



# Can Mixed-Income Housing Ameliorate Concentrated Poverty? The Significance of a Geographically Informed Sense of Community

James Fraser\* and Michael H. Nelson\*

*Vanderbilt University*

---

## Abstract

Since the 1990s, public policymakers have renewed support for mixed-income housing development in low-income neighborhoods as a means toward neighborhood revitalization and poverty amelioration. Research to date finds that, while mixed-income developments in lower-income neighborhoods have promoted area revitalization, they have accomplished less for people in these areas who live in poverty. This article focuses on mixed-income projects that seek to de-concentrate poverty in impoverished, urban neighborhoods. It finds that, because these efforts are largely market-based approaches, they have paid less direct attention to the needs of lower-income residents. While this shortcoming may be attributed to structural barriers that prevent developers, housing authorities, and service providers from implementing effective practices, resource limitations can be offset by strong community-based participation. Drawing on this conclusion, it is suggested that community empowerment strategies should be implemented in tandem with mixed-income approaches in order to achieve positive outcomes for lower-income residents, but that reliance on place-based community will unlikely create the necessary conditions to improve the wealth and everyday quality of life issues that poor people face in a predominantly market-based economy.

---

Thus, as a weapon of social exclusion, housing normally works extremely well.  
(Adams 1984, 519)

Almost a quarter of a century ago, in his presidential address to the Association of American Geographers, John S. Adams discussed the geographic separation of race and class in American cities. His thesis: ‘To be poor is to be isolated’ (p. 519). Adams argued for the necessity of greater socioeconomic integration, but was not optimistic about overcoming the obstacles to create these integrated neighborhoods. Adams predicted that households with greater resources would continue to build new communities on the periphery of urban settlements as they were encroached by undesirable neighbors: ‘Inside every metro region, wealth constantly shifts from declining neighborhoods [often in the inner city] and towards fast growing locales,

usually in the suburban ring' (p. 521). This outward movement reinforced wealthy households' own class privileges and was quite effectively protected by zoning and price mechanisms. Changing this pattern of exclusivity seemed a daunting challenge. Nevertheless, only a decade later, there would be broad-based support for the federal government to begin investing over 6 billion dollars in mixed-income housing in the inner city (McCarty 2007). By the end of the 20th century, geographers Wyly and Hammel (1999) were describing the urban landscape of American cities as 'Islands of Decay in Seas of Renewal', a reversal of Berry's influential 1985 chapter titled 'Islands of Renewal in Seas of Decay'. The authors attributed this change to a reformulation of government policies – a reformulation built on several precedents, as will be outlined below.

In 1987, prominent Chicago sociologist, William Julius Wilson, published *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy*, where he forcefully articulated the individual, community, and societal problems associated with concentrated poverty. The National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing (NCSDPH; 1989) released a report calling for 86,000 public housing units to be replaced in downtown areas across the country. Changes in the structure of the urban housing market led to major increases in investment in the urban core, an area largely neglected since the out-migration of the 1950s (J Smith 2000; Wyly and Hammel 2000). Consequently, a group of planners formed the Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU), which commanded attention for its advocacy of neotraditional neighborhoods which promised to reduce crime, increase economic vitality and employment opportunities, and reduce the harmful environmental impacts of suburban sprawl (Katz 1993). Federal policymakers embraced the sociological insights of Wilson's work, the recommendations of the NCSDPH, the vision of new urban neighborhoods provided by CNU, and the new opportunities afforded by changing investment and settlement patterns in downtown neighborhoods. A new paradigm of revitalized, mixed-use, mixed-income neighborhoods was to be a central goal of federal housing policy. From the early 1990s onward, mixed-income developments were regarded as the new solution to solve America's urban housing crisis.

This response was not unique to the United States. Over the past two decades, European and Oceanic countries have been shifting their housing policy to incorporate poverty dispersal strategies and mixed-income developments in the urban core (Kleinhans 2004; Wood 2003). While grounded in the particular US context of housing policy, and especially the federal HOPE VI program, this article will also draw on international studies of mixed-income and mixed-tenure developments. This article examines the extant literature on mixed-income housing programs that seek to draw higher socioeconomic status individuals/families into lower-income neighborhoods and public housing developments. We focus on the dual goals of mixed-income policies and programs, that is, to promote people

and place-based outcomes, and examine the role that community and geography have in mixed-income housing outcomes.

### *The Role of Mixed-Income Housing*

Access to quality, affordable housing in cities has been an ongoing challenge for those living in poverty, and a persistent and contentious public policy issue that centers on the extent to which having a ‘decent home’ is a basic right for all Americans. Far from being solely an issue for the individual, providing housing for America’s poor has been articulated as a social problem for cities as well as the nation. In both, *the Wagner-Steagall Housing Act* of 1937, which established the US Housing Authority (predecessor to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development), and *the Housing Act* of 1949 which authorized urban renewal projects, Congress linked general welfare and security, health, living standards, and morals of the nation to the provision of ‘a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family.’ Yet, in many cities, housing for the poor has been characterized by hyper-segregation and the extreme concentration of poverty. While the reasons for this spatial concentration of poverty are debated, there is ample evidence showing decreased life opportunities for those who live in these conditions (Squires and Kubrin 2005; Wilson 1987). Minorities are disproportionately represented in neighborhoods that have over 40% of their population living in poverty. In 2000, 5.8% of whites lived in such high-poverty neighborhoods, versus 18.6% of African Americans and 13.8% of Hispanics (Dreier et al. 2004). Recognizing that access to a safe and affordable home is intimately tied to the characteristics of the neighborhood in which it is embedded, scholars and policymakers have looked to mixed-income housing development as one solution to neighborhood-, household-, and individual-level poverty in distressed urban neighborhoods.

