

The Ethopolitics of Housing Habitus: Exploring the Power Dynamic of Mixed Communities and Urban Renewal Projects

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ABSTRACT

This paper uses Rose's concept of 'ethopolitics' to explore the use of various technologies of governance involved in neighbourhood regeneration and housing policies. Specifically, it explores the emerging power dynamics underpinning two distinct but inter-related housing issues of mixed community development and gentrification.

Gentrification represents both a process and strategy which involves the re-construction of space for progressively more affluent users; mixed communities represent an idealised policy outcome which seeks to ameliorate problems of social, economic and spatial segregation through the intentional diversification of house and tenure types by means of planned communities.

Crucially what both these processes represent is not just physical renewal, but a more subtle but nonetheless pervasive power dynamic that seeks to realign citizen's aspirations towards individualisation and responsabilisation (Gough 2002; Keil 2002).

Using ethopolitics as a lens, it will examine how habitus has influenced and in turn been influenced by local housing policies and discourses which have been used to problematise social housing tenures and legitimise certain consumption practices, especially in the form of gentrified owner-occupation and mixed communities. This paper argues that in many cases, these forms of renewal act to reinforce market-driven consumerist hegemony while simultaneously pathologising those who are unwilling or unable to participate fully within the system. Ultimately, there is a danger that these processes may serve to depoliticise social reproduction and disguise the structural causes of poverty and deprivation.

Key Words: mixed communities, regeneration