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▶ **To cite this version:**

Gary Bridge, Tim Butler, Patrick Le Galès. Power Relations and Social Mix in Metropolitan Neighbourhoods in North America and Europe: Moving Beyond Gentrification?. International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 2014, 38 (4), pp.1133 - 1141. 10.1111/1468-2427.12125 . hal-02099971

HAL Id: hal-02099971

https://sciencespo.hal.science/hal-02099971

Submitted on 15 Apr 2019

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International Journal of
Urban and Regional Research

Volume 38.4 July 2014 1133–41 International Journal of Urban and Regional Research
DOI:10.1111/1468-2427.12125

SYMPOSIUM

Power Relations and Social Mix in Metropolitan Neighbourhoods in North America and Europe: Moving Beyond Gentrification?

GARY BRIDGE, TIM BUTLER and PATRICK LE GALÈS

Abstract

Research on spatial segregation has suggested that social mix may be a temporary phase in class displacement, where relations between different groups are at best divided or 'tectonic', for instance in England. Political and policy discourses, by contrast, tend to uncritically valorize social mix as a means to breaking up concentrations of poverty and providing neighbourhoods with a middle-class voice. In the literature, little attention has been paid to power dynamics in socially mixed neighbourhoods and the implications this may have for understanding theory and policy. The five articles that make up this symposium address the ways in which social and ethnic groups interact in major cities in Europe and North America and, as the title suggests, this involves taking into account power relations, domination and negotiation between the different groups. There is a need to connect the experience of the deployment of power within neighbourhoods (and between them) with the discussions of power mechanisms at work in wider urban processes.

Introduction

The articles presented in this symposium specifically aim to show relatively sophisticated social and spatial processes at work within different types of neighbourhood and cities in ways that are not always captured either by the language of social mix, particularly when it is instrumentalized in the policy debate (Bridge *et al*., 2011) or gentrification research (Lees *et al*., 2011).

'Social mix' is an old story and traces might be found in ancient Rome, nineteenth-century metropolises and welfare-state cities in northern Europe. Processes of social mixing are as old as those of social segregation. The dangerous neighbourhoods or

The articles in this symposium are drawn from a large and popular strand at a 2011 conference in Amsterdam, 'The Struggle to Belong: Dealing with Diversity in 21st-Century Urban Settings', organized by the University of Amsterdam for the Research Committee 21 (Urban and Regional Research), of the International Sociological Association. We are particularly grateful to Claire Colomb, Yuri Kazepov, Jan Duyvendak and colleagues from the Centre of Urban Studies for organizing the conference.

margins of cities have always been a concern for urban elites who are pushing them out — eradication, laissez-faire, isolation and social mix being among the various policy responses that have been developed at different times in different contexts.

Social mix has become a policy imperative over recent decades, its aspiration being to end the existence of the kind of single-class poor neighbourhoods that emerged from the building boom of what was essentially working-class public housing in the postwar decades, as well as to deal with increasing ethnic diversity in such neighbourhoods. With the onset of deindustrialization and its associated social and economic restructuring, as well as the loss of employment in key labour markets, such housing rapidly became perceived as a social problem through its concentration of deprivation and diverse ethnic groups in the United States and, to a lesser extent, in Europe. Social-mix policy emerged in a different context. The argument could be summarized as follows: the more severe the pattern of inequality, the less developed the social housing sector, the more radical the expectations about social-mix policy. In northern Europe, social mix was deeply rooted in welfare policies to limit inequalities, for example, by including social housing in bourgeois areas. Another way to address the issue of inequality or concentration of deprivation was to make social housing available to the lower middle as well as the working class.

In the United States, social-mix policy was posed as a solution to an emergent 'underclass' and as a way of breaking up the social homogeneity and disconnection of such neighbourhoods from the rest of the city by bringing in middle-class residents on the assumption that their political voice and social connections would act as a form of advocacy in such neighbourhoods or housing estates. The US HOPE VI programme was a prime example of this; here the physical structures of mass housing were demolished, their inhabitants dispersed and new (middle-class) incomers were encouraged to resettle in the rebuilt mixed-tenure neighbourhoods. However, the research base upon which this policy was conceived and implemented was sparse and evidence about its outcomes even slimmer. There have been similar experiences of urban renovation in European countries, in particular the massive French urban renovation programme (Epstein, 2013) and the UK's New Deal for Communities (Imrie and Raco, 2003).

