

Appendix 4.2. Professor Loretta Lees

Transcribed lecture on gentrification

So, gentrification, this thing, it's not just this borough, this city, this country, it's happening all over the world and the thing everybody neglects to talk about is where do the people go that get displaced, bottom line, where do they go? Now the types of gentrification that are affecting London area varied as we all know. So, we've got for example the super gentrification by the super-rich, we have got 'hipsterfication' as people are calling it, by creative types.

Nadia's speech (Track 2) comes in at this point: so that they are sometimes simultaneous and other times solo as they weave together in a soundscape.

The gentrification I think is most critical and most important at the moment is the gentrification of council estates. Why, why do I think this is the most important gentrification going on at the moment? Because I think that council estates are one of the last barriers to almost complete gentrification of inner London and once they've gone we've lost its gone. So gentrification then as a process obviously has mutated over time, when Ruth Glass was talking about gentrification in 1964 it was a very different process to today. Gentrification, as Spike Lee has said, has become a global brand, it has gone from what I want to call 'conspicuous thrift' to 'conspicuous consumption'. But the branding, the branding has become really important, so for example the East Village in New York city is a big brand, it's a big brand for gentrification. We've now got if you go to the Olympic site E20, we now have our own East Village in London, OK, with re-development of the Olympic Village. Gentrification has become this very broad process of social and economic change and what's happening is that the kind of white collar, middle class consumption habits, are kind infiltrating and kind of expanding around our cities and pushing out anything else and its causing a kind of, I guess, a kind of economic, but also a kind of cultural barrier between rich and poor and I think both of those, the economic and the cultural, are really important.

Governments knowing it's a dirty word have used neutral labels so labels like Urban Regeneration, Urban Renaissance, Urban Redevelopment, but also new labels that have this kind of liberal moral discourse attached to them: 'Mixed Communities' policy and the one we all know about, Urban Sustainability. And, also, another one the kind of economically feel good term the Creative City, the Creative City, the Creative City, the Creative City. Now of course what they all have in common is that they're programmes of gentrification but there hidden.

They soft pedal programmes of gentrification and they're marketed in a very particular way, so what's happened here is a kind of marketing of class change that's of positive process for cities - London, New York, but also cities Worldwide now - that have a series of what they call trickle down affects. So what they do is kind of put forward this false proposition that somehow if people mix in the neighbourhood, rich and poor, low income and high income, there will be some kind of trickledown effect where all social and cultural capital, the education, the aspirations, the manners, the behaviour, of the middle classes will somehow dribble down, percolate down to the poor. Now of course this is a false proposition. But I think the key point here is that gentrification is not a boost for everyone, despite the rhetoric, despite the propaganda. The overwhelming evidence from over now fifty years of academic and policy research on gentrification is that overall it's a negative, not a positive thing.

What happens to the people where do they go? Quite simply, when council estates are redeveloped as mixed income communities, when the middle classes are about to move in, the lower classes are moved out, they're displaced. So, what you get is not social mixing, you don't get this kind of filtering process, what you get is gentrification and social segregation. So, you actually get the opposite of what these policies are sold as. London needs to wake up to what's happening here, but more importantly we need to wake up to what the alternatives are, because this social cleansing is escalating, because this social cleansing is escalating, because this social cleansing is escalating, because this: