

emergence of *xiao jiating* (small family) during the Republican era superseded the late imperial Chinese concept of *jia* that encompassed family, home and house into one word. On the other hand, the presence of multiple empires within one confined urban space gave rise to the city's colonial-capitalist system, under which property became 'a source of masculine individual identity and political power' (p. 118). Part II (chapters 4–6) examines how Chinese urbanites 'lived' at home in cosmopolitan Tianjin. With a broad spectrum of western and Chinese spatial technologies, architectural structures and material objects available at their disposal, Chinese urban elites created their modern home and house in Tianjin through selective combination. In the meantime, women's magazines presented another meaning of modern home: 'the site of middle class affect and individual subjectivity' (p. 213). The last part (chapters 7–8) investigates how Tianjin urbanites perceived the connection between social space and family in the second half of the twentieth century. During this transitional period, the connection between housing and class/status formation became increasingly strengthened, and eventually consolidated when the Chinese Communist Party took power in 1949.

Tianjin's complex fragmented colonial administrations, its *sui generis* cosmopolitanism and its local elites' ingenuous ways of combining and juxtaposing western and Chinese elements would have made it rather tempting for LaCouture to claim the city's distinctiveness over its comparability and commensurability with other historical contexts across the globe. *Dwelling in the World*, however, does exactly the opposite. LaCouture's broad-ranging study has set a new high standard for urban historians to study a local urban society from a global and comparative perspective. *Dwelling in the World* will certainly be of interest to historians of modern China, urbanism, gender and class, as well as colonialism and empire, and deserves as diverse of a readership as it aspires to engage.

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**Paul Watt**, *Estate Regeneration and Its Discontents: Public Housing, Place and Inequality in London*. Bristol: Policy Press, 2021. xiv + 506pp. 54 plates. 14 figures. 7 tables. Bibliography. £75.00 hbk. £26.99 pbk.  
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For over a decade, the urban sociologist Paul Watt has tirelessly documented the regeneration of council housing estates in London, focusing on the experience and resistance of residents living through the regeneration of their estate, often seeing their homes demolished and communities fractured. The book draws upon extensive fieldwork in 14 London housing estates, most of which are 'later' estates built during the 1960s and 1970s, such as Aylesbury or Heygate, although others – like Clapham Park or Woodberry Down – are examples of estates built immediately after World War II. The author is not preoccupied so much with the origins of

these markers on the post-war London landscape – although chapters 2 and 3 offer an historical overview of housing policy in the city and the specific boroughs where research is focused – but rather the regeneration of these estates, a process that in most cases began under the New Labour government (1997–2010) and has continued in subsequent coalition (2010–15) and Conservative governments (2015–). Indeed, it is the origins, implementation and legacies of the policy of estate regeneration – a drawn-out, agonizing process that can take as long as 20 years for a single estate – that is the focus of the book.

Watt's concern with the future of post-war public housing in London springs from the conviction that working-class lives are nuanced and have value beyond abstract measurements; and that their communities are not the 'estates from hell' portrayed by the media and politicians, but instead 'sociologically prosaic places of "getting along" and "getting by"' (p. 21). Housing estates in London are extraordinary in terms of the historical role they have played in providing homes for working people to live in, allowing them to contribute to the city via their labour, their creativity and their *presence*. And now, with widespread gentrification, public housing is arguably more important than ever. Watt draws attention to how working-class lives are being devastated by demolition and eviction, but also by what he refers to as 'displacement anxiety', a subjective response – a sense of ontological insecurity – created by the notices of regeneration given to residents. The anxiety of losing one's home is a daily reality of many thousands of working-class Londoners.

Rather than appealing to a presumed, shared sense of liberal moral outrage – a feature of much academic writing about gentrification – the author explains *why* the regeneration of public housing is a huge issue for working-class Londoners. Using excerpts from hundreds of qualitative interviews with residents, it is always *their voices* that occupy the foreground. Chapter 5 features residents talking about life on housing estates prior to regeneration. Placed in the context of struggles around access to housing, especially racist discrimination, and experiences of social marginalization, this is not a romantic narrative, although we gain a sense of how public housing has provided an inclusive space for the city's most disadvantaged and a welcome step away from the precarity of the private-rented sector. Chapter 6 continues this theme, pointing to how residents value their council houses and flats as homes within communities. Watt explores with his interviewees the impact of the Right to Buy policy introduced by Margaret Thatcher in the 1980 Housing Act. Many of those who did buy have had their dreams of autonomy dashed by regeneration policies, evidence that owner-occupier status offers little protection from regeneration policies. Chapter 7 explores how and why estates became devalued places, a shift due to neglect and the steady worsening of housing conditions, and demonstrates how although many residents recognize they are living in a deteriorating, uncared-for environment, they show little desire to leave their estate. The crucial point is that managed neglect creates the material decline necessary to justify regeneration policies.

Chapters 8 through 12 deal with experiences of urban regeneration. While residents may initially be in favour of regeneration, especially if it involves refurbishment, they soon become disillusioned by one-sided or misleading consultation and unclear information, causing anxiety to grow regarding potential demolition

and/or displacement (chapter 8). There is also the issue of accelerated physical, social and psycho-social degeneration that occurs once regeneration begins. The managed physical decline of homes and shared spaces is part-and-parcel of regeneration and has an overwhelmingly negative impact: 'Degeneration wears people out, mentally and physically' (p. 301). Displacement is a notoriously difficult subject to research because the 'displaced' are necessarily scattered away from the site in question, but Watt extensively explores this issue via the experience of council tenants who have returned to properties in redeveloped estates, council tenants relocated away from their original home and owner-occupiers whose homes have been demolished (chapter 9). Urban regeneration is shown, through a wealth of personal stories, as a coercive policy that restricts choice and forces residents to live according to the timetables of those conducting the regeneration. However, resident agency does come to the fore in chapter 10, which documents numerous resident-led campaigns against regeneration. Watt argues that housing activism varies from pragmatic, estate-based campaigns against demolition to those who seek to contest neoliberalism more comprehensively. Chapter 12 focuses on the divide between those who live 'in the old estate' experiencing advanced states of neglect and those who live in the redevelopment, comprised of new or refurbished buildings. A common complaint, from both, is the lack of neighbourliness and community.

Paul Watt's momentous book is sure to become a landmark text in British urban sociology, as well as a useful point of comparison with studies of the fate of public housing in other countries. Based upon extensive research of processes that have been remaking London for over a quarter of a century, and prioritizing the experiences of working-class Londoners, Watt's book illuminates the troubled present-past of the city: the clash (and unsatisfactory resolution) between Keynesian welfarist planning and current neoliberal urban policy, as well as the crisis in our imagination of more equitable urban futures.

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