253-273, DOI: [10.1080/14649365.2021.1939124](https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2021.1939124)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2021.1939124>



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Published online: 14 Jun 2021.



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The everyday lived experiences of Airbnbification in London

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the impact of Airbnb on the everyday lived experiences of residents in London. We focus on three spatial scales – the city, neighbourhood, and an individual building. Short-term rental platforms such as Airbnb have transformed socio-cultural urban landscapes by turning homes into informal hotels. We argue that many of the consequences of Airbnb echo and support those of gentrification; this includes indirect displacement, buy-to-let investment, and transient communities. Using mixed-methods, including geodata, online surveys, focus groups, resident diaries, and auto/ethnography, we explore the impact of Airbnb across London, in Kensington, and inside a specific building on Kensington High Street.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 15 May 2020

Accepted 10 April 2021

KEYWORDS

Airbnb; gentrification; displacement; survivability; everyday life

Introduction

One of the largest global agencies for short-term accommodation – Airbnb – enables hosts to rent out their spare room or property to guests. In February 2021, there were about 87,000 Airbnb listings in London, and Kensington had amongst the highest number in the capital, with 6,129 available (Blunden, 2018; InsideAirbnb, 2020). Airbnb is one of many flexible platforms for renting out homes; it transforms residential communities into tourist spaces and changes the socio-cultural landscape of urban neighbourhoods (see Ferreri & Sanyal, 2018; Quattrone et al., 2016). It specifically propagates the experience of ‘living like a local’ (Airbnb, 2019), but this consumption of everyday local residential life has implications for the wellbeing of long-term tenants, including the disruption and erasure of long-term communities and housing insecurity. Critical urbanists (eg. Cocola-Gant & Gago, 2019; Freytag & Bauder, 2018; Mendes, 2016) have accordingly linked Airbnb to touristification/gentrification – what Peters (2016) has called ‘Airbnbification’. However, despite a growing literature on Airbnb, Airbnbisation and Airbnbification, there remains a paucity of in-depth research on residents’ everyday experiences of living with short-term rentals in their homes and neighbourhoods. In what follows, we examine the impact of Airbnbification on the everyday lived experiences of long-term residents, focusing our lens on 3 spatial scales – London, Kensington, and a specific, flatted building on Kensington High Street (where from June 2018 to January 2019 one tenant sublet their apartment via Airbnb).

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Following Mendes (2016) and Cocola-Gant (2018, pp. 63–64) we argue that Airbnb profits from gentrified cities and facilitates processes such as capital investment in housing and exclusionary displacement. Using a mixed-methods approach, including geodata, surveys, focus groups, resident diaries, ethnography, and auto-ethnography, we investigate a variety of attitudes and experiences that embody the everyday socio-cultural impact of Airbnb. We show ‘indirect displacement’ – not simply direct physical displacement, but changes in the unique character and social identity of place (see Le Gates & Hartman, 1981). Embedded within this label are exclusionary displacements (being priced out of property but also shops and services, etc), displacement pressures such as a diminishing feeling of community and a transience manifested in the everyday domestic sphere of the home, and symbolic displacement: ‘a shifting social physiognomy that impinges and threatens the viability of their tenure of their places’ (Atkinson, 2015, p. 373). In Kensington, we show how transitory Airbnb visitors transform spaces of encounter and shared socio-cultural interactions. In a building on Kensington High Street, we expose the ‘slow violence’ (see Kern, 2015; Pain, 2019) enacted by Airbnb on statutory tenants.¹ Airbnb disrupts and challenges daily socio-cultural interactions, spaces of encounter, and experiences of place-making, as tenants are forced to share their homes with fleeting visitors. This transitory urban landscape contributes to ongoing, everyday housing insecurities as experienced by long-term residents. Yet micro, small-scale acts of resistance provide residents with some agency over the intrusion of Airbnb into their homes. Although Airbnb promotes a shared collaborative network between tourists and guests, we argue that the impact of this short-term rental site on the everyday experiences of residents in London, Kensington, and a building on Kensington High Street corresponds with and facilitates processes of gentrification, including indirect displacement.

Airbnbisation as Airbnbification

In recent years, there has been a surge of research on the relationship between Airbnb and touristification (as linked to gentrification) (see Cocola-Gant, 2018; Freytag & Bauder, 2018; Novy, 2018). Richards (2014) coined the term ‘airbnbisation’ to refer to the ‘provision of cool places to stay with lower prices and flexibility, bringing locals and tourists together’ (p. 13). Cocola-Gant (2018) and Freytag and Bauder (2018), however, have identified ways in which ‘airbnbisation’ has destroyed community coherence, contributed towards housing shortages, and changed the character of urban neighbourhoods; what Peters (2016) calls ‘Airbnbification’. Freytag and Bauder (2018, p. 443) argue that Airbnb-touristification occurs more frequently in gentrified places given the demand among tourists to visit wealthier neighbourhoods with high heritage and cultural value (see also Maginn et al., 2018; González-Pérez 2020). Novy (2018) observed that in Berlin there were between 10,000 and 15,000 Airbnb apartments available in the ‘epicentres of gentrification’ (p. 425). Gutiérrez, García-Palomares, Romanillos and Salas-Olmedo (2017, p. 16) similarly observed how Airbnb in Barcelona resulted in rental flats being removed from the market in favour of letting them out as holiday accommodation, increasing rents and transforming residential spaces into areas of conspicuous consumption. Mendes (2016) referred to this touristification as the ‘new urban frontier of



gentrification (p. 1). Airbnb as a ‘frontier’ of gentrification is, however, a subject of continuing debate.

Definitions of gentrification have been constantly adapted over time to reflect wider socio-economic trends and the process of gentrification continues to be understood in different ways (Lees et al., 2008). There is reasonable consensus, however, that any process of gentrification includes four key factors: reinvestment of capital; social change due to higher income groups; transformation in the socio-cultural urban landscape; and direct/indirect displacement of lower income groups (cr. Davidson & Lees, 2005). In exploring these in relation to Airbnb, the impacts are arguably distinct (Sequera & Nofre, 2018, p. 847). Indeed, Wilson (2019) argues that tourism does not gentrify because residents are not displaced, and Airbnb does not result in the emergence of a middle-class gentry or super-wealthy elite. Nevertheless, she recognises that Airbnb contributes to the socio-cultural transformation of a neighbourhood, exclusionary displacement, and private capital investment in property. In fact, Airbnb and gentrification complement and respond to one another. The tourist becomes the dominant ‘temporary global inhabitant’ (Sequera & Nofre, 2018, p. 849) that consumes everyday urban spaces regardless of social class. Moreover, Airbnb is often utilised as a capitalist tool to increase personal profit through buy-to-let investment in the housing market (Cocola-Gant & Gago, 2019). Although two separate processes, gentrification and Airbnb, dovetail by contributing to the transformation of socio-cultural landscapes and the exclusionary displacement of long-term residents; the term ‘Airbnbification’ catches this well.

