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London, UK, Routledge, 2024

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BOOK REVIEW

Communities of resistance and resilience in the post-industrial city: A transnational perspective from Lyon and Pittsburgh, by Daniel Holland, London, UK, Routledge, 2024

Daniel Holland's *Communities of Resistance and Resilience in the Post-Industrial City* provides a thought-provoking, modern historical comparison of the neighborhood revitalization processes in Pittsburgh, in the U.S., and the Lyon area, in France. The book is a contemporary history, focusing temporally on the 1980s to the 2010s, with some context from the decades before and after. The comparative structure alternates from Pittsburgh to Lyon, highlighting and analyzing key people-led initiatives and efforts from this period. Each chapter covers roughly a decade. The book focuses on seven neighborhoods in Pittsburgh (Bloomfield, Garfield, Friendship, East Liberty, Larimer, Hill District, and Manchester) and six social housing complexes in the Lyon area (La Duchére, Mas du Taureau, La Grappinére, Les Minguettes, Teraillon, and Parilly).

The purpose in focusing on these communities is to complicate top-down narratives of these two cities' "comebacks" by focusing on the individuals and collectives organizing the revitalization efforts "from below." In Pittsburgh this story begins with pushback and responses to urban renewal in the 1970s and 1980s and ends with questions about community reinvestment's role in exacerbating the racial wealth gap since 2008. Holland's position as vice president for programs at the National Community Reinvestment Coalition during the book's timeframe makes the Pittsburgh side of the global comparison especially rich. One could attribute this richness to Holland's own confusion or frustration with the way Pittsburgh's community development "success story" resulted in displacement for many working-class residents of color.

In Lyon this narrative starts with de-industrialization's impact on *banlieu* residents and the overlaps between labor and housing challenges that galvanized organizing efforts in the 1970s and 1980s. The Lyon arc ends in a similar place to that of Pittsburgh: rising real estate prices, and growing inequality. Lyon is justified as the comparison given its ethnic diversity, river adjacency, long history of bottom-up resistance, and post–World War II economic changes that liken war-torn Lyon to de-industrialized Pittsburgh, at least in the 1960s when the book's histories begin. Interestingly, Lyon's population grows by nearly 10% during the book's time frame, while Pittsburgh's population halves during the same time, but the realities of post–World War II Lyon give legitimacy to the de-industrialized similarities of the study areas.

Holland asserts two primary contributions to scholarship on neighborhood revitalization. The first is to situate social capital as a counter to discrimination. The author operationalizes social capital as the "mutual dependence" needed to construct an "army" of residents to change communities from below through classic Alinksy organizing methodologies. Echoing James DeFilippis's (2001) critiques of Robert Putnam, Holland defines social capital as the fuel for social struggles of working-class folk. In many respects, the term *social capital* has lost its prominence in urban discourse over the last 20 or so years. The collectivist framing employed by Holland, however, allows the main characters to be community development corporations (CDCs) and tenant associations. These protagonists contradict the more popular, top-down, story of urban revitalization in post-industrial cities (Glaeser et al., 2004). Holland instead uses social capital in a bottom-up manner to keep resident actions as the primary focus, instead of neoliberal institutional actors like the "meds and eds."

Holland's second key contribution is to reframe the working-class neighborhoods of Pittsburgh and Lyon, from places of absence or decline, to places of struggle and resistance, a welcome and growing trend in recent urban history (Rodriguez, 2021). The negative perceptions of these lower-income communities are a phenomenon Holland refers to as "narrative blight," referencing an urban renewal term (*blight*) used in the 1950s and 1960s to justify the demolition and displacement of entire working-

class neighborhoods, mostly communities of color. As a brief aside, it is fascinating to see how often Holland leans on this racialized term in his self-proclaimed anti-discriminatory endeavor, at a time when many in urban studies are questioning such racialized terms (Shelterforce, 2017). At any rate, Holland seeks to undo the top-down perceptions of structurally disinvested communities by centering the stories of the neighborhood activists themselves, a necessary expansion of the literature.

Holland achieves their dual scholarly aims with varying levels of success. One key challenge for a book about communal resistance, struggle, and the realities of building and employing people power, is that the concept of power and the ways it is produced and maintained, are rarely mentioned. This is especially significant when the book discusses the powerful. Of course, Holland's goal was to focus on communal resistance, but most resistance is responding to a powerful actor often occupied with maintaining the status quo. There is some discussion of this, such as how urban renewal "stoked the flames" of Pittsburgh's Black female-led communal resistance in the 1960s and 1970s, laying the groundwork for Pittsburgh to become a CDC hub in the decades to follow. However, it seems short-sighted to not unpack what it means for a "grassroots revolution" to be waged in the boardrooms of banks as Holland asserts about the Pittsburgh movement. More specifically, recent community development scholars are using power analysis frameworks, like John Gaventa's "power cube," to better understand the spaces, levels, and forms through which power manifests in urban development processes (Nickels et al., 2024; Tchida & Stout, 2024). While Holland is a historian and not a political scientist, a more nuanced power analysis would have resulted in a stronger narrative, given the book's focus on bottom-up power building. It would also have made the results of the Lyon and Pittsburgh movements—increased minority displacement and higher real estate prices—less surprising. After all, what else would you expect a movement to produce when it is emanating from a bank boardroom?

Analyzing the many forms, spaces, and levels of power becomes even more important when you consider the time period Holland focuses on and its relationship to the broader evolution of the U.S. community development sector. The 1980s–2000s were the peak of professionalization for U.S. community development corporations. Actors in this space were turning from the activists and organizers of the 1960s and 1970s to bankers, financers, lawyers and similar professionals. More critical community development scholars have suggested that the American community development movement, which started in the mid-to-late 1960s, was in fact a strategy for taming the more radical elements of the civil rights ecosystem from which it came (Nickels et al., 2024; Sviridoff, 2004). In this book, Holland casts the U.S. urban riots of the late 1960s in a negative light, seeming to prefer a more tame communal resistance palatable for American white middle-class morals.

Given the transnational focus and the history of fierce popular resistance in France, it seemed like there was opportunity to make a case for how the more untamed responses to oppression and discrimination provided fuel for the social capital of these movements. This omission also speaks to a larger challenge worth noting in this book. It is hard to make the case that both cities, Lyon and Pittsburgh, received equal treatment and equal detail. Much of this is likely attributable to the unequal experiences of the author, having worked in Pittsburgh for decades and seeing Lyon through the eyes of a scholarly observer. But in shorting the Lyon side of the narrative, Holland missed a key opportunity to complicate American ideations of resistance, including what is "necessary" or "comfortable," and when. Take the response to the campus protests of the spring of 2024. Liberal elected officials and pundits alike chastised peaceful university demonstrators instead of the violent anti-protestors they provoked (Megerian, 2024). In a similar way, Holland appears to prefer development to agitation. If the author really wants to discuss what it means for relatively powerless, lower-income communities to resist, then why show such favor to neoliberal methods of resistance that the powerful prefer?

Despite these critiques, Holland's book is a welcome contribution to a growing body of resistance-centric histories and does a good job of depicting the complications of doing bottom-up organizing. The community organizers, planners, and advocates that continue to actualize resident-led power building through neighborhood and tenant groups would be served by reading Holland's contribution. It is a good account of the promises of collective

neighborhood change from someone who had a front seat to the Pittsburgh story and has a solid grasp on the Lyon story. It was especially interesting to see the parallels between Lyon's *banlieus* and urban core Pittsburgh neighborhoods as residents in both places equally sought to operationalize their collective rights to the city, and are now wrestling with the consequences.

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