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## Patterns of Women's Perceptions of their Revitalized Osaka Neighbourhood

Meric KIRMIZI

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## Patterns of Women's Perceptions of their Revitalized Osaka Neighbourhood

Meric KIRMIZI

### 1. Introduction

This paper is part of a three year qualitative study of Japanese gentrification, conducted in the Horie neighbourhood in Nishi Ward, Osaka. The research was based on participant observation and 51 interviews with various social groups, affiliated with the area, including long-term residents, newcomers, and area businesses such as wood-related businesses, real estate agents, and cultural entrepreneurs, as well as organizational representatives. The overall finding of this research was that Japanese gentrification differed from the gentrification models of the Global North (Smith and Williams 1986) and South (Lees et. al. 2015) in terms of its motivation, process, and outcomes. However, recently, it is becoming more similar to the neoliberal urban patterns of the Global North. In the case of Horie, a local policy emphasis on creating a convenient area for child-care was observed.

This paper focuses on the 24 women participants of the study, incorporating the ideas of eleven newcomer mothers –including a single mother, eight long-term residents, four business owners and one employee in Horie. Therefore, this paper is based on a diverse sample of women interviewees, belonging to different age groups and social standing from Horie. The research questions are: What is the stance of women on Japanese gentrification? How do women interpret their neighbourhood's upgrading, and how are they influenced by it? Several studies include theoretical discussions of gender and gentrification with respect to: women's role as gentrifiers (Patch 2008; Kern 2010; Ronald and Nakano 2013); “gendered precarity” (Kern 2013) in gentrification; genderfication as urban policy (Van den Berg 2013), and the possible outcomes of feminine gentrification or a feminized city versus a feminist city. This study argues that in the context of gentrification, women are highly vocal and involved in city (re)making processes in Japanese urban neighbourhoods. However, these Japanese women did not achieve togetherness, since their expectations of a good neighbourhood differed.

In this article, I will first introduce three seminal works to enable a renewed interpretation of the issues of urban revitalization and gentrification through their discussions of significant dilemmas related to geographical scales. Next, I will make an analysis of the Horie case based on the interviews with the area women from a dialectical perspective. The article will be concluded with a reconsideration of the relationship between gender and gentrification by highlighting its

contradictions in the Japanese context.

## 2. Reconsidering Urban Social Change through Dilemmas

In this section, three works by Bauman (2001), Harvey (2017), and Musset (2016) that could help open up the discussion on urban regeneration and gentrification are introduced. All three works pointed to a higher level of analysis for handling social issues of space. The authors approached similar social problems at different theoretical and practical levels. Moreover, they used different terminology, and called for different kinds of politics: a politics of redistribution against a politics of difference (Bauman 2001); a politics of abstraction or a socialist politics (Harvey 2017); a politics for equality/social justice (Musset 2016). Their common point is an emphasis on certain dilemmas, related to geographical scales. These contradictions were regarded as valuable, because: "By perpetually keeping them open, we keep open a primary resource for the creative thinking and practices necessary to achieve progressive social change." (Harvey 2017: 235) The dilemmas mentioned and the solutions offered in these works could provide some clues for thinking about urban social problems in a different light.

Firstly, Bauman introduced about *the community and individuality dilemma* by saying, "Whatever you choose, you gain some and lose some. Missing community means missing security; gaining community, if it happens, would soon mean missing freedom." (Bauman 2001: 4) Bauman reminded about the historical development of the concept of community by referring to Tonnies' *gemeinschaft*, Goran Rosenberg's warm circle, and Robert Redfield's distinctive, small, and self-sufficient community. About the nature of distinctiveness, Bauman wrote: "The sameness evaporates once the communication between its insiders and the world outside becomes more intense and carries more weight than the mutual exchanges of the insiders." (Bauman 2001: 13)

In telling about the creation of a proletariat in the industrial revolution era, which was an "era of engagement" based on social engineering efforts, such as those of Taylor, Mayo, and Ford, Bauman also wrote about a recession of craftsmanship, and "the separation of business from the household" (Bauman 2001: 29), making references to Veblen and Weber. On the other hand, the era after the post-war reconstruction was defined as "the times of 'great disengagement'" (ibid: 41). Bauman enumerated what characterized this latter era as high speed, lessened commitment, and deregulation --flexibility, downsizing, and outsourcing. He referred to Sennett's work to argue that the social frame of work and livelihood --including the family-- as well as the sense of place were lost. Regarding the loss of place, he wrote:

Gone are the friendly corner grocery shops; if they have managed to withstand the supermarket competition, their owners, managers, the faces behind the counter change much too often for any of them to harbour the permanence no longer found in the street. (...) In are

the department stores and high-street chain shops, expected to survive from one friendly merger or hostile takeover to another, but in the meantime changing their staff at a pace which reduces to zero the chances of meeting the same salesperson twice. (Bauman 2001: 46-47)