Many commentators have focused on the privileging of the middle class through this policy — social mix often involved bringing the middle class into deprived communities. Such critics have argued that what might have been intended as urban regeneration has inevitably and invariably become gentrification, a process in which a more powerful class has spatially and socially usurped a less powerful one in terms of access to urban space and assets.

We are aware that the language of social mix is fraught with difficulties. However, in many large, highly diverse cities some form of social mix is the most common situation in most neighbourhoods (and not the outcome of social-mix policy). Strict enclaves or ghettoes of rich, poor, ethnic or religious groups are relatively rare. The rise of super-diversity in cities (Vertovec, 2007) at the same time leads to more and more social mix and strategies limiting social mix. In most metropolises, all kinds of mobilities and interactions take place among strangers who are often from different social and/or ethnic groups. Beyond structural measures or interpretations of inequality and difference, there are a variety of interactions, which are more or less controlled and imagined and felt in different ways. The ways in which power operates and social mix is negotiated in these settings might be instructive for examining the assumptions upon which mixed community policy is based. It provides critical evidence of the dynamics of socially mixed neighbourhoods in practice. Equally, such evidence informs thinking on gentrification processes. Little attention has been given to social mix in gentrification research, either because it is seen as a temporary phase in the wholesale class transformation of a neighbourhood, or because it is assumed to be analytically insignificant given the dominant class position of the gentrifiers over working-class and poorer residents.

Nevertheless there are many neighbourhoods that have sustained social mix, either because of their location relative to changing labour markets or because of tenure mix or different dwelling types, or what might be called 'slow-burn' gentrification. Equally,

sociological work on the middle classes in cities in England (Butler, with Robson, 2003; Savage *et al*., 2005; Bridge, 2006; Butler and Hamnett, 2011) indicates an increasing social and spatial differentiation of the middle classes, fractions of which may have contrasting social and economic circumstances, and this too may influence the types of social mix that occur in different neighbourhoods. There is no dispute about the wealth of research and explanation of urban change developed through gentrification research. However, there are social interactions, forms of domination and negotiation, between social and ethnic groups, which may or may not be explained or interpreted in terms of the existing gentrification framework. Many individuals and households from different social and ethnic groups have quite complex relations of distance and proximity with other groups, in terms of both day-to-day practices within the city and/or their residential strategy (Savage *et al*., 2005, Andreotti and Le Galès, 2011; Bacqué *et al*., 2014, this issue). Pioneering work by Chamboredon and Lemaire in France (1970) showed that in social-mix housing, different social groups avoided each other. Andreotti *et al*. (2013) argue that in European cities, inter-group social dynamics in urban spaces are generally more complex than either extreme mutual avoidance or the colonization of neighbourhoods by the wealthiest groups. Social mix goes together with the development of 'partial exit strategies' that take place through specific combinations of practices that allow groups to select the dimensions they are willing to share with other social groups, and those in which they prefer a more segregated social environment for themselves and their families.

A complex picture

One element of that complexity is spatial scale. Urban scale issues are central to how we understand and measure the dynamics of social segregation, social mix or gentrification. Several of the articles in this symposium relate precisely to the interactions in a particular suburb or neighbourhoods, either in relation to surrounding neighbourhoods or to the larger metropolitan context. Various forms of social mix take place within neighbourhoods but are articulated with other social formations within cities, metropolitan areas and transnational networks. Simple generalizing accounts miss the articulation of these different dimensions by individuals who may, for instance, happily share their day-to-day life in mixed neighbourhoods, provided they can escape them for schools, consumption and interactions with friends within the wider metropolis (see Bacqué *et al*., this issue). Power relations also have to be understood as the capacity to choose interactions in different domains at different scales. In addition, these interactions have to be qualified — because they take on other forms besides clear control (see Tissot, 2014, this issue; August, 2014, this issue) — as being weak interactions, in which weak links make a particular urban atmosphere important for some people, as shown by Blokland and Nast (2014, this issue). Power in the city is also a relation that can take different forms that are more or less subtle. Capacity for choice and resistance from immigrants or less educationally or vocationally qualified groups should not be ignored.