Stabrowski (2014) described how gentrification is experienced through an ‘ongoing loss of agency, freedom, and security in the neighbourhood’ (p. 794). While poorer residents are still physically living in their neighbourhood, gentrification destroys their living conditions, social patterns, security, access, and consequently results in indirect displacement (Stabrowski, 2014, pp. 808–810). Noise pollution and lack of shared space creates unliveable and unsustainable neighbourhoods (Cocola-Gant, 2018; Cocola-Gant & Pardo, 2017). Spangler (2020) looked at the emotional labour of short-term rentals in New Orleans and the ways in which platforms such as Airbnb have alienated residents and contributed to feelings of displacement. Airbnb pressures can even lead to direct displacement – involuntary movement from one’s home. In Barcelona, Cocola-Gant (2018) found that the transformation of a neighbourhood into a space for touristic consumption pressured residents to move out: ‘the sense of dispossession becomes in some cases a direct process of expulsion’ (p. 162). Wilson (2019), however, maintains that this literature does not reveal a direct correlation between Airbnb and the direct displacement of residents; instead, other factors, such as increasing house and rent prices due to housing investment, should be recognised in isolation from short-term rentals. But others argue that there needs to be a ‘deeper understanding of displacement’ that goes beyond physical relocation to consider the ongoing transformation of everyday lived spaces (Stabrowski, 2014) and what gentrification scholars call ‘indirect’ or ‘exclusionary’ gentrification (Lees et al., 2008).

Lees et al(2018) have recently argued that studies of the lived experience of gentrification-induced displacement should explore ‘survivability’ in relation to resistance and resilience. Related to Airbnb, Newman and Wyly (2006), Gravari-Barbas and Jacquot (2016), and Hughes (2018) have discussed anti-tourism campaigns and resistance in European cities, including Berlin, Barcelona, Paris, and Amsterdam, where the presence

of short-term rentals is contributing to a loss of community and affordable housing. The #BoycottAirbnb campaign in Berlin, for example, included evocative advertisements depicting the Airbnb logo as the male genitalia being sliced with a pair of scissors alongside the slogan 'castrate gentrification' (Pereira, 2016). In this protest *residents themselves* drew the comparison between Airbnb and gentrification, highlighting 'rising rent prices for locals' and exclusionary displacement (Pereira, 2016). Lees et al. (, 2018, p. 351) argue that more research needs to focus on individual practices of resistance/survivability, whether intentional or non-intentional, political or non-political, visible or invisible. Where Airbnb scholars have tended to focus on neighbourhood or city-wide resistance, in this paper we examine smaller, more intimate acts of resistance – the everyday acts of survivability that residents use to safeguard their essential needs, including the right to a secure and liveable home.

We also extend the literature's focus on the city and neighbourhood scale to that of an individual building/home because the displacements associated with Airbnbisation are, as we show, a form of slow, violent un-homing (Elliot-Cooper et al., 2020). We focus on three spatial scales: the hyper-gentrified *city* of London where land rents are extremely high, and gentrification has pushed into all sorts of properties and areas. Kensington, a *neighbourhood* in the London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, which has experienced 'extreme gentrification'² (The Economist, 2017) and is a hotbed for Airbnb lets. It also has high numbers of empty³ and second homes and the longest council housing waiting list in the country. And Sharda's *home* – Webb Place⁴ on Kensington High Street.

Methods

To study Airbnbification across these three spatial scales we adopted a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative geospatial data was obtained from the website 'Inside Airbnb'; researchers have used this before to show how Airbnb affects the spatial dynamics of the city (Cameron, 2000). While using the most updated version of 'Inside Airbnb', we were aware that the data was constantly changing to capture the influx of Airbnb properties: a 'map is never complete ... it is always fluid and contested, deployed in new ways' (Perkins, 2009, p. 2). The geodata was useful for illustrating the spatial and economic growth of Airbnb in London and its impacts. To complement and strengthen this geodata we designed an online questionnaire survey that generated responses from residents across London. The survey was created using the online platform Toluna Quick Surveys and advertised on 'Nextdoor.com'; it was active for 3 weeks and generated 140 responses from residents across London. Questions included whether participants were Airbnb hosts, how long they had lived in London, and what the benefits and problems were of Airbnb in their community.

The online questionnaire was supplemented by 4 (x8) focus groups made up of residents living in Kensington, snowballed off contacts from volunteer work in the borough. Recognising that the everyday can be complex and multifaceted, human geographers use focus groups to uncover the meaning, intentions and emotions of everyday encounters (Conradson & Latham, 2007, p. 128). Open-ended discussion created an interactive dynamic as participants responded to each other's opinions and body language, allowing for new themes to be introduced (Cameron, 2000, p. 87).

In addition to the questionnaire survey and focus groups, residents living in a residential building on Kensington High Street kept diaries on the multitude of ways that Airbnb impacted their everyday lives through everyday rhythms and interactions (see Latham, 2016). The resident diaries were full of emotive and amusing narratives about their Airbnb experiences and were a successful method for understanding the everyday interactions between guests and residents. They enabled us to better understand the material and affective impact of Airbnb and to capture emotive moments that were not always recalled during interviews. Diaries also informed the auto-ethnographic parts of the research as Sharda, her family and neighbours discussed their diary entries and these everyday encounters in informal settings, such as over a cup of tea or having supper. Auto-ethnographies are emerging as a valuable tool for studying experiences of Airbnb (see Roelofsen, 2018a, 2018b; Roelofsen & Minca, 2018; Wilkinson & Wilkinson, 2018); here Sharda, whose family live in one of the flats in the Kensington High Street building, undertook auto-ethnography for a period of 1 year, recording her own daily experiences and encounters with Airbnb in her building/home. While some (eg. Sparkes, 2000; Wall, 2008) have questioned the 'legitimacy of story-as-scholarship' within academic writing, reflecting on her personal experiences allowed Sharda to present additional ideas that pertained to issues in the wider socio-spatial landscape (Lapadat, 2017, p. 589). Auto-ethnographic techniques are growing amongst social geographers (see for example, Kraftl, 2017, on his own childhood experiences). However, auto-ethnographies within gentrification studies are few and far between. Auto-ethnography enables the researcher to engage with the world they are writing about by incorporating storytelling that connects the auto-biographical to socio-cultural and political issues. Not all social scientists are skilled writers, but believing that 'autoethnography is a form of scholarly research' (Wall, 2016, p. 5), Sharda analysed her experiences thematically and theoretically whilst also trying to tell an engaging story (cr. Wall, 2016, p. 3). Auto-ethnography exposed the emotional labour and indirect displacement that Airbnb had inflicted on residents and this complemented the highly personal accounts of the building that residents wrote about in diaries, including the ways in which the social space of the building had been transformed. A combination of auto-ethnography and diaries generated an emotional, rich, and multivoiced account of the building and residents' lives.