Bauman also discussed the aesthetic community with reference to Kant, as opposed the ethical community. The need for aesthetic community was related to the identity construction (Bauman 2001: 66). He considered the idol-centred aesthetic community as "a community of non-belonging, a togetherness of loners" (ibid: 68). Unlike ethical communities, aesthetic communities did not bind their members by ethical responsibilities or long-term commitments (ibid: 71). The anxieties of identity-building made individuals seek after the company of similar others again. They also sought the company of other escapees not to be too lonely. Yet, just like Don Juans would not make a community, the new elites who retreated into gated communities also did not make a community. They were "exterritorial" (Bauman 2001: 54) in the sense that they did not have a permanent residence. However, the "territory of exterritoriality" of the globalizers was not open to communication with the real physical world outside. It was insular, like a bubble.

As the social institutions weakened, the value of place intensified, despite the growing exterritoriality of the global elite. For example, safety became a local matter, which was tried to be solved for example, at the neighbourhood level. Even the global elite sought for their safe places, such as a gated community, which "stands for isolation, separation, protective walls and guarded gates." (Bauman 2001: 114) In a context of increasing individualization and institutionalization of urban fear in Zukin's terms, we were now targeting at a "safe neighbourhood community" instead of "the 'perfect' (...) society" (ibid: 116). Bauman suggested that we were trying to solve our collective problems, such as a feeling of insecurity by individual acts. Musset (2016) also claimed that the pursuit of society, social inclusiveness and a social mix at the city level through concepts, such as a "just city"<sup>1)</sup>, was problematic, because:

The primary illusion is to think that we can eradicate social injustices by taking actions on the urban forms. Metaphorically, acting this way is like painting on a mirror to erase the wrinkles from the face that is reflected on it: unjust society will always produce an unjust city. (Musset 2016: 57)

Secondly, Musset (2016) made a critique of the recently popular socio-spatial concepts, such as resilience, inclusive city, good city, equity, and security, in addition to the just city, when discussing *the dilemma of neoliberal and just city and equality*. He argued that these concepts were used to legitimize the current competitive and neoliberal city, which was the urban output of what Bauman referred to as "the times of 'great disengagement'" (Bauman 2001: 41), instead of pursuing

a real equality among citizens. These politically correct slogans of "equity, resilience, durability, participation, inclusion and innovation" (Musset 2016: 58), and the just city, were actually extensions of the neoliberal city. Hence, it was possible to think the seemingly opposite terms of competitive and just, resilient and vulnerable together. Musset argued that as long as the city was a palimpsest of higher ideological struggles, social problems could not be solved by just changing the city, and for these reasons, the just city was only a "myth" (ibid: 60).

In this context of conceptual ambiguity concerning urban social change, Harvey (2017) considered a revision of a discussion on geographical scales to be important, also when specific anti-capitalist movements, including anti-gentrification struggles, abounded everywhere around the world at present. Therefore, thirdly, Harvey (2017) discussed *the dilemma of space and place* to arrive at a politics of abstraction and possibility of socialist politics. Harvey made a discussion of the concepts of space, place, environment, militant particularism, and loyalty, with a worker's campaign against the closure of a car factory in Oxford in the late 1980s and early 1990s in the background. He strengthened his argument for a politics of abstraction through an analysis of the novels of Raymond Williams<sup>2)</sup>, including "People of the Black Mountains", "Border Country", and "Loyalties", and concentrating on his concept of "militant particularism". Militant particularism meant: "Ideas forged out of the affirmative experience of solidarities in one place get generalised and universalised as a working model of a new form of society that will benefit all of humanity." (ibid: 229)

As for the suggestions to these dilemmas of urban social change, Bauman argued for a collective struggle for our "shared troubles" (Bauman 2001: 144) against the atomizing tendencies of the contemporary life which intensified our problems. He saw community as a useful tool for that struggle, but with two conditions: That it supported an equality of resources, and it provided for a collective backup for individual failures (ibid: 149). His understanding of the now missing community was "a community woven together from sharing and mutual care; a community of concern and responsibility for the equal right to be human and the equal ability to act on that right." (ibid: 150) On the other hand, Musset (2016) promoted directly the idea of equality instead of an equalitarian community. Finally, Harvey (2017) argued for taking distance from a particular issue at hand to render militant particularism and socialist politics possible; otherwise, one ended up supporting some urgent causes of the (place) moment without turning it into a vehicle for changing the capitalist system. He gave the example of women who returned eventually to their sources of violence for not breaking away from their dependencies.

