Fountayne Road community now and after 5 years: who will be left
Essay and visual representation by Kaddy Jatta

Walking down Fountayne Road with a friend we met a group of the community members hanging out in front of their unit, enjoying the warm and sunny day. The brownies I baked as an exchange currency for data turned out to be an excellent conversation opener, but even without them I was struck by the kindness and openness that people showed towards my work. We stayed there for the afternoon and talked with people, some who sat there with us the whole time and with some who passed by quickly but still managed to give some insight.

Some hypotheses about the research yet to be conducted turned out to be true. One of them being that creatives who decide to live in warehouse districts such as Fountayne Road, do feel that the communities are contributing to their creative careers either because of the space, being able to combine studio spaces to living arrangements, or because of the collaboration possibilities among the people and other creatives. This hypothesis is based on my own and my housemates' experiences and reasons why we, as young creatives, have decided and enjoy living in a warehouse.

With a fashion designer and artist who I chatted with, we got into an interesting conversation about some projects where external companies have built studio spaces to the area (the person did not recall any names), used community-washing with advertising them, and then ended up prizing the spaces way above the community members budgets. Projects like this are the exact ones that eventually break the communities and force artists and people to move somewhere else, more affordable. It is important to communicate these disappointments towards projects in the past on the behalf of the community and to really think about which one is overall more important: preserving London's creative and unique communities such as this or financial profit.

The collective mindset towards a bright future of Fountayne Road as the creative community as we know it is skeptical amongst the Fountayne Roaders. I asked the community members if they see themselves living on Fountayne Road in 5 years' time. The age bracket of the people interviewed was from 20-34 years. These are some of the responses collected:

“I don’t think that Fountayne Road will be here in 5 years. The rent prices are going higher and higher. A couple of years back you were able to rent here for 200 pounds a month! The only thing holding the change of the neighborhood back into something that we cannot afford anymore is O’Donovan because due to them the air quality is so bad.” - Resident of Fountayne Road for 6 years (34, builder)

“If I keep living my life like this, I won’t be alive in 5 years haha! Maybe if I lived in a quieter warehouse around here it would be more sustainable. In 5 years, I wish to have a proper career as a musician.” - Resident of Fountayne Road for 3-4 months (20, musician)

“It depends how everything goes with the urban development around here. I am a creative freelancer and an artist, and I have been living here for the past 5 years. Right now, I have a studio space in my home, which I could not afford separately.” - Resident of Fountayne Road for 5 years (30, artist and fashion designer)

“Well, I wish not to be living in the country in 5 years.” - Resident of Fountayne Road for 4-5 months (24, care worker)

Based on these conversations the community seems to be very aware of the potential that Tottenham Hale and the surrounding areas have regarding the existing infrastructure. This infrastructure would for example include the Victoria Line, surrounding cafés and the retail park, green spaces such as the marshes, the canal, and Markfield park. The saddening thing is though that the community seems to view that the development of this infrastructure and future projects is directed to someone else’s needs rather than to theirs. Community members seem to think that the goal of these development ideas and new spaces are to increase financial profit of the landlords and companies, which would mean the rise of the rent prices following that a creative community like Fountayne Road, where people seem to value creation, self-expression and togetherness over big income, would eventually vanish.