Proponents of mixed-income housing posit that economic diversity within a neighborhood would enhance community interaction and improve neighborhood characteristics (Cole and Goodchild 2001; Joseph 2006; Kleinhans 2004). Early studies on mixed-income housing initiatives were guided by the general hypothesis that enhanced neighborhood conditions – physical, political, and socioeconomic – translated into public goods that were broadly distributed across all households. Since then, studies demonstrate that mixed-income housing does not automatically produce these hypothesized neighborhood- and household-level outcomes both in the United States (Collins et al. 2005; Kleit 2001; Popkin et al. 2004; Salama 1999; US General Accounting Office 2003; Varady et al. 2005) and internationally (Atkinson and Kintrea 1998, 2000, 2001; Jupp 1999; Kleinhans 2003, 2004; Wood 2003). Indeed, the empirical research on mixed-income redevelopment of distressed urban neighborhoods suggests that the majority of benefits have been realized by private-sector developers, local government,

and other stakeholders who are in the position to benefit from place-based revitalization. Low-income households, on the other hand, do not share in many of these benefits. The failure to improve outcomes for poor residents has raised questions about the mechanisms by which mixed-income housing could lead to the reduction of poverty for resident families (Brophy and Smith 1997; Kleinhans 2004; Popkin et al. 2000; Smith 2002; Wilkins 2002).

A core point of debate in the literature is why income-mixing initiatives might not achieve both neighborhood revitalization and poverty amelioration for low-income households. Some scholars have suggested that it may be due to the limited capacity of stakeholders to provide social and community services in a timely and efficient manner as part of mixed-income housing projects (Popkin et al. 2004). Other studies have argued that such disappointing outcomes may be more likely when urban redevelopment initiatives only seek to create 'neighborhoods of choice', that is, they attempt to spur private-sector investment in depressed areas without commensurate attention to the economic needs of people in poverty who live there (Fraser 2004). While policymakers, academics, and practitioners may agree that it is optimal when mixed-income housing initiatives produce both neighborhood revitalization *and* poverty amelioration, it cannot be assumed that all parties involved in these efforts place equal value on these goals. Even when stakeholders claim to support both people- and place-based outcomes, either can become neglected when one of these goals outpaces the other (Weber 2002).

Since the 1990s, public policymakers have renewed efforts to de-concentrate poverty in urban neighborhoods based on a model that claims neighborhood-level characteristics shape opportunities for the households within them. Jobless neighborhoods, isolated from wealth, mainstream institutions, and lacking in internal and external social networks, are viewed as offering limited residential mobility and status attainment opportunities (Coleman 1988; Putnam 2000; Wilson 1987, 1996). Research shows that isolation and poverty combine to produce other disadvantages for neighborhood residents, leading to a host of negative outcomes (Coulton et al. 1996; Ellen and Turner 1997; Jencks and Mayer 1990; Land et al. 1991; Taylor and Covington 1993). Policies aimed at assisting people in poverty often rely on this 'neighborhood effects' approach arguing that the environment of neighborhoods must be revitalized to promote positive outcomes for low-income populations (Fraser et al. 2003).

### *The Geography of Housing Provision*

Place-based, mixed-income housing development has been embraced as a mechanism to improve the life conditions of lower-income households by altering the neighborhoods in which they live. Another mechanism to enable cross-social class mixing is to assist lower-income residents to move into existing affluent neighborhoods (see Briggs 2008; Goering and Feins

2008; Imbroscio 2008 for a critical discussion of poverty dispersal policies in the United States). Scattered-site public housing, 'Fair Share' housing initiatives, and tenant-based housing subsidy programs (e.g. rental vouchers), are all examples of dispersal policies (for more discussion, see Briggs et al. 1999; Kirp et al. 1995). The Montgomery County Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit ordinance (inclusionary zoning) in Maryland, and state override statutes, such as the Massachusetts' Comprehensive Permit Law, are state and municipal examples of dispersal programs. At the federal level, the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) and the 1970s initiated Section 8 voucher program have become substantial components of the recent federal programs promoting the dispersal of low-income households from areas of concentrated poverty (although the LIHTC program has been under some criticism for reinforcing racial and social class divides, see Tegeler 2005). The Gatreux and Moving to Opportunity programs have provided mixed and somewhat controversial evidence on the success of poverty dispersal programs (see Goering 2005). These dispersal programs are qualitatively different than attempts to revitalize low-income neighborhoods and improve neighborhood characteristics that have been associated with positive outcomes for lower-income residents.

Alastair Smith's (2002) analysis of mixed-income developments revealed a large degree of cross-project variation. Mixed-income developments may serve different percentages of low, moderate, and market-rate units, depending on the purpose of the development and the context in which it occurs. Contextual factors at local, state, and federal levels all impact mixed-income housing development as these projects typically involve complicated multi-level coordination. For example, the LIHTC and Section 8 programs, which originate at the federal level, are channeled through state and municipal government agencies in support of the building of mixed-income housing as well as occupancy by low-income families (Brophy and Smith 1997). For this reason, mixed-income housing can describe a variety of different types of developments. Subsidies may be used to provide housing opportunities to a variety of mixes of extremely low- (below 30% of area median income), very low- (below 50%), low- (below 80%), and moderate-income households, and each development generally includes a portion of unsubsidized market rate units. Each development may be the product of a different conglomeration of federal, state, and local subsidy programs as well as charitable and for-profit investment. The heterogeneity of mixed-income developments poses challenges both in their development and their evaluation. For this reason, the focus of the rest of this article will be on HOPE VI revitalization of distressed public housing developments.

### *The Promise of HOPE VI*

The US Department of Housing and Urban Development HOPE VI program, initiated in 1992, tries to take the neighborhood effects of a

dispersal strategy and apply it to a greater number of households in an effort to de-concentrate in place. The dispersal strategy puts a small number of low-income households in a higher-income environment, while the de-concentration strategy brings a small number of higher-income households into a low-income environment. Concomitantly, HOPE VI has the potential to impact a much larger number of low-income households (Fraser and Kick 2007).