This suggestion of taking a distance did not mean only working at the abstract, theory level: "... theoretical practice must be constructed as a continuous dialectic of the militant particularism of the lived lives on the one hand, and the struggle to achieve sufficient critical distance and detachment on the other." (Harvey 2017: 242) He drew attention to the problem of socialist politics

accordingly:

But where does 'place' begin and end? And is there a scale beyond which 'militant particularism' becomes impossible to ground, let alone sustain? The problem for socialist politics is to find ways to answer such questions, not in any final sense, but precisely through defining modes of communication and translation between different kinds and levels of abstraction. (Harvey 2017: 240)

These dilemmas of community and individuality, neoliberal and just city and equality, and space and place and the theoretical suggestions for solving them could provide opportunities for reconsidering not only the urban change processes themselves, but also the various local approaches to a neoliberalizing city and the social interactions within a gentrified neighbourhood, including those of the most visible, that is women.

### **3.The Horie Neighbourhood Example**

The case of Horie provided examples of several dilemmas, related to different loyalties and uses of space of various social groups, such as long-term residents and newcomers. In this section, the change of the Horie neighbourhood and its present situation are examined by bringing out important contradictions from the interviews with Horie's women.

#### **3.1. The Dilemma of a Costly vs. an Affordable Living**

The Horie residents usually evaluated the living costs in their area by separating housing costs from other daily living expenses. Most of the study interviewees, regardless of their length of stay in the area and employment condition, considered Horie's housing costs, including both rents and purchase prices, expensive. When the interviewees were asked about their area's problems, the expensive housing cost was the most common reply. The housing costs differed according to the type and place of the apartments in Nishi Ward. Family condominiums and apartments which were closer to the major transportation axes, such as the Yotsubashi Line, as well as the newly built high-rise apartments, were more expensive. On the other hand, one did not have to depend on a car in Horie for its transport convenience. Still, Horie had its social divides. One interviewee noted, "Also in Nishi Ward, when divided by the river into the east and the west, the other side of the river (the west) has a downtown area-like feeling, I think." (A 2013) Two interviewees agreed that the prices became cheaper towards the west of Nishi Ward.

During the bubble era in the 1980s, the construction of new apartments was too expensive. Today on the contrary, new apartment buildings mushroomed all over Horie. Despite a lack of construction during the economic bubble, the apartment values in Horie rose extremely at the time,



until for instance, they equalled to those of "very luxurious apartments" (A 2013). The rise in land values together with the bubble economy was considered to be beneficial only for those people who sold their assets and left Horie. On the other hand, the leavers had relationship difficulties in the places where they moved, "because one had to begin the human relations, which she had cultivated since old days, from scratch again in a new place" (C 2013). For the other people who stayed in Horie, the asset price bubble meant only increased property taxes as underlined by an interviewee: "(Land values) do not rise suddenly as before. The bubble was great. It was gruelling. If one does not sell, it is only toilsome for the owner for the property tax rises." (E 2013)

After the bubble burst in the early 1990s, the Horie neighbourhood went through a period of decay with a decrease in the area's main, furniture business for several reasons, including: the already built-in furniture of apartments buildings; a generational change in furniture tastes and needs --such as not needing a special closet for *kimono* anymore (G 2013); a decrease in "regular customers" (K 2014), and increased competition in the furniture business. A small group of Horie's family businesses chose to remain in furniture business, and put efforts in revitalizing their area, as well as reforming their businesses. On the other hand, another group which mostly had a problem of succession closed down their businesses, and rented their shops to other types of businesses, such as apparel, accessories, galleries, and cafes. Among the latter, renter group, some moved out of Horie, whereas others stayed in the area only as residents. An interviewee described the situation of the former furniture shop-owners as: "They lend the shop, receive rents every month, and live on the second or third floor. The people who do not wish to leave this land, rent downstairs, and make upstairs their home." (O 2013) In any case, this development indicated a separation of the house and the workplace which was also observed in the industrial era, and evaluated by Bauman (2001) as a dispossession.

Horie's commercial gentrification after the bubble economy resulted in the shops' changing hands. Local family businesses were taken over by outside corporate interests, similar to the western cases of commercial gentrification (Gonzalez and Waley 2013; Schlack and Turnbull 2015). The former public markets, and local shops, including furniture shops, were replaced by supermarkets, convenience stores, and other service businesses with a focus on brands. Horie's revitalization, which gave birth to the so-called Horie brand, also pushed up the area's living costs. A mother interviewee commented, "Since there is not any place like a market, I cannot buy things like vegetables or fish for cheap. Supermarkets do not sell except for fixed prices." (O 2013) Another mother found it difficult for people with a limited income to live in Horie because: "There are plenty of shops, and too much temptation." (V 2013)

The expensive commodity prices in Horie were also a consequence of the higher shop rents there, compared to Osaka's other recently popular, old, and residential and commercial areas, such as Tanimachi in Chuo Ward and Nakazakicho in Kita Ward. In these neighbourhoods, self-

repair or renovation of old buildings, which belonged mostly to some elderly people from the local community, for making individual shops was a common practice. It helped keep the shop rents down (J 2014; L 2015). Moreover, the rents of Horie's street level shops were also higher than those of for example, suburban shopping malls, because the street level shops' "maintenance costs became high" (I 2014). In Horie, neither the physical nor the social conditions of area shops did not allow for individuals, renting for cheap amounts.