An emphasis on the relational and therefore negotiable dimension of power within the city does not imply that we believe cities are simply a function of negotiation and interaction among individual actors who are freely reinventing themselves in a fluid world. Rather, these strategies, which include power relations, social-control strategies and the mobilization of resources, influence the extent to which exit strategies are adopted. Whilst social segregation and gentrification research provide powerful tools for many of these processes, it is important to explore them empirically and theoretically at different scales. This symposium is an attempt to articulate those issues to more sociological concerns such as sense of belonging, social networks and weak ties, social resources and strategies of individuals under structural constraints to develop or avoid social interactions in those different settings. Within such a framework, social-mix policies are only one element of the puzzle and social mix is an outcome, the result of historical developments of cities and neighbourhoods, structures of difference, social networks and agencies from the

standpoint of various groups and individuals at different scales. We should always keep in mind that public policies for achieving social mix are very hard to implement; most of them tend to fail because of the strength of the other dynamics at play.

This is hardly a new issue. There is a long tradition in urban research that has demonstrated at length a range of interactions and dynamics — for example, the ecology of social and ethnic groups, which was central to the work of the Chicago urban sociologists and the long tradition of communities studies (Bell and Newby, 1971), a tradition criticized by the founders of this journal and the new urban sociology of the 1970s. There is also a robust tradition of European locality studies informed by class conflict that has produced excellent analyses of interactions and conflicts between different social groups (Benoit-Guilbot, 1987; Cooke, 1989; Harloe *et al*., 1990; Bagnasco and Negri, 1994; Bagnasco, 1999). This tradition stressed in particular the rise of the lower middle classes working in the public sector and social movements. However, the strength, violence and rhythm of change brought forward by neoliberal market-driven urban restructuring (in many cases with the support, or under the leadership, of public policies) have put aside this research tradition and led to a focus, for instance, on gentrification processes. The reading of local behaviour from systemic and theoretical tendencies of capital accumulation has been central to how we understand some, but not all, of those cases and trends.

However, this paints only part of the picture. Progressive urban policies, family relations, sexual orientations and religious beliefs and other forms of identity also play a part in the transformation of cities and the explanation of different types of conflict or negotiation between social groups, revealing different mechanisms of power. This pluralist approach adds to critical analysis, and understandings, of conflict and agonistic power relations (Bohman, 2002). The articles that comprise this symposium provide a timely reminder of the importance of empirical analysis of the interactions between different social and ethnic groups and their outcomes, at different scales.[1]

Much of the research reported previously saw social mix as a by-product of research into urban regeneration or gentrification. For this symposium we have deliberately sought to bring together five articles that have specifically set out to analyse interaction between social class and ethnic groups in neighbourhoods and their outcomes in different contexts, and whether or not there were explicit policies for achieving social mix. The articles are all empirically grounded in local studies of relations between fractions of middle-class and disadvantaged groups and patterns of social mix, avoidance, control or domination. The aim has been to explore the nuances and ambiguities that have characterized specific examples in order to unpick the experience of social interaction between different social classes and ethnic groups in large cities in Europe and North America.

The overall outcomes, we suggest, point to a remixing of social classes and ethnic groups as well as to processes of social segregation, sometimes gentrification, reflecting the transformation of cities, of their labour market and their population that has occurred over the past 25 years. The articles published in this symposium look at negotiation, domination, power relations, distance and proximity from a number of different positions by employing different methodologies, but share an attempt at understanding the often nuanced ways in which these interactions manifest themselves. The evidence from these articles suggests a combination of exit strategies from the neighbourhood by the middle classes (in terms of schooling or cultural and social connections) through to highly interventionist local strategies for controlling community agendas or managing social mix and public events. The deployment of forms of institutional and performative power is strongly inflected by the context of the neighbourhood and the particular class

1 In this respect, the symposium builds upon some of the work done by, for instance, Maloutas in Athens, Bacqué, Préteceille, Oberti and Simon in Paris, Butler and Hamnett in London, and Savage and colleagues in Manchester, Bagnasco and Negri in Italy, Duyvendak and colleagues in the Netherlands, on the analysis of social networks (Blokland and Savage, 2008) on the one hand, and gentrification research on the other (see, for example, the special issue of *Environment and Planning A* 37.1, published in 2007).

