

## CUCR: My Spiritual And Intellectual Home

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credit :Petra Rainer

I did not talk about how I feel about CUCR during my presentation at its [30th anniversary in May 2024](#). The event had already started very emotionally with many, including me, holding back tears. Had I added my own declaration of love for CUCR, I would most certainly have started crying in front of the audience. I thought I could describe how I feel about CUCR in this postcard instead.

I came upon CUCR through joining the [Crossing Lines](#) urban photography group in 2010, which was a newly established collaboration between CUCR and [MA Photography and Urban Cultures](#) (PUC), and [London Independent Photography](#), of which I was a member. I immediately felt a connection, a kind of homecoming, a place and community where my ideas on photography and urban life and my socially-engaged and research-informed photographic practice felt validated, valued and understood. CUCR also published an article I wrote about my [Deptford High Street](#) project in its journal *Street Signs* (2012/2013), which was still being printed at the time. This felt really encouraging. Wanting to engage further with the theories around photography and urban cultures, I signed up for the MA PUC in 2013 as a part-time student.

The MA was an incredibly supportive, intellectually stimulating and enriching learning experience. I found the language through which to articulate my photographic and research practice, and the shared dialogue with people on the course, the CUCR community and members of *Crossing Lines* instilled in me a profound sense of belonging. When I graduated, I actually cried; the thought of leaving this critical, creative and supportive research environment

too painful. I couldn't get the dissertation feedback out of my head: that I should consider pursuing a PhD in (Visual) Sociology.

It's 2024 and I have finished my AHRC-funded PhD. I find myself tearful again at the thought of leaving CUCR when my Graduate School Fellowship runs out in 2025. The thought of CUCR possibly ceasing to exist together with teaching staff facing potential redundancy due to the horrid "Transformation Programme" is unbearable. As with the MA, my PhD journey was an immensely stimulating and enriching learning experience which went way beyond my PhD project [Deptford is Changing](#) and its [book launch](#) (hosted by CUCR) and my [thesis](#). I engaged in many activities supported by CUCR, from co-organising conferences on [Urban Photography](#) and [Walking](#) to writing many articles for [Street Signs](#), the CUCR blog, and participating in [events](#), [projects](#) and [exhibitions](#). All these activities helped me shape my ideas on many things but particularly on participatory and creative research methods, socially-engaged photography, urban regeneration, community arts and activism and walking as a research method. The CUCR – my supervisors, Goldsmiths Sociology teaching staff and fellow students – has been a community of spiritual and intellectual solidarity, a space where I and my ideas can thrive and where I have formed beautiful academic and personal friendships. It has been a home where I feel I belong.

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