There are four primary reasons that place-based, mixed-income housing initiatives, and in particular the US Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) HOPE VI program, have gained public policy support. First, mixed-income developments can reduce the incidence of social problems related to concentrated poverty while providing opportunities for low-income households to gain access to better neighborhoods. Second, it is a mechanism to address 86,000 of the nation's 1.2 million public housing units that were identified as 'severely distressed' by the National Commission on Severely Distressed Housing in 1989. Third, cities benefit from neighborhood revitalization and economic development outcomes associated with mixed-income housing development. Fourth, place-based, mixed-income housing initiatives can play a role in creating a foundational environment in which other poverty amelioration strategies can be more successful (e.g. Welfare to Work, Jobs Plus).

The empirical literature on place-based, mixed-income redevelopment of distressed urban neighborhoods has primarily focused on the HUD's HOPE VI program. The HOPE VI legislation was passed in 1992 and encouraged local housing authorities to transform low-income public housing developments into mixed-income communities. From 1993 to 2007, HUD funded a total of 235 HOPE VI developments at a cost of over US\$6.5 billion (McCarty 2007). In total, as of 2004, these efforts resulted in the demolition of 82,979 distressed public housing units; the rehabilitation of 11,573 units, and the new construction of 83,152 units, 51% of which would be subsidized (McCarty 2007). The goals of the program are to decrease the concentration of poor families and provide services in support of family self-sufficiency efforts (Finkel et al. 2000; Wexler 2001). In place-based, mixed-income housing initiatives, this involves bringing the middle-class back to the city in order to realign neighborhood demographics.

Policy research has focused on a dominant model of mixed-income housing characterized by: (i) development in existing low-income neighborhoods; (ii) the aim to move higher-income households into these areas; (iii) attracting private-sector investment, including retail services into underserved neighborhoods; and (iv) the emphasis to increase general revenue for municipalities from property tax, sales tax, and employment (Quercia and Galster 1997; Wilkins 2002). This research has begun to shed light on the factors that are associated with mixed-income housing success in the urban context (Bernstein 2004; Brophy and Smith 1997;

Finkel et al. 2000; Popkin et al. 2004; Quercia and Galster 1997; Smith 2002; Wexler 2001).

Location, management, and income mix have been attributed important roles in creating successful mixed-income housing developments. *Location* of the mixed-income project has been found to be of central importance for economic viability. Finkel et al. (2000) state that, 'if a site is convenient and attractive, higher-income residents will be drawn to the newly built residences and, where available, the homeownership opportunities' (pp. 113–114). *Good management* of the differing needs of income-diverse residents (Varady et al. 2005), as well as the challenges associated with effective coordination between public and private sectors, is seen as essential to mixed-income success. Wexler (2001) finds that this often requires that public housing authorities involved in this type of development build the capacity to 'use private market forces to achieve public ends' (p. 211). A *critical mass* of higher-income residents is also characteristic of mixed-income development sustainability. This raises the difficult question of how much focus should be on bringing in higher-income households, and what proportion of resources should be dedicated to maximizing the amount of units subsidized. As having a tight housing market (e.g. one in which there is higher demand than units available) has been found to be one of the most important factors associated with attracting higher-income residents to mixed-income developments, many projects have to spend significant resources on marketing to generate demand for market-rate units. Marketing that does not emphasize the 'mix' of incomes in the development, but rather emphasizes that all of the units are similar and of high quality helps to bring in higher-income residents (Brophy and Smith 1997). In addition, Brophy and Smith (1997) find that the provision of attractive, onsite amenities and services will assist in drawing a critical mass of upper-income residents. One amenity that researchers find as a pre-requisite for drawing upper-income residents with children to mixed-income developments is access to safe and high-quality schools (Varady et al. 2005).

Mixed-income approaches have been shown to produce positive place-based outcomes. Alistair Smith (2002) found that criminal activity is lowered in areas that gain mixed-income housing. More generally, one longitudinal study on the association between mixed-income development and economic change in high-poverty neighborhoods finds that mixed-income approaches, in tandem with other investments by the public and private sectors, have assisted in promoting revitalization (Zielenbach 2003). A more recent study using (hedonic) estimations of the impact of HOPE VI mixed-income developments on nearby property values finds that 'HOPE VI redevelopment should be encouraged by community members because it substantially increases surrounding property values' (Bair and Fitzgerald 2005, 783). They report that 'HOPE VI had a statistically significant positive impact on surrounding property values on the order of 8–10% for every quarter-mile closer that a housing unit was located to the development'

(Bair and Fitzgerald 2005, 771). While there is still a paucity of research on the effects of mixed-income approaches on economic development and neighborhood revitalization, the evidence to date indicates that positive place-based change can and does occur (Kleinhans 2004).

Alternatively, with respect to the goal of poverty amelioration, research on the outcomes of mixed-income housing upon low-income residents through examinations of HOPE VI has challenged and modified the expectations of what can be accomplished through creating mixed-income housing communities. Previously, the conventional wisdom was that mixed-income housing would provide opportunities to low-income households through multiple mechanisms associated with living in proximity to higher-income households. It was hypothesized that households with different incomes would develop relationships, higher-income households would provide models of 'constructive behavior' for lower-income households, and low-income families would create additional social networks or bonds through higher-income households, which would increase employment opportunities for the poor. Research, however, has not found evidence to support these latter assumptions (Brophy and Smith 1997; Joseph 2006; Smith 2002). Studies have also questioned the assumption that lower-income residents in a mixed-income development will adopt the social norms of the higher-income residents implicitly suggesting that the norms of a mixed-income development or neighborhood are affected by factors nested in the larger community in which the mixed-income project resides (Brophy and Smith 1997; Galster and Zobel 1998).