fractions and ethnic groups that occupy it. Thus, forms of neighbourhood 'exit' might reflect the strategies of the powerful or, conversely, the more constrained middle-class groups. Negotiation might be an indulgence for powerful groups or, equally, part of an everyday struggle for resources for less powerful middle-class and working-class groups, or valorized in different ways politically across groups. To what extent do middle-class strategies regarding social mix transcend neighbourhood, urban and national context, and to what extent are they differentiated across neighbourhoods and fractions of the middle class? What are the effects of the strategies less powerful groups adopt, and to what extent do institutional forms connect to these strategies? An attempt to open up and map the spatial and social dimensions of power, domination and negotiation in socially mixed neighbourhoods, as well as the relation of different types of socially mixed neighbourhood to the wider circulation of power at city level and beyond might help to inform more equitable and participatory institutional responses to these inequalities.

Overview of the symposium articles

The articles in this collection all pay serious attention to the relationships in different types of socially mixed neighbourhood. These neighbourhoods represent a spectrum in terms of socioeconomic and neighbourhood status, from low-income ethnically mixed areas with early hints of gentrification (Blokland and Nast) to an ethnically mixed, largely low-income neighbourhood with some long-term and newly arriving, more 'constrained' gentrifiers forced out of central Paris (Bacqué *et al.*); a mixed-class and highly ethnically mixed gentrifying neighbourhood (Jackson and Benson, 2014, this issue) with middle-strata middle-class incomers; class and ethnic mix in a former municipal estate subject to social-mix policy (August) and a mixed neighbourhood with affluent middle-class incomers (Tissot). The researchers work across a number of national (institutional) contexts — France, Germany, the UK, USA and Canada — and all capture some key dynamics of large metropolitan areas.

In the first article, Blokland and Nast take an original approach to these local studies. Their chosen research area is an ethnically diverse pair of neighbourhoods in Berlin, and they hypothesize that public familiarity creates a comfort zone in which there is a low-key but significant sense of belonging. They suggest how local social networks (deemed so significant by the social-capital literature) and sense of neighbourhood belonging may not be the same thing analytically. By means of regression analysis the authors indicate how public familiarity (being recognized and recognizing people known and not known) creates a comfort zone which can affect feelings of belonging and trust that imply that social-capital arguments might be too invested in the idea of local social networks, while also suggesting that local social mix might still be significant in this more low-profile way. Whilst Blokland and Nast are justifiably cautious about generalizing too far based on a relatively small sample, they nevertheless put forward a powerful argument for the power of 'weak ties' in providing the basis for a sense of social mixing. Thus, in a society that has moved from class-homogenous urban neighbourhoods to neighbourhoods based on ethnic heterogeneity, social mixing takes on different sets of meanings. Blokland and Nast's article suggests that social-mix policy might have an unrealistic view of the level of interaction required. Issues of power and negotiation should remain central to the analysis, but inferring the state of social relations from everyday interactions in public (and feelings of belonging) may require a more nuanced set of interpretations.

In two of the North-American-based (Toronto and Boston) studies (by August and Tissot, respectively), the authors use a largely ethnographic approach to follow what happens in formerly poor neighbourhoods when the middle classes move in. One is a postwar working-class housing development subject to regeneration and rebranding (the Toronto case) and one — a poor Boston suburb — is subject to gentrification. Both authors track how the middle classes manage the situation to their advantage in ways in which a narrative about diversity is never far distant but always firmly under middle-class control.

August shows how professional middle-class males use their professional skills and control of resources (notably internet access) to monopolize the construction and management of the agendas of neighbourhood meetings to ensure that their agenda is the dominant narrative. Despite this, they are not trying to displace the social-housing residents but rather to control their behaviour in ways that are compatible with middle-class norms and expectations. Their narratives meet resistance, so forms of negotiation take place, but asymmetric ones. This is even more explicit in the Boston study, where Tissot provides an extended example of what happens when a low-income housing association wants to expand and take over vacant housing. Unsurprisingly perhaps, a group of the nearest adjacent homeowners is adamantly opposed to this, citing the threat to property values and personal safety, although the neighbourhood as a whole adopts a more welcoming approach. This in fact represents a highly subtle and professionally executed strategy designed to ensure that the development occurs, but on their terms — meeting expectations of diversity (while safeguarding the overall middle-class habitus).