The everyday lived experiences of Airbnbification in London

Using the geodata from 'Inside Airbnb' and survey responses from London residents, we were able to identify how hosts invest in multiple Airbnb listings; this means fewer homes for permanent residents and a process of exclusionary displacement. Most of our survey respondents lived in the London boroughs possessing the highest number of Airbnb listings: Southwark, Camden, Tower Hamlets, Hammersmith and Fulham, and Kensington and Chelsea (Portico, 2017). There is a marked correlation with epicentres of gentrification and evidence of it following the newer frontiers into East and South London (see Figure 1).

Despite laws in the capital to regulate Airbnb listings, the statistics in Table 1 demonstrate how landlords and residents exploit the law to manage multiple Airbnb listings as rental properties throughout the year. Sections 44 and 45 of the Deregulation Act (2015) state that 'temporary sleeping accommodation of any residential premises in Greater London' cannot 'exceed ninety nights per year.' The estimated nights that listings are

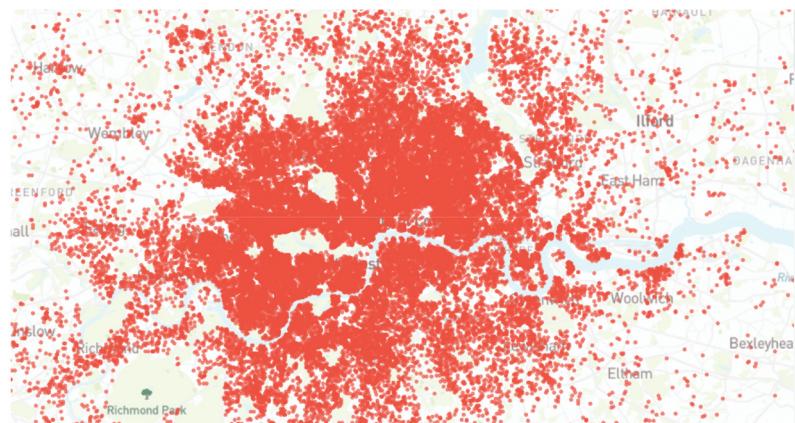


Figure 1. Red dots showing entire homes/apartments on Airbnb in London (InsideAirbnb, 2020).

Table 1. Airbnb data in London (InsideAirbnb, 2020).

	Airbnb listings (total)	Percentage of entire homes/flats listed)	Estimated nights used per year	Estimated occupancy	Estimated income of listings per month	Multi-listings	Availability (high: > 90 days/year)
London	87,235	56%	85	23.2%	£762	49.4%	40.4%
Southwark	4,972	54.1%	92	25.2%	£794	42%	33.7%
Tower Hamlets	8,545	48.1%	92	25.4%	£669	54.9%	38.7%
Camden	6,220	65.4%	104	28.6%	£1,082	59.4%	44.6%
Hammersmith & Fulham	4,281	64.1%	88	24.1%	£867	52.4%	40.2%
Kensington & Chelsea	6,129	79.6%	84	23.1%	£1,156	64.4%	49.1%

used per year as shown in Table 1 reveals that the average Airbnb figures in London surpass these regulations. On average over 49% of Airbnb hosts in London have multiple listings. Providing multiple listings for individual rooms in the same building is a way of bypassing the ninety-night limit. Residents can switch to short-term rental platforms to avoid the law: one resident stated that ‘accommodation is always let out illegally further than 90 days a year with little to no consequence of going over’ (anonymous, survey 2019). Many London residents discussed how the expansion of Airbnb in the city has led to a shortage of houses: ‘there is a decrease in flats available for rent for long term tenants throughout the year’ (anonymous, survey 2019). The geodata, however, does not prove a direct relationship between these factors; other socio-economic and political pressures, such as the activities of the super-rich and the decline of social housing are contributing factors towards the shortage of housing and increase in London rents. Nonetheless, multiple listings that exceed 90 nights are in violation of short-term rental laws aimed to protect residential housing (InsideAirbnb, 2020). The increase in Airbnb investment creates its own exclusionary displacement in London since it is removing homes where permanent residents could potentially live. Landlords potentially make considerable profit from investing in Airbnb: ‘Inside Airbnb’ suggests that in Kensington the estimated income of a listing per month is £1,156 with an occupancy of only 23.1% (InsideAirbnb,

2020). Furthermore, 79.6% of the Airbnb listings in Kensington are entire homes, meaning it is unlikely that these hosts are permanent residents living in the local neighbourhood. Instead, platforms such as Airbnb allow homeowners and tenants to invest in homes as hotels. The transient nature of hotel guests has a detrimental impact on the everyday material experiences of homemaking among London residents.

Responses from the online survey revealed that the large presence of Airbnb in London facilitates transient communities; such communities are associated with more recent forms of gentrification like new-build gentrification (cr. Davidson & Lees, 2005). In contrast to permanent empty homes, short-term rentals means a constant movement of transient people who are not permanently invested in the shared practices and experiences of the community: 'our street was once close knit, people knew each other, and it was a community' (anonymous, survey 2019). This constant renting through Airbnb severely 'undermines and destroys this sense of community' (anonymous, survey 2019). This contrasts markedly with Richards' (2014) assumption that Airbnb guests create shared feelings of cohabitation in the community and a 'local buzz' among tourists and residents (p. 4). Roelofsen (2018a, p. 24) discussed how Airbnb and other sharing economies in Sofia, Bulgaria, have contested the idea of home as an idealised space of authenticity, localness and belonging. She exposed how Airbnb has led to 'un-homing' (Baxter & Brickell, 2014) as residents' experiences are temporarily or permanently destroyed by Airbnb's commodification of home and community. With both residents and guests trying to 'make home' (Roelofsen, 2018a, 35) Airbnb has interrupted or challenged residents idealised, material, and imaginative understanding of home and community, leading to a sense of unbelonging.