The privatization of public facilities in Horie was another factor behind area's increased living costs. For example, after a public community centre in Horie was privatized, the cost of renting its spaces for local activities rose (G 2013). An interviewee said: "Horie residents had been using it (the centre) easily until now, but it is difficult (now that) it turned into bidding or such a form." (H 2013) Regarding the upcoming privatization of the Horie Kindergarten<sup>3)</sup>, another interviewee was surprised to hear some supporting statements of the newcomers for the privatization. She said: "The government abolishes the public nursery. When we made a petition drive for keeping the public nursery with a history, I heard a young mother say, 'Why should it remain? It is better to do away with expensive things, and make a private kindergarten.' Then, I realized that there were various opinions." (F 2013) Hence, privatization could be a controversial issue between long-term residents and some of the newcomers because they had different opinions and "loyalties" (Harvey 2017) about a local matter.

The high living costs in Horie did not only affect the type and nature of businesses, but also affected the profile of area residents. A long-term resident interviewee remarked: "Young couples increased in my apartment, but (they have) two-incomes. They leave their children (to the nursery) from the morning, and both (go to) work. Such a state seems to be common." (F 2013) A newcomer mother observed the same about the commonness of two-income households with children as Horie's residents (P 2013). Therefore, the traditional Japanese family composition of a working husband and a homemaking wife was changing. An interviewee considered Horie to be less folksy than Osaka's other neighbourhoods with an old community, such as her husband's hometown, Awaji. Another interviewee, who was a Horie-born teacher, also did not find Horie folksy, in contrast to the general Osaka image portrayed by its stand-up comedies, such as those produced by Yoshimoto Kogyo Co, Ltd., a famous comedy troop.<sup>4)</sup> (G 2013) A third interviewee who worked at a new interior shop agreed by saying, "I have the impression that there are many relatively rich people, even if not so far as (making up) a wealthy class" (I 2014). Therefore, the social status of Horie's residents was evaluated to be above the city average in general.

The inflationary effect of Horie's revitalization on housing and other commodity prices did not spare any group of women, whether they were long-term residents, business owners or newcomers. Horie's expensive housing was a common source of complaint for all, except for some leavers and rentiers. While some long-term resident women took action to protect the area's public facilities,

Horie's higher image than the folksy Osaka in general was a matter of local pride for some other long-term resident women. Next, I will turn to analyzing in detail the apartment lifestyle in Horie that has been becoming widespread since the second half of the twentieth century.

### **3.2. The Dilemma of an Apartment vs. a Single-Family House Lifestyle**

Horie had been surrounded by rivers where timbers had been floated until after the Second World War. After the 1950s, a few of these rivers, such as Nagahori River, Horie River, and Nishiyokobori River, were filled in and replaced by roadways. Before the infilling, Nagahori River and Nishiyokobori River had crossed at a unique waterway intersection point with four bridges, called Yotsubashi. None of the interviewees remembered the area with the old rivers, but some of them witnessed the existence of many timber and furniture dealers, who did business and lived with their families in Horie. These tradesmen lived mostly in single-family houses in a neighbourly way. An interviewee, who was from a timber dealer family herself, explained the old neighbourhood landscape: "There were not any large apartments; small houses lined up." (E 2013) These houses functioned as both homes and workplaces according to another interviewee who said: "The family made timber dealership, and the house and the business were together." (H 2013) Therefore, Horie's old wood businesses continued the lifestyle of craftsmen, which Sennett (2008) skilfully described. In explaining about the medieval workshops, he noted, "In the Middle Ages, craftsmen slept, ate, and raised their children in the places where they worked." (Sennett 2008: 53).

Following an increase in the city population and the establishment of the Japan Housing Corporation<sup>5)</sup> in 1955, apartment buildings began to be constructed in Osaka. A construction of apartments on the lands of formerly failed businesses was also promoted as a way to revitalize the static economy (G 2013). Hence, there were more apartment units than single-family houses in Horie at present. An interviewee who had her house reconstructed approximately 30 years ago so that she could rent its first floor as a shop gave the following example of the growing number of apartments in Horie: "The whole (neighbourhood) changed. (...) From about 330 units, including shops and apartments, only nine are single-family houses (in my neighbourhood)." (D 2013) The increase in the number of apartments in the area was acknowledged commonly as a major change in Horie during the last 30 years by the interviewees.

When the construction of apartment buildings was a relatively new process, it created some conflicts among Horie's residents because of light and noise problems, and worries regarding the incoming residents. An interviewee pointed out these problems, related to the apartment heights: "When an apartment is built, the wind's direction changes, and the sunlight is shut out; (thus) it becomes a problem." (A 2013) The Japanese government did not get involved in such issues, except for regulating the building's height according to the street's width in front of it. The single-family houses' residents expressed their complaints about apartmentalization at the neighbourhood

associations, but to no avail. There were also some protests against the construction of one-room apartments for single dwellers approximately 20 years ago, because the arrival of many single residents to the area was expected to influence the neighbourhood community negatively.