In both the Boston and Toronto cases, we see how class relations are reproduced in outward-facing activities (such as a summer fair), which the middle class manages while lower-income residents do the 'grunt work', such as the actual frying of the burgers. In both studies, diversity and social mix are active processes by which the incoming middle classes are open to other groups while controlling the terms and conditions of engagement under which they live in 'their' neighbourhood. A significant theme that emerges in each case is that of gender relations, where (professional middle-class) men take a more aggressive stance towards other groups, while the integration work is undertaken by (professional middle-class) women. Gender emerges as a reworking of the 'hard cop-soft cop' routine in terms of creating a new social settlement acceptable to the middle class as a whole, which is protecting its property values and social hegemony — all in the name of promoting social diversity.

Jackson and Benson in their study of Peckham in South East London and Bacqué, Charmes and Vermeersch in their study of Noisy le Sec in North East Paris have a different perspective on the issue of social mix. Although these areas have a different relationship to their respective cities, what emerges in both is a new middle-class formation that 'pushes back' not only against a local sense of difference to lower-income residents (in Peckham this is articulated as the 'othering' of Rye Lane with its African and Caribbean cultures of consumption and in Noisy in relation to the outer Paris immigrant settlements of, for instance, Aulnay-sous-Bois), but also against a rather 'posher' middle-class imaginary. In the case of Peckham this is to be found in nearby East Dulwich, a relatively established area of gentrified middle-class settlement with a child- and consumption-oriented local infrastructure. In the case of Noisy this can be found in different sections of the middle classes that have been brought together by unaffordably high property prices in central Paris, as well as an indigenous middle class that had been there for some time, coalescing as a social group through an adherence to broadly defined leftist politics (based on different party affiliations and on participation in the voluntary sector). In both cases, the authors suggest that there is such a thing as a local social system with codified interactions between social and ethnic groups, resulting in an active creation of a (lower) middle class that is oppositional and dis-identifies with a conventional consumption infrastructure whilst creating its own alternative — in the case of Peckham in the new Bellenden Road, or in the more residential part of Noisy. These two examples remind us not so much of gentrification but of the new urban left in Britain (Seyd, 1987; Gyford, 1985; Le Galès, 1993) or in France (Chalvon, 1984; Bidou, 1984) or even in Italy (Bagnasco and Negri, 1994), namely lower-middle-class residents from the public sector living in mixed social areas, with some cultural capital, developing 'distinct' (in Bourdieu's sense) ways of life, political mobilization and relations from the 'proper' middle and working classes alike.

There is, however, one clear difference between the case of Peckham in South East London and the case of Noisy in the eastern suburbs of Paris. Bacqué *et al.*'s article shows that the contrast of this fraction of the middle class with the classic middle class

is less significant than the contrast with Paris — understood as the dense area of the twenty *arrondissements* within the central orbital motorway (the *boulevard périphérique*) with its concentration of top secondary schools, elite universities and *grandes écoles*, cultural infrastructure and commerce, bars and restaurants. The distinctive symbolic capital associated with central Paris is strong for the middle classes, including those lower-middle-class residents who could afford to live there until the mid-1990s and are now moving into neighbourhoods such as Noisy beyond the *periphérique*. The authors demonstrate that the power relations of distance and proximity between the middle classes and the poorer residents of Noisy are not only played out at the neighbourhood level but also in relation to the city of Paris. Noisy's new middle classes make systematic reference to Paris. They negotiate partly in Noisy, but less in terms of colonization of gentrification and more with a mix of voice (politics) and partial exit strategies (other activities and social practices in Paris). In the case of Noisy, the authors show how social interactions in Noisy between social groups (based on negotiation, conflict, avoidance) are constructed in part within the locality but are in part articulated to the wider urban area and most importantly in relation to the Paris city centre. Although this is not the point of the authors' research, one would expect residents of poor neighbourhoods to go to Paris regularly too (for work, consumption and leisure) but not in the same way and not in the same relationship to networks of power.