In Lisbon, Cocola-Gant and Gago (2019, p. 8) considered how buy-to-let gentrification contributed to increasing insecurity among residents; the 'hyper flexible rental market' of Airbnb creating a constant movement of strangers in small communal spaces. The impact of transitory guests is the disruption of the everyday domestic experiences of the home, disturbed or ignored by the constant movement of people who are not invested in the practices of the building. The issue of rubbish disposal, for instance, was a recurrent theme in our surveys: 'rubbish being dumped on the street' and 'additional waste ... that gets thrown around by vermin' (anonymous, survey 2019). Transient guests have little knowledge of the daily routines of the neighbourhood and the survey data exposed time and again the themes of anti-social behaviour, such as littering, noise pollution and drugs. Some described the constant coming and going of people as 'tiresome', while others alluded to a sense of 'insecurity' and feeling frightened (anonymous, survey 2019). The emotional impact of Airbnb is not knowing who is in the building and how they will behave towards residents or care for their home. Transient community is not only facilitated by guests but also absent tenants and landlords who use property for Airbnb investment and have little or no interest in the wellbeing of residents and the potential socio-cultural impact on the community.

Richards (2014) maintains that since residents create tourist platforms through Airbnb they can introduce guests to the everyday routines and culture of the neighbourhood; the potential disruption then is arguably much less than traditional forms of tourism. Yet many Airbnb hosts were perceived as absentee landlords or tenants detached from the local community: 'the landlord often lives abroad so could not care less who he/she is hiring out to' (anonymous, survey 2019). These distant landlords



Figure 2. The key box for Flat 3, Webb Place.

do not engage with the day-to-day experiences of residents. Their absence is demonstrated by the presence of key boxes outside homes, allowing guests to pick up keys without having to interact with residents. The emergence of boxes all over the city challenges the concept of a shared network. The key box (see [Figure 2](#)) was the first indicator that the tenant in one of the flats in Webb Place, Kensington High Street was illegally subletting the property to Airbnb guests. Key boxes distort the idea of a collaborative society that creates intimate, authentic and meaningful exchanges between host, tourist and tenants ([Arias-Sans & Quaglieri-Domínguez, 2016](#)). Instead, the key box symbolises the constant movement of people, the transience of an



unknown community and arguably a tenant or landlord that is absent for large periods of the year.

Nevertheless, despite the growth of Airbnb in London, there is little evidence of large, citywide resistance to Airbnbisation, such as marches, protests, and the occupation of buildings, in comparison to cities such as Barcelona and Berlin. This, however, fits with the fact that London, unlike New York City, has been late in discussing processes of gentrification publicly and resistance has been slow. Instead, the London residents who responded to our survey discussed legal concerns about tenancy agreements and alluded to ways they were able to pressure Airbnb hosts and local authorities to prevent illegal subletting: 'I told the housing association what he was doing and they ended his tenancy' (anonymous, survey 2019). In a warehouse apartment in South-East London, a concierge acted as 'an Airbnb detective' attempting to find tenants that were illegally subletting. Airbnb guests were given letters by the 'host' stating 'DON'T ASK THE CONCIERGE FOR DIRECTIONS' because he reported Airbnb to the Freeholder (Ariya,⁵ personal communication, 2019). Despite attempts to prevent this illegal subletting through 'airbnbisation', many hosts continued to sublet their homes. Many more residents implied they had little power to regulate or stop Airbnb disruption: 'complaints are pointless as new guests constantly arrive disrupting residents' (anonymous, survey 2019). Although our research found an absence of wide-scale opposition to Airbnb in London, residents alluded to some of the ways they had individually resisted illegal subletting via Airbnb. This was especially apparent in Kensington where empty homes potentially facilitated the expansion of Airbnb and buy-to-let investment.

Experiences of Airbnbification in Kensington

Despite the ongoing gentrification of Kensington, there are many mixed-income, long-term residents living alongside transient Airbnb guests. Airbnb has exacerbated gentrification processes, including loss of communal space and displacement, by turning residential homes into tourist accommodation. Overall, 64.4% of Airbnb hosts in Kensington had multiple listings; the borough also had a higher availability rate than London's average with 49.1% of listings renting out for more than 90 nights a year. Airbnb has contributed to buy-to-let gentrification as it has enabled landlords, developers, and investors to turn many unoccupied homes into profitable, flexible short-term investments (Cocola-Gant & Gago, 2019, p. 2). In 2015, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea produced a report on empty housing. Using council tax registers, energy use data, and land registry records, they concluded that there were 941 unoccupied homes in the borough (see Figure 3). Since 2015 the number of empty homes in Kensington has risen to 1,857 (Lusher, 2017). Empty homes are linked to increasingly unaffordable housing prices, foreign investment, and offshore ownership (see Atkinson, 2020). Comparing the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea data with the map of Airbnb listings in Kensington (Figure 4) we argue that there is a notable correlation between empty homes and Airbnb listings in the borough. For instance, the highest numbers of empty properties in Kensington were in the Hans Town Ward and Courtfield Ward, both of which cover the Airbnb hotspots of Gloucester Road and South Kensington.

Residents living in South Kensington alluded to the connection between Airbnb and empty homes. Nathan (focus group, 2019) stated: 'Kensington has the most empty