Joseph (2006) provides a systematic review of empirical studies in order to examine four ways mixed-income housing can create favorable outcomes. These include: (i) creating and solidifying social networks (low-income households link with higher-income households promoting information exchanges that lead to opportunities); (ii) behavioral modeling (higher-income households will model effectual behavior for low-income households); (iii) social control (higher-income households will enforce norms); and (iv) enhanced political economy (higher-income households will attract resources to a neighborhood and promote development). He concludes that available evidence suggests that the first two ways, which depend on meaningful interaction and trust, may not occur in the short term. The last two ways seem more likely to occur because higher-income households are more apt to be stringent about upholding beneficial social norms and they will have more political capital to bring resources to an area. One of the implications from this conclusion is that mixed-income housing approaches tend to be more effective in improving the physical quality and atmosphere of the neighborhood than in creating social mobility opportunities for low-income households. Vale (2006) is skeptical that such outcomes represent effective value for money for a costly and disruptive program that fails to have many tangible benefits for the public housing residents that it is designed to serve. Similarly, Brazley and Gilderbloom (2007) find

that even nationally celebrated HOPE VI projects like the multi-award winning Park Duvalle project in Louisville, Kentucky, show very little evidence that they benefit those residents who used to live on the targeted site.

One challenge to the HOPE VI program is that 'some housing authorities have failed to implement their HOPE VI redevelopment plans effectively' (Popkin et al. 2004, 33). In some cases, 'failures in relocation and community-supportive service planning have led to inadequate support for residents and less than optimal outcomes for many families' (Popkin et al. 2004, 33). HOPE VI has not been able to resolve the dilemma of improving the quality of life for the 'hard to house' populations, or help those who are dealing with multiple barriers and obstacles to employment, such as child care, health care, and transportation (Bloom et al. 2005; Harris and Kaye 2004; Kleit and Manzo 2006; Levy and Kaye 2004; Popkin et al. 2004).

Public housing residents in HOPE VI relocation programs are offered rental vouchers or placements in other public housing developments in the municipality. A growing number of empirical studies lend support to the finding that those residents who relocated from public housing using Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers experienced the greatest benefits associated with the HOPE VI relocation program (Boston 2005; Brooks et al. 2005; Buron 2004; Popkin et al. 2004). Using administrative data to examine the long-term, socioeconomic status of households relocated from public housing, Boston (2005) finds that over a 7-year period residents who moved using Section 8 Vouchers or who moved into revitalized HOPE VI sites experienced significant socioeconomic improvements as well as being able to live in a higher-quality neighborhood. Brooks et al. (2005) also find that HOPE VI participants who use Section 8 fare better in their new neighborhoods than those who move back into non-revitalized public housing developments, and they conclude that HOPE VI would be weakened if the Section 8 component decreased in funding. Studies conducted by the Urban Institute also find that HOPE VI participants who moved into private housing lived in neighborhoods with less criminal activity than their prior public housing residence (Buron 2004; Popkin et al. 2004). These same studies report that a significant population of HOPE VI participants face multiple barriers to employment as well as securing safe and affordable housing, which highlights the need for case management and effective community and social service programs (Levy and Kaye 2004). As Wexler (2001) notes, 'HUD itself considers the family self-sufficiency programs one of the most problematic pieces of HOPE VI' (p. 210). Findings such as these have motivated closer examinations of the processes that might be triggered by mixed-income housing development. Furthermore, there are several studies that fail to show significant improvements for those receiving housing choice (Section 8) vouchers. These studies find no difference between public housing and voucher households in terms of employment outcomes (Levy and Woolley 2007), children's educational achievement (Jacob 2005), and social capital (Clampet-Lundquist 2004).

The mixed outcomes for those who receive vouchers and the lack of positive outcomes for those who move into other public housing sites, as well as the unknown outcomes for the significant portion of displaced residents that have not been tracked by local housing authorities (Popkin et al. 2004), suggest that place-based revitalization has taken precedence over the needs of existing public housing residents in HOPE VI developments. Some authors have suggested that this is an eerie echo of the urban renewal policies that led to the creation of high-rise public housing in the first place (Bayer 2003; Keating 2000; J Smith 2000). This point of view is best articulated in the National Housing Law Project, the Poverty and Race Research Action Council, Sherwood Research Associates, and the Center for Community Change's ENPHRONT Tenants Organization's report, *False HOPE: A Critical Assessment of the HOPE VI Public Housing Program* (2002). This report highlights the importance of resident participation and decision-making control in the transformations that affect their lives.

In conjunction with these critical findings, an increasing group of scholars contend that contemporary urban housing policy is serving to colonize poor inner-city neighborhoods for the middle and upper classes (Atkinson and Bridge 2005; Lees et al. 2007; N Smith 2002). The changing political economy of urban neighborhoods, from a long history of disinvestment to increasing gentrification and major reinvestment projects (such as HOPE VI) and increased mortgage lending, can be seen as a product of urban real estate's increasing role as a vehicle for urban economic expansion (N Smith 2002; Wyly and Hammel 1999). Urban redevelopment policies, including ones said to have the goal of ameliorating poverty and providing opportunities for environmental improvement for low-income populations, can be alternatively examined in terms of their potential to spur urban revitalization for incoming middle-income populations. In this analysis, HOPE VI serves as a prime example of the pre-eminent importance of inner-city land: costly redevelopment projects result in revitalized urban land markets for wealthier households. The resultant increase in high-priced units comes at a direct reduction in the number of available subsidized units. Thus, from this critical perspective, inner-city mixed-income housing initiatives are not interventions to serve low-income household, but methods to grow city economies by substantial increases in urban land value. One way to ameliorate the negative impact of the prioritization of economic expansion over the needs of extremely low-income families is through public participation in redevelopment decision-making and comprehensive initiatives that deal with the community as a whole.