More recently, the opening of a funeral hall in Kita Horie has created a controversy, as the people in the surrounding apartments argued against such an 'ill-omened' business in their vicinity. An interviewee interpreted this controversy as: "When there is a funeral hall near, the value of the apartment falls. That's the first (reason)." (A 2013) This reasoning could be reconsidered in relation with the rent gap theory, which explained the urban revitalization processes, such as gentrification, in terms of a land's potential gain from a more profitable use than the existing one (Smith [1979] 2010: 90). Although these past concerns regarding the construction of apartments may sound conservative and exclusionist, in fact, apartmentalization brought about individualization in the neighbourhood.

Horie's familiar, *nagaya*<sup>6</sup>-like atmosphere, where people called out to and knew each other, diminished with the development of an apartment's vertical lifestyle. A shift from house ownership to tenantry, except for the family condominiums, occurred with the building of apartments. The rise in rental apartments led to an issue of transiency, and therefore, a lack of involvement of the resident population. "There are few people, settling down permanently in Horie," said an interviewee (H 2013). The meaning of neighbourhood was reduced to a temporary stage in a person's own and family lifecycle until she moved out to: the husband's family house (O 2013; Z 2013); a greener and cheaper suburban area, preferably near the family homes, especially for those who were of such countryside origin themselves (N 2013; S2013; V 2013), and other areas where their children would go to school (R 2013; AA 2016). The more footloose apartment dwellers did not participate so much in the neighbourhood associations as the house owners. The same lack of participation applied to the shop-owners who have developed in years their own independent customer portfolios (J 2014; L 2015; M 2015). These shop-owners achieved an independent status, because place was mostly irrelevant for the nature of their products and services. Therefore, the relationships of some apartment dwellers and shop-owners with the rest of the local community remained at a polite, greeting level, akin to the "limited exposure" (Atkinson 2016) of urban elites in London.

These inhabitants of Horie with limited exposure, including the apartment dwellers and shop-owners with a niche audience, did not have any important quarrels with the other inhabitants, but they lacked the "opportunities" (I 2014) as motivating spaces of encounter --except for some local festivals, such as the Tosa Inari Shrine's cherry blossom festival (G 2013)-- and time --due to for example, being dual-income families (P 2013)-- for a deeper communication. Therefore, the construction of apartment buildings through new-build gentrification and shop conversions was a major, socially divisive factor among Horie's women due to a lack of communication and some spatial controversies.

*Figure 1* Minami Horie Area's Women's Association at the Bon Dance Festival in August, 2017



### 3.3. The Dilemma of an Urban Village vs. a City Area

Reciprocal knowing diminished with apartmentalization, resulting in a growing unfamiliarity among Horie residents such that apartment dwellers are mostly unaware of their neighbours' occupations at present. A newcomer mother interviewee commented, "Generally, I do not know in detail, but I know, if there is a family, a grandmother, a pet, (like) a dog." (V 2013) A long-term resident interviewee confirmed the situation by suggesting that "Now, such acquaintance decreased, and it feels like, (I don't know) what the neighbour is doing." (C 2013) Another interviewee added that "They are only an apartment's inhabitants. There are so many people who have not even talked to each other." (D 2013) Yet, the close relationship among the long-term residents continues today, and some newcomers and business owners in Horie were even surprised to find the following in a city: a neighbourly atmosphere (S 2013), with a strong web of residents' associations (L 2015), which organized many local activities (Y 2013; L 2015).

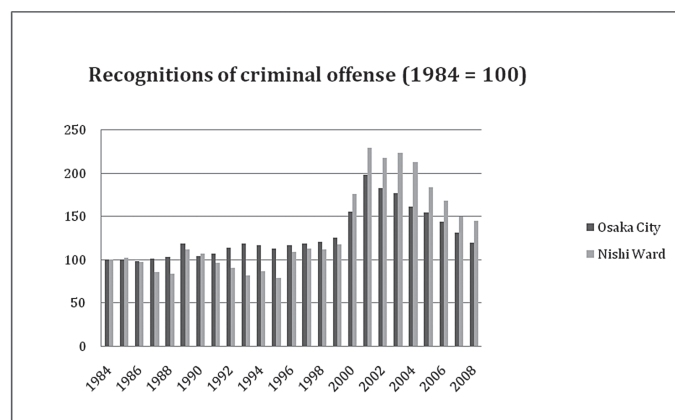
A few interviewees compared Horie to an "urban village" because of its close-knit community of long-term residents and business owners. A long-term resident interviewee explained her sentiment as: "We call Horie the country-side of the city. (It's like) country-side, although it's inside the city, and (actually) very close to the downtown areas, such as Shinsaibashi and Namba." (E 2013) This village-like quality had both a good side --safety-- and a bad side --not being able to act freely as a stranger in the city. About the bad side, the same interviewee admitted to feeling a need to be "free of constraints" or said that she "sometimes might wish to go to a place where nobody knew her." (ibid.) On the other hand, not all of the interviewees felt a social pressure. Another interviewee who also compared the social life in the country-side with that of Horie suggested that it was easier to talk with people during simple, daily encounters in Horie than in the country-side, where houses were scattered more loosely. At the same time, Horie kept the free quality of a city so that one did not have to communicate with everyone in contrast to the obligatory relationships of the country-side. In this sense, a good balance between a Simmelian metropolis and a Jacobsian

urban community was achieved in Horie.