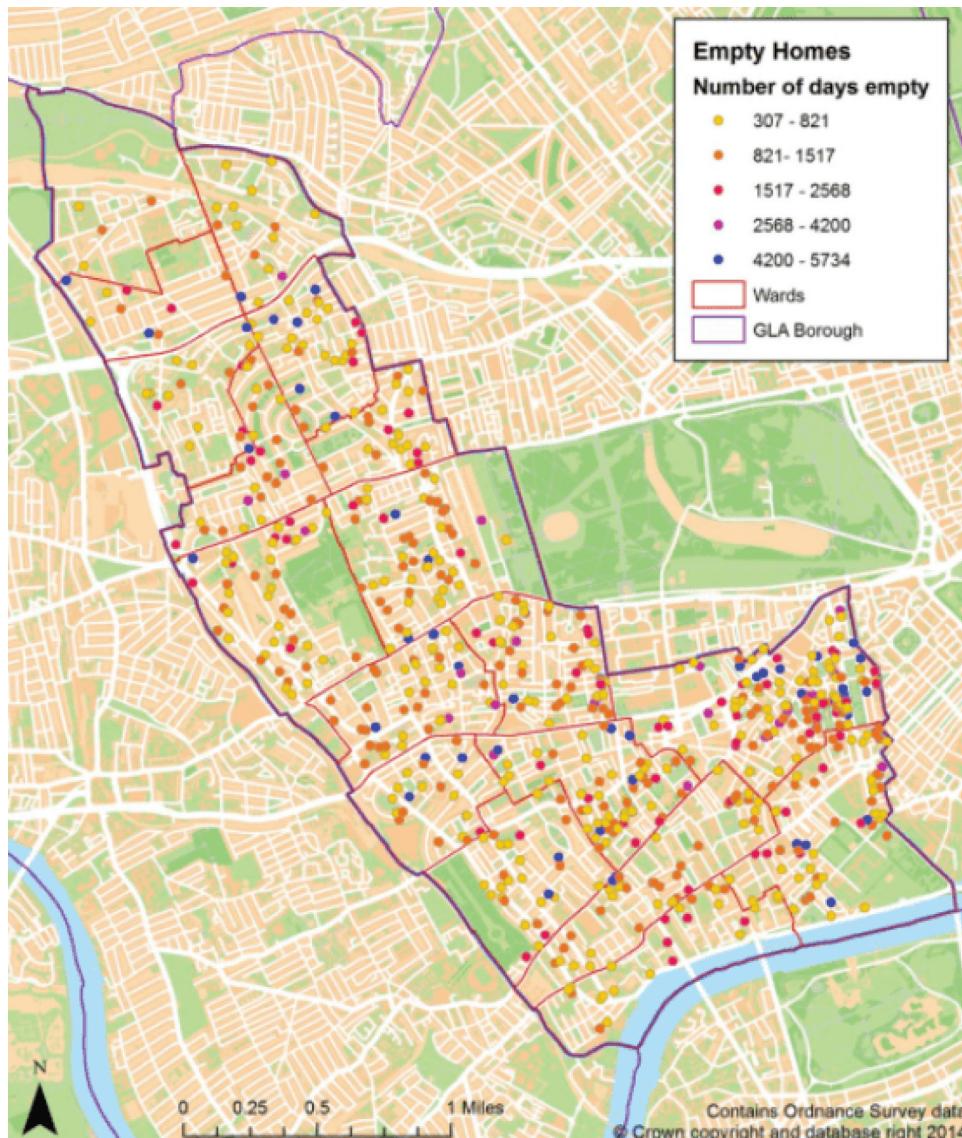


Figure 3. Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea report on empty homes in Kensington (Marshall, 2015).

properties in the country and I suspect that there's a lot of people who would have just left the property empty in some cases are now renting out to Airbnb'. In Nathan's building three of the four apartments had been turned into short-term-rentals throughout the year, demonstrating how a residential building almost became a de facto hotel: 'it's new people in the whole time basically' (Nathan, focus group, 2019). Many Airbnb researchers have exposed ways in which vacant properties and short-term lettings converge (see Crommelin et al., 2018; Gutiérrez et al., 2017). Airbnb continues to drive

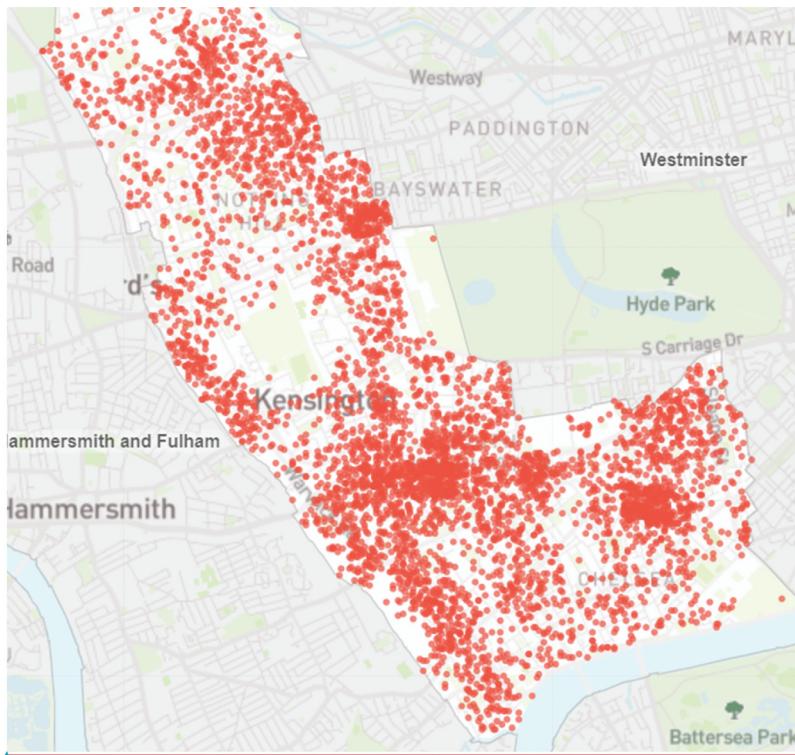


Figure 4. Red dots showing entire homes/apartments as Airbnb listings in Kensington and Chelsea ([InsideAirbnb, 2020](#)).

Kensington's radical transformation from a mixed income residential borough into a tourist landscape with transient visitors and more unoccupied homes. Since Airbnb advocates the 'colonisation of the lifeworld' (Richards, 2014, pp. 14–15), tourists attempt to appropriate the everyday 'authentic' lifestyle' in Kensington. Living among locals is considered an authentic indicator of visiting a 'real city' (Maitland, 2008, p. 16). Alongside being ideal destinations for public transport services into central London, the Airbnb hotspots in South Kensington and Notting Hill are the most popular among tourists as areas of cultural and heritage value. Nathan (focus group, 2019) found that the Airbnb guests in his building were 'real high value tourists going to the museums'. Alongside the tourist desire to live like a local, Kensington is promoted on Airbnb as a super-rich luxurious holiday destination: 'from its redolent gardens to its royal palace, Kensington's storybook elegance permeates the air' (Airbnb, 2019). Kensington's 'opulence doesn't detract from the neighbourhood's inviting nature' and museums that are visited by 'locals and visitors alike' (Airbnb, 2019). Zukin (2010) explored how gentrification involves 'supplying cultural consumption', whereby authenticity is essential for attracting people to an area. Authenticity is also marketed by Airbnb hosts looking for guests seeking the everyday cultural experiences of the neighbourhood. Airbnb, however, challenges the concept of the 'local' and alludes to new ideas of authenticity. In Kensington, these authentic lived experiences are associated with luxury; this is evident in Airbnb's latest