HOPE VI public housing revitalization is the best American example of large-scale place-based mixed-income housing developments. This review of the literature on HOPE VI suggests that the program has been successful in improving the quality of marginalized neighborhoods (e.g. lower crime, increased property values). Nevertheless, the program does not seem to be associated with consistently better outcomes for the original

impoverished neighborhood residents it was designed to serve. Scholarship that criticizes neoliberal policies and programs suggest that the goal to ameliorate poverty has been superseded by the opportunity to grow urban economies by enhancing the value of historically marginalized neighborhoods. It is our contention that this economic growth imperative can be counterbalanced by increasing the participation of the original neighborhood residents in the revitalization process, and concomitantly improving outcomes for the original impoverished residents, but that community residents need to be meaningfully networked with non-profit, market and state entities that are willing to make poverty amelioration for low-income families as much a priority as building neighborhoods in central city locales that may become attractive to higher-income populations.

### *Community Initiatives and Partnership in Mixed-Income Housing*

While there is evidence that some populations of HOPE VI participants benefit from leaving concentrated poverty neighborhoods and that some redeveloped HOPE VI areas show improvement in economic and environmental indicators (e.g. crime), studies also find that many residents are displaced into other public housing or impoverished neighborhoods. In many cases, public housing residents have not been adequately tracked (i.e. 'lost') and the community and social services provided to public housing residents have not produced the desired outcomes of economic self-sufficiency or increased life opportunities. This failure creates another related problem for those residents who want to move back into the revitalized neighborhood, because they may not meet the criteria for return. Because there are few longitudinal studies that examine processes and outcomes for low-income residents in revitalizing HOPE VI sites (for an exception, see Boston 2005), little is known about the benefits they receive from living in a revitalized, mixed-income neighborhood other than that some characteristics of the place have improved.

A central component of contemporary federal housing policy is the doctrine of local control. As a former HUD Secretary put it: 'It is a different mentality that says, "look to the cities, give the flexibility to the cities, let them shape their own destinies"' (Cuomo 1997, cited in J Smith 2000, 221). However, this rhetoric leaves open a question of significant political importance: who is the 'them' in the above statement? Is it the citizenry as a whole, the public housing authority, the municipal government, the private sector, or the residents who are directly affected? This lack of clarity allows for a reprioritization of program goals depending on who is sitting at the decision maker's table. Not surprisingly, there have been many documented cases where impoverished public housing residents have been excluded from having any real power in the decision-making process (Elliot et al. 2004; False HOPE 2002; J Smith 2000). Instead, city power brokers have been largely in control of the HOPE VI redevelopment

process (Bayer 2003; Keating 2000). Greater federal specificity in program goals may help to ensure that the needs of low-income city residents are not marginalized in favor of more influential stakeholders.

This being the case, should the HOPE VI program be abandoned, as the Bush administration has recommended for the past several budget cycles (McCarty 2007)? Most commentators are supportive of the goals of the HOPE VI program, but many have strong criticisms of the way it has been carried out over the past 15 years. There is broad-based support for more participation by community members in the planning and administration of redevelopment projects and in 2003 congress' reauthorization of the program included stronger requirements for resident participation. In 2007, legislation was introduced to reauthorize the program until 2013 (McCarty 2007).

Greater resident participation requirements might be a step toward improving mixed-income development projects as these relate to resident's hopes and goals; however, successful influence must go beyond simple participation as sanctioned by government policy (see Cooke and Kothari 2001). Scholars and policymakers must identify ways to build and mobilize neighborhood-based community capacity in support of people if such projects are to achieve the goal of poverty amelioration. The literature on comprehensive community initiatives finds that a community-centered approach toward neighborhood revitalization has the potential to help low-income households even in the face of tightening housing markets that threaten to displace residents (Fraser and Kick 2005). In addition, comprehensive community initiatives (CCIs) themselves can be a catalyst for improving neighborhood-level characteristics, promoting the development and sustainability of housing markets that the literature on mixed-income approaches has identified as so important for successful projects (Schubert 2001).

The belief that engaging current community members and organizations will facilitate mixed-income approaches is not new. The issue here is that engagement facilitates mixed-income approaches and that engagement may modify the mixed-income approaches to make them more acceptable to the current neighborhood residents. That said, there have been concerns that the current neighborhood's goals may not be the ones that should be implemented. Wexler (2001) notes that since 1996 HUD expanded its emphasis on having 'meaningful resident involvement' in HOPE VI projects by mandating that local authorities reach out to 'adjacent community in the development of community service and family support plans' (p. 208). He argues that community engagement has run smoothly in some locales, but that there is an underlying issue around control of decision-making from social services to actual management of development.

The HUD's position has been to allow resident involvement in every phase of HOPE VI short of actual decision-making authority (Wexler 2001). A different approach to community involvement goes beyond decision-making

for HOPE VI developments to broadening the agenda for engaging place-based community whether the mixed-income approach mandates it or not. Community engagement, in the form of comprehensive community initiatives, is a mechanism to improve all domains of neighborhood life because the long-term sustainability of a place requires that the people who live and work there can play a role in managing everyday issues that neighborhoods face.

Comprehensive community initiatives began during the 1990s as a model for organizing neighborhood residents, building community capacity, and linkages to external stakeholders for the purpose of positive neighborhood change (Fullbright-Anderson et al. 1998). These initiatives are people- and place-based as the goals typically include change in multiple domains that affect neighborhood life, including education, employment, physical infrastructure, housing and crime, as well as family and individual goals such as educational achievement, economic and employment opportunities, and health. In particular, this can translate into asset accumulation for low-income families whether that is access to affordable and decent housing or other forms of socioeconomic benefit. The CCI approach is guided by holistic themes (Fullbright-Anderson et al. 1998), as well as widespread public participation and resident decision-making (Chaskin et al. 2001; Green and Haines 2002). Underlying CCIs is a belief that community empowerment must be present in order to promote positive neighborhood effects (Fraser and Kick 2005).