While Horie's well-developed local community created at times, a too familiar and controlling environment for some of the long-term residents, it also formed a kind of self-enclosed group of insiders, composed of the long-term residents and the residing business owners. Horie's insiders assumed that the new dwellers in Horie's apartments, considered as the semi-outsiders, did not participate much in the neighbourhood associations. The long-term residents, consisting of usually the elderly and the retired people, took part most actively in the various units of the neighbourhood associations, including the women's association, the children's association, and the elderly people's association. They joined regular practices, such as yoga and English conversation lessons at the neighbourhood hall. Moreover, they assumed some social duties for the organizations under the Nishi Ward office.

Horie's insiders helped maintain a nice area with good public order through these local efforts, but at the same time, they recreated their identity based on certain outsiders, such as the newcomers and thieves, coming from outside. Regarding the commonly mentioned purse-snatching problem in the area, an interviewee argued: "It's not that Horie people snatch it away, Horie people's (belongings) are snatched away." For this reason, they were organizing night patrols in the neighbourhood, and some long-term resident interviewees worried about a further increase in Horie's population for assuming that such petty crime would rise, if a lot of new people moved in. Actually, criminal offenses have been falling in Nishi Ward and Osaka City since the mid-2000s with the increased safety measures of Nishi Ward Office and Osaka Prefectural Police<sup>7)</sup> (See Figure 2). A newcomer mother pronounced her isolation from the long-term resident community: "Well, I don't know, because I am not friends with any people who have been here for long; to the extent that I am not sure, whether long-term residents exist (indeed)." (P 2013)

**Figure 2 The Change in the Recognitions of Criminal Offense in Osaka City and Nishi Ward**



Source: Created from Statistics Bureau



Horie's revitalization impaired the area's urban village quality, and increased the area's safety issues in the early 2000s, and therefore, the local anxieties for safety. However, the following local efforts to achieve a "safe neighbourhood community" (Bauman 2001: 116) worked against the city ideal of social inclusiveness (Musset 2016), as the self-enclosure of one group was reciprocated by a somewhat indifference of the other.

### **3.4. The Dilemma of Desirable vs. Undesirable Residents and Shops**

Among the newcomers, families with small children were the most welcomed group, because mothers in particular, contributed more to the local community by at least attending some children's activities and the school's parent-teacher association. The mother interviewees attended for example, the parent-child plaza events, held by Nishi Ward's various neighbourhood associations several times a month. A mother explained her motivation as: "To talk, to ask the children's situation or to hear about some good information of this area." (P 2013) Thanks to these events, mothers also made friends with other mothers, even if not with the long-term women residents. A mother interviewee commented: "Yes, not all, but there are some people whom I made friends with." (U 2013) The mothers even organized to join some events together (V 2013). Nevertheless, the newcomer mothers sometimes competed with each other for their children's benefits (P 2013) or created their "others" in turn, such as the poor or homeless people. A mother interviewee on paid leave remarked:

There are not such bad people here, I think. (...) because there are few dubious people, walking around. (...) Dangerous looking persons, how shall I say, people who do not have homes do not walk around so much. (...) I think those people would not do anything bad, but I am still afraid, and so, it is a good point that such people are rarely met in Horie. (Y 2013)

Another mother put it more implicitly by saying that "Relatively, a lot of clean people, immaculate people are living (here), I guess." (V 2013) A third mother complained about the area's young visitors who littered or smoked, while they were wandering around Horie's streets for shopping (P 2013). Still another mother stated that Horie was an area where it was easy to raise children, because it lacked "adult areas" with entertainment businesses in contrast to for example, the neighbouring Naniwa Ward (U 2013), although apparently, "geisha girls lived in the area" (G 2013) in the past. Accordingly, a process of bourgeois identity-making with reference to the poor, marginalized others was "reproduced through images of new-build gentrification and urban revitalization, where particular bodies and identities are clearly marked as desirable and belonging, while others are made wholly invisible." (Kern 2010: 224)