venture offering 'luxury' properties through the online platform 'Airbnb Luxe' (2019). There were five listings for Kensington, including a historic artist's cottage near Kensington Palace for £2,250 a night and a three-bedroom townhouse in Earls Court for £1,100 a night (Airbnb Luxe, 2019). Airbnb Luxe enables the super-rich owners of real estate to temporarily profit from their 'sitting' investment while high-value, super-rich tourists experience the so-called everyday luxury of Kensington. Airbnb in Kensington attracts the elite 'cosmopolitan consuming class' (Fainstein et al., 2003; Arias-Sans & Quaglieri-Domínguez, 2016, p. 220). While wealthy visitors consume and colonise this luxury culture, poorer residents are excluded from these spaces and lifestyles. The influx of visitors with a desire to appropriate the lifeworld of the locals also has a significant impact on community relations and the spaces of encounter among long-term residents and transient guests.

Kensington residents described how they interacted with Airbnb guests in transitional spaces, such as corridors and stairwells. As these communal spaces became appropriated by short-term visitors, items belonging to the 'leisure industry' (Cocola-Gant & Gago, 2019) reserved only for Airbnb guests, were found in staircases and outside entrances to buildings. Abby (focus group, 2019) recalled 'a professional laundry service outside the door', while Mila (focus group, 2019) discussed cleaners leaving the Airbnb apartments. This transformed a familiar residential space into a hotel-like environment, creating a space of exclusivity or 'dual space' (Cocola-Gant & Gago, 2019, p. 24) where Airbnb guests are serviced, whilst long-term tenants are more likely to live in neglected apartments. Steve (focus group, 2019) described how an Airbnb guest had started a flood 'by doing something stupid with a washing machine or pipe and it dripped through'. Steve's attempts to get support from the landlord were futile and despite being a permanent tenant, his needs were ignored: 'they were super reluctant ... "It's not in my flat" and I was like "it's definitely in your flat" [laughs] ... "I can see it coming through the roof" and then I had to call the police' (Steve, focus group, 2019). These experiences of living with Airbnb reveal how residents are forced to adapt to living with the physical destruction that short-term guests can create in the home.

The transience of Airbnb guests has an affective impact on everyday socio-cultural interactions, including the ability to create meaningful home-making practices. Blunt and Dowling (2006, p. 23) considered how home-making practices are essential to how the home is created and understood; the way that the home materially manifests is recreated through everyday routines, practices, and shared experiences with neighbours (p. 23). Abby (focus group, 2019) discussed how Airbnb guests are simply an anomaly because they cannot participate in these meaningful experiences and encounters: 'they are not going to make friends with us, they can't share things. They can't share leaving packages or just a general celebration ...'. Brahinsky (2014) discussed how the commodification of everyday life impacts upon the politics of care for the city and for the community: the 'ethics of genuine sharing' (p. 50). The transitory nature of Airbnb limits these meaningful shared interactions. Tourists can be detached from any meaningful obligation to the community because they are in the area for pleasure rather than to create long-lasting relationships. Blunt and Dowling (2006, p. 23) state that 'people create home through social and emotional relationships', yet the impact of Airbnb is an ongoing insecurity about the absence of reliable and permanent neighbours. Steve (focus group, 2019) stated, 'someone in the building just had a baby and it's just a bit weird that they don't

know who their neighbours are'. Instead, residents discussed encounters that cause feelings of discomfort: 'when they were coming in, they would go to the wrong door' (Abby, focus group, 2019). In Kensington, this flexible Airbnb market with its constant movement of guests has not created a genuine shared inhabitancy between tourists and residents but instead has destroyed community liveability. Drawing on Brickell's (2012) critical geographies of the home, we emphasise that home and community are complex and problematic terms that can have a variety of connotations from safety, protection and familiarity to tension, conflict, loss, and alienation. Home consists of material and imaginative spaces of emotion and belonging (Blunt & Dowling, 2006, 22) and provides both challenging and positive experiences that tell us about the 'micro-geographies' (Brickell, 2012, 227) of how this space is used, performed and contested. While our auto-ethnography and diaries have shown how Airbnb created anxiety and displacement pressures in the building and within the community, it is important to note that residents have experienced many changes in the constantly gentrifying neighbourhood of Kensington. Airbnb (and short-term lets more generally) are one of the many aspects of 'buy to let' and 'buy to leave' gentrification in the borough that contribute to wider displacing effects. This is explored now in more detail with an auto-ethnography that captures the daily struggles with Airbnb in Sharda's family home on Kensington High Street.

Experiences of Airbnbification in Webb place, Kensington High Street

Blunt and Dowling (2006, p. 33) recognise that domestic 'life stories of the home' are a key feature of critical geography, enabling us to understand how the home is experienced by residents: in Webb Place, Kensington High Street, we identify how Airbnb has impacted the daily encounters, routines, and practices of home. Researchers have examined the importance of Airbnb in the geographies of shared-housing (Parkinson et al., 2020) but not in a flatted building, common across Kensington. Webb Place is part of a terraced block built in the late nineteenth century; originally a house with a back garden, it was later converted into five flats above a shop. Statutory tenants in the building have been subject to a 'slow violence' (Kern, 2015; Pain, 2019) that includes building works and other schemes designed to disrupt the daily routine of residents and force them to move from their homes. 'Slow violence' is progressive and plays out over time (Elliot-Cooper et al., 2020); it includes events or actions, such as neglect or harassment, that combined creates anxiety, depression, and frustration, and often leads to indirect or direct displacement. Angelina recorded in her diary (2019) the historical repairs neglected in one of the flats: 'exposed pipes, a faulty kitchen sink, broken sash cord windows and ill-fitting doors that let cold drafts in during the winter.' Flat 3, in Webb Place is the only apartment that is not occupied by a statutory tenant. Sharda watched as Flat 3 was renovated in time for the new tenant with carpets and painted ceilings while the repairs in her flat were completely ignored. Flat 3 was rented out by Grace Lee (not her real name), who advertised the apartment for short-term lets via Airbnb. Lee was a foreign investor with multiple Airbnb properties in London; she never lived in the building. The rent on Airbnb was £195 per night for the large room, £80 per night for the smaller room, and £995 for the entire flat for the week. Lee described the apartment on Airbnb as a 'red brick castle-like building' in 'one of the most sought-after neighbourhoods in London'. In doing so, she used