The strength of CCIs is that 'resident involvement' means comprehensive participation in program design and implementation. While this is the case, place-based communities and even state and market-based actors all operate within an existing institutional frameworks for 'doing business', as well as broader sets of social relations that span places. Community, in this sense, may need to be thought of in terms of networks of actors that operate from different locales but have effects that manifest themselves in actual (specific) places. For example, a mixed-income development (i.e. housing) and the community of residents and actors that govern it need to work with economic entities that have the ability to provide living wage jobs, or lower-income populations will remain at risk of being displaced. This is especially true of non-HOPE VI mixed-income development that caters to the needs of new economy workers.

This raises a point around the linkage between place and space. The way we think about solutions to poverty can actually constrain mixed-income efforts. Consider that in the 'globalization' literature places are usually conceived as needing to attract capital investment (Massey 2005). This logic has been applied to creating 'sustainable' mixed-income housing developments: 'best practice' focuses on ways to attract middle-income populations to places that were once considered unappealing to those with a choice of where to live (Brophy and Smith 1997). Conceptually, this renders low-income populations of people (communities) ineffective at

dealing with poverty issues. Certainly, poverty needs to be addressed in a variety of ways and by a wide range of actors, but taking as a starting point that what already exists cannot be the foundation for a 'sustainable' future all but eliminates the ways in which low-income people could play a central role in producing economic formations that have an anti-poverty emphasis. There are many examples of socially responsible economic development being done under the banner of 'post-capitalist' or cooperative arrangements (Defilippis 2004; Gibson-Graham 2006), and these types of endeavors can be central features in mixed-income development that links housing and work. In particular, Birmingham, Alabama's Parc Place HOPE VI development has included business incubators as well as training facilities and schooling onsite (<http://www.parcplaceproperties.com/>). These are real institutional arrangements that have a chance of providing meaningful solutions for single parents who have to negotiate work, home and childcare, but the backbone of these types of initiatives must include the actual community members that it will not only live in the mixed-income environment initially, but also for populations down the road that may come to reside in these locales.

### *Conclusions*

Mixed-income approaches have been effective interventions in transforming impoverished neighborhoods. In particular, studies have found that mixed-income initiatives are successful at lowering crime, improving economic indicators, and producing quality housing for market-rate and subsidized tenants. This is an important step in assisting some low-income residents because concentrated poverty and poor neighborhood conditions shape life opportunities.

Still, investigations of mixed-income housing also suggest that very low-income residents face multiple barriers to economic self-sufficiency, health, and general well-being. The community and social services that have been provided as part of the HOPE VI program have been uneven and researchers have made policy suggestions for creating more effective case management and social service delivery mechanisms. One vehicle for providing the support and opportunity structures necessary to assist those in poverty are through the development of meaningful social networks and neighborhood-based institutions. Building community to provide for the welfare of a diverse group of residents takes focused and committed effort. In addition, the 'geography' of these communities needs to be thought of not only as literally place-based but also translocal, whereby coalitions of actors come to together to create effects in particular locales. This is a slightly different idea of community. It is a hybrid notion that does not necessarily base inclusion by living in place, but rather recognizing that for place-making to be ethical all parties must acknowledge their stake and negotiate what they want from a mixed-income housing development (Fraser et al. 2003).

While conceptually the mixed-income housing redevelopment is purported to promote both positive neighborhood change and opportunities for low-income households, thus serving both people and place-based objectives, some urban scholars have noted that the ‘benefits of HOPE VI [mixed-income] have chiefly been place-based: reclaiming particular neighborhoods, reducing criminal activity in those areas, and significantly upgrading the physical environment. In many cases, HOPE VI-style redevelopment has spawned or facilitated gentrification . . .’ (Goetz 2005, 409). This raises one final point about mixed-income development and the range of people and place-based goals it may achieve. If mixed-income developments/neighborhoods are what we desire then policy instruments need to be applied to keep a proportion of the housing obtainable for different ranges of low-income people. While this is a topic for a future paper, it is a real challenge that we as a society will have to face. Are we satisfied with moving poverty around cities and metropolitan areas, or can we develop innovative and geographically informed community-based approaches for the integration of housing needs with other domain areas that affect our quality of life?

### *Short Biographies*

Jim Fraser is an Associate Professor at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, where he holds an appointment in the Department of Human and Organizational Development and is a Fellow at the Vanderbilt Center for Nashville Studies. His research in urban studies focuses on community organizing and social justice, human dimensions of environmental change, and modes of conducting research. He has published in journals ranging from *Urban Affairs Review*, *Urban Studies*, *Urban Geography* and *Geography Compass* to *EOS*, *Space and Culture*, and *Economic and Industrial Democracy: An International Journal*.

Michael Nelson is Research Fellow at the Vanderbilt Center for Nashville Studies and doctoral candidate in the Community Research and Action Program at Vanderbilt University. His research focuses on the segmentation of metropolitan housing markets and housing accessibility across racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups.

### *Note*

\* Correspondence addresses: James Fraser, Vanderbilt University, 2201 West End Avenue, Nashville, TN 37240. E-mail: pavement@vanderbilt.edu; or Michael Nelson, Vanderbilt University, 2201 West End Avenue, Nashville, TN 37240. E-mail: m.nelson@vanderbilt.edu.

### *References*

Adams, J. S. (1984). The meaning of housing in America. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 74, pp. 515–526.