Homeless people were rare in Horie, Nishi Ward. A long-term resident interviewee interpreted

their existence quite differently by giving an example: "There is also a man who owns a lot of empty cans, but he's working himself. He collects empty cans and changes them for money." (E 2013) Therefore, the long-term residents were often more open to accepting and supporting Horie's poorer inhabitants, including the elderly welfare recipients. In the case of shops, the shop-owners who have been doing business in Horie for long might also have criticisms of new shops. A family business owner interviewee complained that some new businesses on the Orange Street did not abide by the Horie Union's rule of closing at a certain time in the evening (K 2014). Another interviewee, who would soon celebrate her gallery and accessory shop's fifteenth anniversary, wished for a tacit vetting system for the new shops via the local real estate agents to maintain the general area image and to achieve business continuity (J 2014). Otherwise, newcomer shops could isolate themselves with the excuse that they also did not receive any invitations from the local community, including long-established businesses, but also present the easy entry and exit of various kinds of people as a negative aspect of the area (I 2014). Social diversity, much sought after by urban policy makers in general, was not of first priority for Horie's local residents and business owners who preferred "sameness" (Bauman 2001).

Mothers in Horie and throughout the country received public support in a national context of aging and declining birth rates (Boling 2015). The local administration in Nishi Ward backed up the efforts of Horie's local community to include young mothers. It adopted child-friendly policies, similar to those introduced by Van den Berg (2013) who interpreted Rotterdam's urban planning for a child-friendly city based on replacing existing dwellings with new, larger ones for families as "genderfication". For example, parental care was mentioned at least eight times in the responses of the ward office in a local administrative document entitled, "Responses to the Comments Received about the 2015 Nishi Ward Administration Policy". In addition, Horie's mothers had public, quasi-public and/or private spaces to socialize outside their homes. Still, they had a schooling problem even if not as intense as the gentrification-induced educational displacement found by Butler et. al. (2013) in East London. The main problem was that Horie's nursery and school capacity was inadequate<sup>8)</sup>, despite the huge rise in the number of day nursery pupils in the 2000s (See Figure 3). A mother interviewee, who could not have her baby accepted to the Horie Kindergarten, because she was not working said:

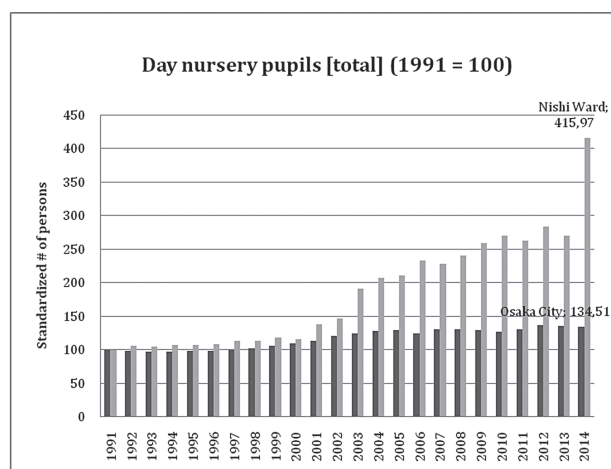
Normally, the employed people (go back to) work after giving birth and taking a year's leave, because the nursery accepts from 0 years old. (That is) Except for when one does not have work. I actually wanted to work immediately, but I did not have either a job or a nursery. So now, my child cannot enter before three years-old, I suppose. (O 2013)

Some mothers also lacked sufficient child raising support from their husbands who were absent most of the time for work-related excuses, such as doing overtime work or going on business trips (T 2013; V



2013), and other outside activities, such as local duties (Y 2013). Furthermore, the area's collective gaze on children, which was highly appreciated by a newcomer mother (Y 2013), was decreasing according to a long-term resident, as people, including mothers, became busier with outside work (G 2013).

**Figure 3 The Change in the Day Nursery Pupils in Osaka City and Nishi Ward**



Source: Created from Statistics Bureau

Accordingly, women in gentrified urban areas internalized the socially hierarchical and divisive characteristic of the neoliberal city by creating their identity based on the socially inferior others. Whenever possible, they sought for conformity in the company of similar others, instead of a social mix. Moreover, the more consumerist they were, the more social barriers they had against the non-consumers.

### 3.5. The Dilemma of Place Branding vs. Historical Place Identity

Horie's revitalization in the 1990s led to the creation of a new image for the area. This image became known as the Horie brand. The area's increased popularity as a place of residence and commercial activity fostered this process of place branding, and vice versa. The study interviewees agreed on Horie's increased popularity and recognisability which was underlined by an interviewee as follows: "In the past, I think, there was not so much recognisability (...) Now (...) because pretty much everyone knows it (the area), when you say, "I live in Horie", (they reply by saying) "It's a good place, isn't it?" or "It's lively, isn't it?", and so on." (M 2015) The causes for this growing popularity were suggested to be the ease of living and raising children in Horie, because of its good environment, including good public schools. Horie's public schools attracted many newcomers to the area for their children's education. A long-term resident interviewee remarked: "(...) since the schools seem to be good, (...) (people) would like to live in Horie so much so that (...) (they) transfer from other places (...)" (F 2013). The attractiveness of Horie's schools for families

with children from outside resembled the western cases of gentrification, related to the parents' schooling choices (Butler et. al. 2013).