exclusivity and cultural authenticity to attract wealthy visitors: 'museums, million-pound mansions, grand architecture and exclusive clubs' provide 'a cultural and historical experience'. Building resident Greta (focus group, 2019) described her reaction to this unrealistic description of her long-time home: 'you put effort into this, your home ... you see someone, all it means to them is making some money, uh it does hurt, it jars'. Online reviews detailing the degradation and unsuitability of the building revealed how meaningful place-making experiences of home for the residents were corrupted by the presence of Airbnb. Visitor critiques of a personal and meaningful home space as 'dated and dim' tarnished Sharda's own family experiences of home and place-making in the building. Sharda described reading these reviews as both hurtful and humiliating. The alleyway where her brother taught her to cycle became a transitory vacuum for tourists to pass through without any shared exchanges. Residents have always kept access to their building private, yet detailed instructions on access were published online. This lack of consideration for the security and privacy of residents revealed how a shared 'network' among Airbnb guests and long-term residents was futile. Airbnb allowed personal details to be publicised online, creating real feelings of apprehension and insecurity about the privacy of the home. By exploring these daily encounters of living with Airbnb in Webb Place, it was possible to see a process of everyday, phenomenological displacement that goes beyond spatial dislocation (Cocola-Gant & Gago, 2019, p. 24).

The destruction of social networks and the socio-cultural transformation of the neighbourhood creates displacement pressures for residents. While residents in Webb Place had not experienced direct displacement (yet), they did suffer from exclusionary displacement as more houses along the alleyway were let out as short-term accommodation. Greta (diary, 2019) stated, 'you don't know how to say hello to people anymore, that takes away your community and your sense of autonomy about where you live so you don't have a sense that you belong in the same way'. Airbnb-led investment can lead to exclusionary displacement as low-income tenants become financially and socially excluded from an increasingly touristic neighbourhood, the impact of Airbnb, however, goes beyond direct displacement (Cocola-Gant & Gago, 2019, 9). The everyday material disruptions caused by transient guests, including noise and security issues, left residents feeling pressured to move away from their neighbourhood. Exploring landlord negligence and increasing rents for Polish tenants in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, Stabrowski (2014, p. 794) maintained that exclusionary displacement is 'experienced through the production of new spaces of prohibition, appropriation and insecurity that constitute a form of neighbourhood erasure'. A similar process of displacement was caused by the material and affective disruption of Airbnb in Webb Place. Greta (focus group, 2019) questioned her permanence in this transient neighbourhood of tourists: 'why are you there when everyone else is there in a different way?'. Indirect displacement was expressed through the loss of autonomy over one's home and in the inability to make long-lasting and sincere relationships with other tenants. Angelina (diary, 2019), for example, confronted Grace Lee on the stairs during one of her infrequent inspections of Flat 3: 'she rents the flat and can do as she likes with it. I offer my hand in an extension of friendship and understanding. It seems pretty hopeless'. This frustration directed at the lack of meaningful encounters in the home resulted in the inability to 'make places' (Stabrowski, 2014, p. 800). The material and affective impact of Airbnb in Webb Place contributed to both indirect displacement, and in Sharda's own situation, a temporary direct displacement

from her home as the noise created from Airbnb guests using the building for all-night parties forced her to find elsewhere to sleep. Displacement is not simply a physical consequence of gentrification; geographers should consider how displacement is an ongoing experience felt in the 'lived spaces' of the home and community (Stabrowski, 2014, p. 796). Statutory tenants in Webb Place, Kensington High Street had little autonomy in the gentrification occurring in their building; likewise, they had no agency over Airbnb, which enhanced their feelings of insecurity and socio-spatial disruption that contributed towards indirect displacement. However, the daily resilience to Airbnb through writing notes became a way of taking ownership of the situation and dealing with both the physical and emotional impact of Airbnb.

Looking specifically at gentrification, Lees et al. (2018 p. 350) argue that the individual can be overshadowed by a focus on large, organised forms of resistance, yet individual everyday resistance is essential for survivability (cr. Chatterton & Heynen, 2011). Small-scale resistance and survivability were evident in Webb Place through the practice of writing and delivering notes. Despite letters of complaints from residents, the landlord waited many months before acting on the illegal subletting of Flat 3 on Airbnb. Residents, however, found ordinary, everyday ways to challenge the disruption. Confronting Grace Lee resulted in anxiety and infuriation. She responded with defensive statements 'this is not an Airbnb!' alongside accusations: 'I was going to live here after Christmas, but you have made my life miserable' (Grace Lee, personal communication 2019). Fleeting confrontations with the host were unsuccessful in preventing Airbnb in Flat 3; instead, the tenants targeted guests by writing and delivering notes. This became a comfortable method for communicating with transient visitors, making them aware of the injustices caused by Airbnb and how it negatively transformed their everyday lives. The tenants wrote notes at 2am in response to loud conversations, thundering footsteps or suitcases banging up the stairs. Angelina (diary, 2019) recalled the night of December 5th/6th:

'Couple arrive at 1.00AM

Crashing up the stairs. Within minutes they embarked upon lengthy, loud, crying out sex sessions. We send notes and bang with a big bamboo pole. Met the guy coming in with breakfast in the morning. Tell him ... says he leaves today.'

