

Soft-Selling Gentrification?

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines what happens when many of the fine-sounding concepts and phrases used to promote regeneration are applied on the ground. Through the example of housing regeneration in Dundee, it looks at what concepts such as 'low demand' and 'mixed tenure' can really mean for those living in the target areas, and especially at the reality of 'community consultation'.

The empirical core of the paper will be based on participant-action-research carried out with tenants in two areas of Dundee where multi-storey housing is scheduled for demolition. As part of the demolition process the city council carried out rapid consultative ballots in the buildings concerned. Subsequently, housing activists and tenants carried out their own much more detailed survey, which demonstrated fundamental flaws in the official consultation - and has been almost totally ignored. This empirical work is combined with a critical analysis of council processes and documents (including a crucial housing finance report that was only released to us after appeal under the Freedom of Information legislation), and reports in the local media.

The paper will attempt to look not only at who really benefits from this type of development, but also at the reasons for and impact of the rhetoric that surrounds it. How has this affected public debate, including within the academy, and what are the implications for the democratic process?

This ongoing research is part of a wider comparative study of housing and neo-liberalism that grew out of the sessions on Housing in Crisis that I co-convened at last year's Institute of British Geographers' Conference.

Key Words: regeneration, housing, community consultation