The Peckham and Noisy-le-Sec studies are based on in-depth interviews that generate a rich narrative of how the middle classes 'do difference' — both towards other fractions of the middle class and towards poor and socially excluded residents. In both cases 'tectonic' differences (Robson and Butler, 2001) can be identified between the middle classes and their others, but what both articles show is how this is far more of a dynamic process than Robson and Butler proposed. In truth, there is little social contact between the social groups, which generally move past each other like tectonic plates but, at the same time, they 'push back' against these ideas of 'the other', against which they then calibrate, in the case of Peckham at least, the idealized middle-class family of East Dulwich. In some respects therefore, they negotiate their identity in terms of what, in an early study of gentrification in Melbourne, Jager (1986) termed as belonging to a 'neither/nor' class. However, in this case this differentiation is not between the working and upper classes but between an established middle class and a diasporic (black) other. Thus, identity construction now involves ethnicity and household formation as well as occupational class. In Peckham this becomes symbolized by Bellenden Road, which is neither Rye Lane nor Lordship Lane (the gentrified shopping street of East Dulwich). The respondents negotiated both of these sites differently, but belonging was represented by Bellenden Road with its bookshop, chocolate shop and Antony Gormley-designed street furniture.

Conclusion

The empirical studies of social mix on which the articles in this symposium are based suggest a number of questions for future research. The first is the question of context in terms of the mix of groups, the nature of social relations and the temporal aspects over the timings of entry of new groups and the duration of mix. Within this, one conclusion might be that even in neighbourhoods of multiple types of social mix, or where social mix is prolonged, there is nevertheless a reassertion of class power over the management of mix (as the articles by Tissot and August show). Even in these cases, where neoliberal social policy might seem to be rolled out through the professional power of middle-class residents, the nature of the social diversity means that the resulting political outcome is more contested. In other contexts we also see different forms of local interaction that seem more ambiguous. In the London and Paris examples we see the ways in which new middle-class groups emerge in relation to groups above and below them in a more active evolution of 'social tectonics' than one of us originally proposed in the context of a study of gentrification in Brixton (Butler and Robson, 2001). These formations suggest a more

ambiguous politics of mix, with elements of control but also awareness of the need for accommodation in ways that are contrasted to the more divisive or separate middle-class settlement. As the article by Bacqué *et al*. suggests, the timings of the experience of mix in these neighbourhoods might influence the nature of the politics of mix, both within the neighbourhood and in relation to the city as a whole. The London and Paris studies suggest how relationships to other neighbourhoods might frame the practices of social groups within any one neighbourhood.

Inter-neighbourhood relations raise a second aspect of context: the relationship between neighbourhoods and any one neighbourhood and the city as a whole. The social networks beyond neighbourhood are key to understanding the nature of social interaction and mix within them. The other side of this is that there may still be value in social mix in a neighbourhood that is not too over-invested in ideas that social mix will lead to strong forms of social interaction or 'within-neighbourhood' social networks. Blokland and Nast's idea of public familiarity, or what we might call the 'low-profile' social relations of the neighbourhood, might be an important platform for understanding forms of belonging and demands of neighbourhood in the contemporary context. The urban context of the neighbourhood is also significant in terms of public services and infrastructure and its impact on class and other social relations within the neighbourhood. Bacqué *et al*. point to this in terms of the quality of the urban fabric and especially in relation to schooling. This connects to a much wider literature on the relationship between neighbourhood change and schooling (see Butler and van Zanten, 2007). Neighbourhood social mix or segregation has to be connected to school social mix or segregation in order to understand social mix overall (the same might be said for the impact on other services, such as healthcare).

Overall, at the macro level, social mix might still be argued to be a part of a process of class re-/displacement. However, contextual studies suggest a range of types and durations of neighbourhoods with social mix, the metropolitan, social and temporal contexts of which might suggest possibilities for more differentiated, context-sensitive and spatially sophisticated egalitarian policy interventions — rather than any blanket faith in social mix per se. In addition, there is certainly more scope for comparative and multi-method studies for understanding these distinctions in the way demonstrated by the five articles that make up this symposium.

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