

**Gentrification: A Working-Class Perspective.** Kirsteen Paton. 2014. Farnham/Burlington: Ashgate. 223 pages. £70.00. ISBN 9781472418524.

*Gentrification: A Working-Class Perspective* is a compelling and empirically rich account of processes of gentrification and urban regeneration in Partick, Glasgow. Paton's account focuses on the surprisingly under-researched working-class perspective and experiences of urban gentrification. Dismissing the claims of scholars such as Giddens (1998) and Pakulski and Waters (1996) that class is materially and ontologically irrelevant in the post-industrial era, Paton utilises a framework of hegemony, set out in detail in Chapter 1, to explore the production of class in the contemporary neoliberal era. Paton argues that, unlike Foucauldian approaches to governance theory, hegemonic understandings of gentrification processes bring together the social and cultural aspects of governance structures with the material and economic, stating that 'hegemony offers sociological insight into the relationship between capitalist dynamics and social conditions' (p.56). The remainder of the book explores these critical ideas via an ethnography of the Partick neighbourhood. Paton's case-study approach adeptly highlights the place-based nature of gentrification processes and class identity. Whilst many of her participants did not identify directly with being working-class, they simultaneously 'knew their place', and identified themselves as being distinct from middle-class 'incomers'. This is explored in particular in Chapter 2, where Paton suggests that her participants' rejection of 'working class' as an identity category is a classed act in and of itself, as working-class residents seek to detach themselves from negative connotations and frame themselves within neoliberal economic structures.

Chapter 3 extends the discussion of the interconnections between class and place, highlighting that although residents 'born and bred' in Partick were more likely to feel a stronger sense of fixity and attachment to the neighbourhood, agency over their own mobility was a crucial factor in defining residents' relationship with Partick. Participants tended to feel more positively about 'belonging' to Partick if they knew they had the means to leave. As Paton notes, 'Mobility and fixity are both, simultaneously, positional goods; it is the control

over commanding each of these that differentiates' (p.122). Residents' accounts of their relationship with Partick acted as 'a proxy for class' (p.121), with both their connection to and ability to leave the neighbourhood defining their class status.

Chapters 4 and 5 explore constructions of class through a neoliberal hegemonic framework, focusing on the relationship between Partick's working-class residents and the gentrification and regeneration processes taking place in the area. Chapter 4 traces these relationships through three examples of regeneration projects. The first, a planned Tesco supermarket development, resulted in an anti-gentrification campaign calling for a scaling down of the plans. However, this campaign was led by middle-class residents, who were primarily campaigning against the development due to it potentially reducing the value of their properties. Paton argues that this is a form of anti-gentrification firmly grounded in neoliberal hegemonic practices, as residents were resisting as consumer citizens, concerned that they would lose valuable economic capital. Working-class voices were obstructed from this campaign by its organisers; only resistance concerned with preserving capital was deemed appropriate.

Paton's second example traces the redevelopment of a local park, funded in part by the prominent housing association in the area. Paton's account of her interactions with housing association staff and policy documents reveals consultation frameworks that invite input on the redevelopment, whilst simultaneously being highly dismissive of any suggested usages that did not facilitate the park becoming a profit-making space. Although working-class residents are invited to participate in the gentrification process, they are only able to do so via an adherence to an understanding of Partick as a financialised and profitable space.

However, Paton also discussed an instance of a similar regeneration project in another local park, whereby working-class residents had structured themselves as a campaign group similar to the middle-class anti-Tesco group, framing themselves within a neoliberal consumer framework and expressing an interest in the park as a profitable site. This allowed them to eventually negotiate for control over a large portion of the regeneration budget.

Thus, working-class residents adapted neoliberal consumer citizen behaviours in order to obtain some control over gentrification.

Paton's third example, the redevelopment of an old granary site into luxury flats (known as the Harbour), perhaps the most classic example of a regeneration project, was also utilised by working-class residents in subversive ways. One resident told Paton that she had visited the complex with friends, disguising alcohol (forbidden in the public areas of the Harbour) in soft drink bottles in order to participate in and enjoy the area without revealing herself to be 'deviant', or Other. Another participant had been placed in the complex by the council, who were using some of the unsold flats as temporary social housing.

The final chapter builds upon this, exploring how;

'...gentrification *simultaneously* excludes and includes working-class residents, demonstrating what Young (2007) calls a bulimic society. State-led gentrification invites all to participate, knowing full well that many working-class citizens do not have the means to do so: this is its paradox' (p.155).

Paton argues that the issues at the heart of the gentrification paradox, and the limitations on working-class residents' ability to participate, are material, rather than essential; that 'the most meaningful difference between working-class and middle-class residents is a material one' (p. 156); and that ultimately it is lack of economic capital that reduces working-class access to social capital and limits control in negotiating gentrification. Limited economic capital leaves working-class residents 'unable to realise consumer citizenship or fixity to place', meaning that 'such residents cannot successfully fulfil the neoliberal identity narrative around consumption' (p.156). Chapter 5 concludes by highlighting that working-class residents' positionality as flawed consumers, unable to fully engage with neoliberal hegemonic practices, ultimately leaves them exposed to displacement, with Paton listing four key forms. 'Perverse displacement' occurs as housing associations neoliberalise and focus on building sellable homes for profit, rather than a commitment to social housing. 'Latent generational displacement' refers to the phenomenon whereby the young can no longer afford to live in the areas they grew up in. 'Strategic displacement' occurs when housing

associations remove local connections criteria from housing waiting lists. Finally, Paton highlights 'spiralling displacement', whereby displacement from a gentrified area leads to displacement in poorer neighbouring communities (for example, displaced Partick residents moving to the poorer Ibrox neighbourhood), forming something of a domino effect.

Paton's account of the lived experiences of gentrification from the working-class perspective is an excellent and thought-provoking one. One slight criticism lies in her discussion of agency. Although Paton does highlight the ways in which working-class residents utilise gentrification and in turn exert some control over it, rather than always being the victims of the process, this to me unfortunately felt limited. Whilst it is undoubtedly important to ensure that the varying relationships working-class residents have with gentrification processes are explored, I would caution that it is more important to highlight the prevalence of the negative impacts these processes have on those without the means or want to participate in the neoliberal hegemony.

Overall, *Gentrification: A Working-Class Perspective* provides a valuable contribution to gentrification and regeneration literature, exposing the concerning lack of voice given to the working-class experience. Paton's emphasis on the material nature of exclusion is also a valuable point that has been somewhat overlooked as an integral element of displacement, closely tied to limited social capital and the construction of the working-class as flawed consumers, the archetypal Other in neoliberal governance structures.

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### **References**

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