Figure 5, written by Angelina on behalf of all tenants in the building, and her retaliatory noise displays frustration, but also how tenants used humour in language and action to manage a situation that was disrupting their everyday lives. The Airbnb guests never personally responded; they may have been alarmed and slightly afraid by blunt accusations or emotional appeals. There could also have been a language barrier between tenants and global tourists. Angelina's notes reveal the affective impact of Airbnb; she emphasises how she (and Sharda) had been 'forced to move out' and repeated that it was 'impossible to sleep', 'impacting our health' (diary, 2019). Delivering notes meant quickly running up the communal stairs and pushing them under the door. This was always an unnerving experience and made Sharda consider the security issues of having strangers in a small communal space. However, writing notes arguably also meant fewer visitors left positive reviews on the Airbnb website or returned to the flat, thereby affecting Grace Lee's Airbnb business venture. Similarly note-taking, while an exhausting form of

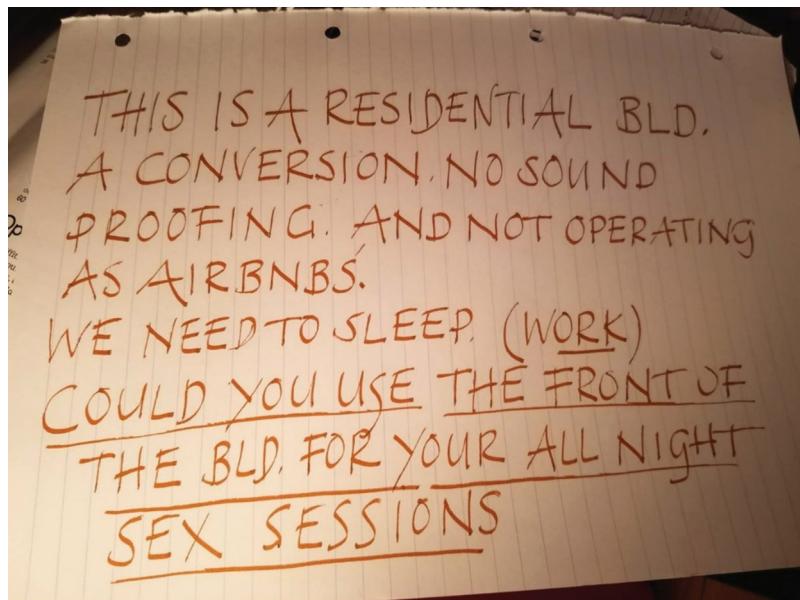


Figure 5. A note left to Flat 3 at 2am in the morning.

resistance, was necessary for releasing tenant frustration and taking ownership over the building in response to the constant disruption of Airbnb.

By way of contrast, Sanjeev (diary, 2019) welcomed visitors, offering them assistance: '4/6 people who have just flown in and arrive at 12.30–1pm with many heavy suitcases dragged up the stairs. They don't know where the flat is so try fitting the key into flat 2. I showed them up to flat 3. Welcomed them in'. In this case there was also an attitude of acceptance towards the appropriation of the home since little could be done to prevent the intrusion of Airbnb. Sanjeev (diary, 2019) said that, unable to stop the situation, he may as well embrace it: 'maybe I should do Airbnb!' Writing notes to guests, conversely, enabled Sharda and Angelina to have some agency in a process that, similarly to gentrification, had engulfed their building and homes. As Lees et al. (2018 p. 322) assert: 'survivability reflects the ability of threatened people to act on their agency'. Occasionally when a note was sent, and the noise stopped Sharda knew that their methods had worked.

Conclusion

The impacts of Airbnb on the socio-cultural landscape are many, and are often negative: touristification, transient communities, buy-to-let investment, and in/direct displacement. Although an increasingly popular research topic, more research needs to explore the impact of short-term rentals on the daily lives of long-term residents. We have begun by focusing on the intimate, ordinary, and domestic lived experiences of Airbnb in a home, neighbourhood, and city; highlighting further the ways in which Airbnb has supported gentrification. Like Freytag and Bauder (2018), we show how Airbnb profits from gentrification as tourists seek wealthier (gentrified) neighbourhoods with high cultural value.



A more detailed examination of Airbnb 'landlords' in London is needed to further examine this relationship. In addition, more detailed geodata concerning Airbnb and unoccupied homes could facilitate further exploration of the socio-economic motivations of Airbnb alongside statistical analysis of the relationship between rising rents and Airbnb occupation in London.

The geodata and online survey responses show that Airbnb in London has facilitated a process of buy-to-let investment. The potential profit and flexibility of short-term lets, and number of entire properties rented on the site reveals how people can and *do* use Airbnb as a form of housing investment. Similar to the impact of gentrification, Airbnb can contribute to exclusionary displacement as fewer homes are available for long-term residents. The impact of this flexible, short-term rental market on existing residents is the disruption of the everyday domestic and material experiences of home. Transient visitors are not invested in shared practices, and as discussed, issues with rubbish disposal, anti-social behaviour and housing security were frequently mentioned by residents. Absent landlords and tenants reinforced the transitoriness of neighbourhoods in London already affected by gentrification, the effects on residents being the daily anxiety about strangers in their building. In Kensington Airbnb was seen by residents as contributing to the ongoing housing shortages in the wider borough, and indeed in London as a whole. Transitory spaces, including stairs and hallways, were the main spaces of encounter between guests and residents. Fleeting visitors diminished meaningful socio-cultural interactions and raised concerns about security. We also considered authenticity in this colonisation of the lifeworld, and how Kensington is promoted on Airbnb as an exclusive neighbourhood of luxurious consumer culture to attract wealthy transnational visitors; this appropriation of the neighbourhood was met with frustration.

In Webb Place, Airbnb infiltrated the home as short-term visitors used the space as hotel accommodation. Resident diaries and Sharda's auto-ethnography revealed the extent to which Airbnb impacted statutory tenants' everyday experiences of home and place-making. Daily concerns with noise, building security and confrontations between the Airbnb 'host' and residents contributed to indirect displacement as residents felt incapable of preventing this disruption in their home. The indirect displacements experienced underline the relationship between the impact of Airbnb and gentrification. Finally, we considered the ways in which permanent residents practiced survivability in the form of writing and delivering notes. Research looking at resistance to Airbnb has tended to focus on city-wide campaigns; here we highlight the importance of small-scale acts of survivability that provided tenants with some agency and control. Writing notes helped tenants to express their frustrations or even laugh when faced with challenging situations. In our evaluation of the impacts of Airbnb on London, Kensington, and Webb Place, we found zero shared inhabitancy between the Airbnb tourists and the tenants, rather homes were turned into hotels, disrupting place-making activities and residents' everyday well-being. The enduring impact of Airbnb on the everyday lived experiences of long-term residents is ultimately the absence of a genuine, shared, and permanent neighbourhood – in sum-airbnbification.

Notes

1. A statutory tenancy signed before the 1977 Eviction Act provides protection from eviction and regulated rent control.
2. www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-18394017.
3. Many empty homes never get converted because the 1% see no need (see DeVerteuil and Manley 2017 who distinguish between 'pied-a-terre' urbanism and gentrification), but they may get let out on Airbnb.
4. Fictional Name.
5. All names are pseudonyms.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to all the participants who responded to the research with their insightful discussions and observations.

Disclosure of potential conflicts of interest

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This work was supported by the Economic and Social Research Council

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