- Atkinson, R., and Bridge, G. (2005). *Gentrification in a global context: the new urban colonialism*. London: Routledge.
- Atkinson, R., and Kintrea, K. (1998). *Reconnecting excluded communities: the neighbourhood impacts of owner occupation*. Edinburgh, UK: Scottish Homes.
- . (2000). Owner-occupation social mix and neighbourhood impacts. *Policy and Politics* 28, pp. 93–108.
- . (2001). Disentangling area effects: evidence from deprived and non-deprived neighbourhoods. *Urban Studies* 38, pp. 2277–2298.
- Bair, E., and Fitzgerald, J. (2005). Hedonic estimation and policy significance of the impact of HOPE VI on neighborhood property values. *Review of Policy Research* 226, pp. 771–786.
- Bayor, R. H. (2003). The second ghetto: then and now. *Journal of Urban History* 29, pp. 238–242.
- Bernstein, S. (2004). *Making the case for mixed-income housing and mixed-use communities*. Center for Neighborhood Technology for Atlanta Neighborhood Development Partnership Inc., Atlanta, GA.
- Berry, B. J. L. (1985). Islands of renewal in seas of decay. In: Peterson, P. E. (ed.) *The new urban reality*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, pp. 69–96.
- Bloom, H. S., et al. (2005). *Promoting work in public housing: the effectiveness of jobs-plus*. New York: MDRC Publications.
- Boston, T. (2005). The effects of revitalization on public housing residents. *Journal of the American Planning Association* 714, pp. 393–406.
- Brazley, M., and Gilderbloom, J. I. (2007). HOPE VI housing program: was it effective? *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 66, pp. 133–142.
- Briggs, X. D. S. (2008). Maximum feasible misdirection: a reply to Imbroscio. *Journal of Urban Affairs* 30, pp. 131–137.
- Briggs, X. D. S., Darden, J. T., and Aidala, A. (1999). In the wake of desegregation: early impacts of scattered-site public housing on neighborhoods in Yonkers, New York. *Journal of the American Planning Association* 65, pp. 27–29.
- Brooks, F., et al. (2005). Resident perceptions of housing neighborhood and economic conditions after relocation from public housing undergoing HOPE VI redevelopment. *Research on Social Work Practice* 156, pp. 481–490.
- Brophy, P. C., and Smith, R. N. (1997). Mixed-income housing: factors for success. *Cityscape: A Journal of Policy Development and Research* 32, pp. 3–31.
- Buron, L. (2004). *An improved living environment? Neighborhood outcomes for HOPE VI relocatees*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.
- Clampet-Lundquist, S. (2004). HOPE VI relocation: moving to new neighborhoods and building new ties. *Housing Policy Debate* 15, pp. 415–448.
- Chaskin, R. J., et al. (2001). *Building community capacity*. New York: Aldine De Gruyter.
- Cole, I., and Goodchild, B. (2001). Social mix and the balanced community. *GeoJournal* 51, pp. 351–360.
- Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social capital in the creation human capital. *American Journal of Sociology* 94, pp. S95–S120.
- Collins, M. E., et al. (2005). Evaluation of social services in a Hope VI housing development: resident and staff perceptions of success and barriers. *Evaluation and Program Planning* 28, pp. 47–59.
- Cooke, B., and Kothari, U. (2001). *Participation: the new tyranny?* New York: Zed.
- Coulton, C., et al. (1996). Geographic concentration of affluence and poverty in 100 metropolitan areas. *Urban Affairs Review* 32, pp. 186–216.
- DeFilippis, J. (2004). *Unmaking goliath: community control in the face of global capital*. New York: Routledge.
- Dreier, P., Mollenkopf, J., and Swanstrom, T. (2004). *Place matters*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas.
- Ellen, I. G., and Turner, M. A. (1997). Does neighborhood matter? Assessing resident evidence. *Housing Policy Debate* 84, pp. 833–866.
- Elliot, J. R., Gotham, K. F., and Milligan, M. J. (2004). Framing the urban: struggles over HOPE VI and New Urbanism in a historic city. *City and Community* 3, pp. 373–394.
- Fullbright-Anderson, K., Kubisch, A. C., and Connell, J. P. (1998). *New approaches to evaluating community initiatives*. Washington, DC: Aspen Institute.

- False HOPE: A Critical Assessment of the HOPE VI Public Housing Program (2002). Washington DC. [online]. Retrieved on 20 September 2007 from <http://www.nhlp.org/html/pubhsg/FalseHOPE.pdf>
- Finkel, A., Lennon, K., and Eisenstadt, E. (2000). HOPE VI: a promising vintage. *Policy Studies Review* 172/3, pp. 104–119.
- Fraser, J. (2004). Beyond gentrification: mobilizing communities and claiming space. *Urban Geography* 255, pp. 437–457.
- Fraser, J., and Kick, E. (2005). Understanding community building in urban America. *Journal of Poverty* 91, pp. 23–43.
- . (2007). The role of public, private, non-profit and community sectors in shaping mixed-income housing outcomes. *Urban Studies* 44, pp. 2357–2377.
- Fraser, J., et al. (2003). The construction of the local and the limits of contemporary community-building in the United States. *Urban Affairs Review* 383, pp. 417–445.
- Galster, G., and Zobel, A. (1998). Will dispersed housing programmes reduce social problems in the USA? *Housing Studies* 135, pp. 605–622.
- Gibson-Graham, J. K. (2006). *A postcapitalist politics*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Goering, J. (2005). Expanding housing choice and integrating neighborhoods: the MTO experiment. In: Briggs, X. D. S. (ed.) *Geography of opportunity*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Goering, J., and Feins, J. (2008). Social science, housing policy, and the harmful effects of poverty. *Journal of Urban Affairs* 30, pp. 139–148.
- Goetz, E. G. (2005). Comment: public housing demolition and the benefits to low income families. *Journal of the American Planning Association* 714, pp. 407–410.
- Green, G. P., and Haines, A. (2002). *Asset building and community development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Harris, L. E., and Kaye, D. R. (2004). *How are HOPE VI families faring?* Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.
- Imbroscio, D. (2008). '[U]nited and actuated by some common impulse of passion': challenging the dispersal consensus in American housing policy research. *Journal of Urban Affairs* 30, pp. 111–130.
- Jacob, B. A. (2005). Public housing, housing vouchers, and student achievement: evidence from public housing demolitions in Chicago. *American Economic Review* 94, pp. 233–258.
- Jencks, C. and Mayer, S. (1990). The social consequences of growing up in a poor neighborhood. In: Lynn, L. E. and McGreary, M. G. H. (eds) *Inner-city poverty in the United States*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press.
- Joseph, M. L. (2006). Is mixed-income development an antidote to urban poverty. *Housing Policy Debate* 17, pp. 209–234.
- Jupp, B. (1999). *Living together: community life on mixed tenure estates*. London: Demos.
- Katz, P. (1993). *The new urbanism: toward an architecture of community*. New York: McGraw-Hill Professional.
- Keating, L. (2000). Redeveloping public housing: relearning urban renewal's immutable lessons. *Journal of the American Planning Association* 66, pp. 384–397.
- Kirp, D. L., Dwyer, H. P., and Rosenthal, L. A. (1995). *Our town*. New Brunswick, CT: Rutgers University Press.
- Kleinhans, R. (2003). Displaced but still moving upwards in the housing career? Implications of forced residential relocation in the Netherlands. *Housing Studies* 18, pp. 473–499.
- . (2004). Social implications of housing diversification in urban renewal: a review of recent literature. *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment* 19, pp. 367–390.
- Kleit, R. G. (2001). The role of neighborhood social networks in scattered site public housing residents' search for jobs. *Housing Policy Debate* 123, pp. 541–573.
- Kleit, R. G., and Manzo, L. C. (2006). To move or not to move: relationships to place and relocation choices in HOPE VI. *Housing Policy Debate* 17, pp. 271–308.
- Land, K. C., McCall, P. L., and Cohen, L. E. (1991). Characteristics of US cities with extreme high or low crime rates: results of discriminant analyses of 1960 1970 and 1980 data. *Social Indicators Research* 24, pp. 209–231.
- Lees, L., Slater, T., and Wyly, E. K. (2007). *Gentrification*. New York: Routledge.

- Levy, D. K., and Kaye, D. R. (2004). *How are HOPE VI families faring?: Income and employment*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.
- Levy, D. K., and Woolley, M. (2007). *Relocation is not enough: employment barriers among HOPE VI families*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.
- McCarty, M. (2007). *CRS report for congress: HOPE VI public housing revitalization program: background, funding, and issues*. Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service.
- Massey, D. (2005). *For space*. New York: Sage.
- Popkin, S. J., et al. (2000). The Gautreaux legacy: what might mixed-income and dispersal strategies mean for the poorest public housing tenants. *Housing Policy Debate* 114, pp. 911–942.
- Popkin, S. J., et al. (2004). *A decade of hope VI: research findings and policy challenges*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute and Brookings Institution.
- Putnam, R. (2000). *Bowling alone: the collapse and revival of American community*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Quercia, R. G., and Galster, G. C. (1997). Threshold effects and the expected benefits of attracting middle-income households to the central city. *Housing Policy Debate* 82, pp. 409–436.
- Salama, J. J. (1999). The redevelopment of distressed public housing: early results from HOPE VI projects in Atlanta, Chicago, and San Antonio. *Housing Policy Debate* 101, pp. 95–142.
- Schubert, M. (2001). Revitalizing the smart growth debate – revisited. *Bright Ideas (a Neighborworks Publication)* 203, pp. 37–38.
- Smith, A. (2002). *Mixed-income housing developments: promise and reality*. Cambridge, MA: Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University and Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation.
- Smith, J. (2000). The space of local control in the devolution of of US public housing policy. *Geografiska Annaler* 82, pp. 221–233.
- Smith, N. (2002). New globalism, new urbanism: gentrification as global urban strategy. *Antipode* 34, pp. 427–450.
- Squires, G. D., and Kubrin, C. E. (2005). Privileged places: race, uneven development and the geography of opportunity in urban America. *Urban Studies* 42, pp. 47–68.
- Taylor, R. B., and Covington, J. (1993). Community structural change and fear of crime. *Social Problems* 40, pp. 374–397.
- Tegeler, P. D. (2005). The persistence of segregation in government housing programs. In Briggs, X. D. S. (ed.) *Geography of opportunity*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, pp. 197–218.
- US General Accounting Office. (2003). *Public housing: HOPE VI resident issues and changes in neighborhoods surrounding grant sites*. Washington DC: US General Accounting Office.
- Vale, L. J. (2006). Comment on Mark Joseph's 'Is mixed income housing the antidote to urban poverty'. *Housing Policy Debate* 17, pp. 259–269.
- Varady, D. P., et al. (2005). Attracting middle-income families in the HOPE VI public housing revitalization program. *Journal of Urban Affairs* 272, pp. 149–164.
- Weber, R. (2002). Extracting value from the city: neoliberalism and urban redevelopment. *Antipode* 343, pp. 519–540.
- Wexler, H. J. (2001). HOPE VI: market means/public ends: the goals strategies and midterm lessons of HUD's urban revitalization demonstration program. *Journal of Affordable Housing* 103, pp. 195–233.
- Wilkins, C. S. (2002). *Barriers to creating and sustaining mixed income communities...and how to overcome the barriers discussion draft*. Washington, DC: Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation.
- Wilson, W. J. (1987). *The truly disadvantaged*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- . (1996). *When work disappears: the world of the new urban poor*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Wood, M. (2003). A balancing act? Tenure diversification in Australia and the UK. *Urban Policy and Research* 21, pp. 45–56.
- Wyly, E. K., and Hammel, D. J. (1999). Islands of decay in seas of renewal: housing policy and the resurgence of gentrification. *Housing Policy Debate* 10, pp. 711–770.
- . (2000). Capital's metropolis: Chicago and the transformation of American housing policy. *Geografiska Annaler* 82, pp. 181–206.
- Zielenbach, S. (2003). Assessing economic change in HOPE VI neighborhoods. *Housing Policy Debate* 144, pp. 621–655.