The Horie brand image was of a fashionable town of youth. Horie's old image, as a centre for furniture manufacture and sales, was undermined by various developments. One of them was "the collapse of a (Japanese) culture" (K 2014) of marriage furniture, as was underlined by an interviewee who inherited a family furniture business in Horie. Another interviewee noted that "now it feels like a town of youth" (H 2013). A mother interviewee on parental leave also acknowledged that "the image is that of a so-called fashionable town (...)" (S 2013). The Horie brand was also used as a sales pitch for the newly built apartments in the area, and it pushed up Horie's housing prices, compared to the other, more modest parts of Osaka. Yet, the long-term residents questioned Horie's popular image, which they did not accept for themselves. For example, a long-term resident remarked: "Seen from the surroundings, it might feel like the high Horie, (although) the residents do not think so." (B 2013)

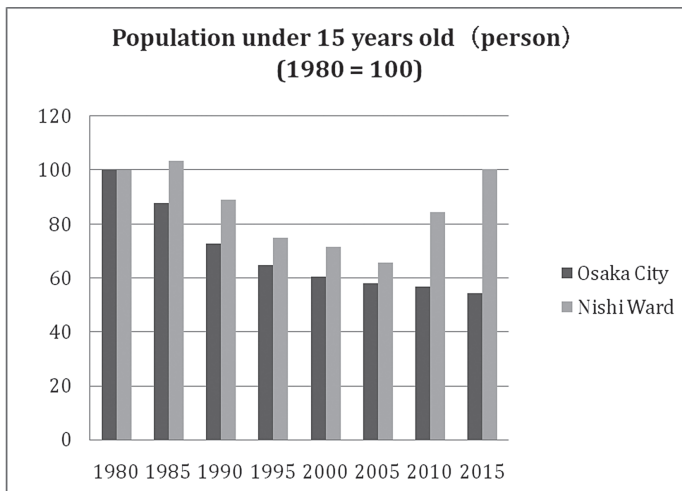
An interviewee who worked at a new interior shop in the area suggested that whether Horie was recognized as a furniture town or a fashion(able) area depended on the age group (I 2014). In that sense, the meanings of a neighbourhood as a place to live versus a place to do business clashed in Horie as a result of the place branding process. According to Nishi Ward's 2017 budget, from the five main operational budget items %7 was allocated to area branding activities under the title "Improvement of the brand power that utilized various attractions" (Nishi Ward Office 2017). The attitude of the local administration regarding the area branding efforts was shared in an administrative document as follows:

In the Nishi Ward Office, various efforts, which aspire to deepen the ward inhabitants' attachment for the area, and to make them get engaged in town-making personally, are being made by promoting the various attractions of each area or utilizing the local resources for actualizing the creation of new attractions. (...), we are thinking to proceed by cooperating with all of the ward inhabitants with the kind of work that would let Nishi Ward's new inhabitants, and particularly, the people of the child-raising class as a specialty of Nishi Ward, to learn about the goodness of the immediate area, and to interact with all of the residents. (Nishi Ward Office 2015: 3)

The reason for the variety in Horie's meaning for different social groups did not only lie in the contrast of a use value versus an exchange value of the place. A certain place meaning also depended on the relative time-depth and multitude of urban layers, influenced by various actors, and whether these formed a collective consciousness among the area inhabitants. Furthermore, Horie's increased popularity and population led to some physical problems, for example, the under capacity of Horie's public schools, in addition to causing people's conflicting loyalties in terms of

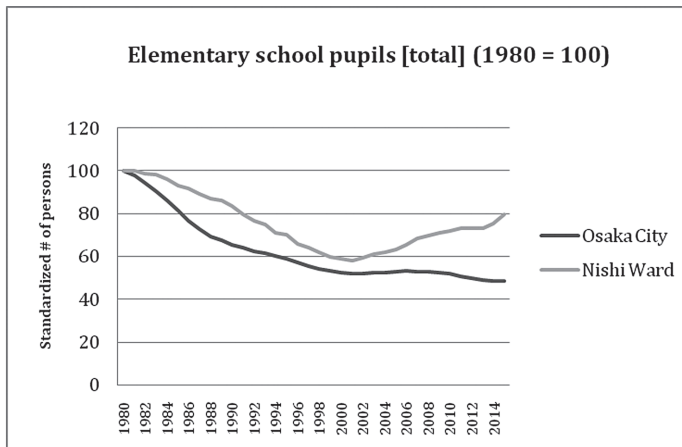
place identity and meaning. Although Nishi Ward was unique in its increasing children's population against the mostly aging Osaka Wards (See Figure 4 and Figure 5), the local administration was criticized for being slow to react to the school capacity problem by some worried long-term residents. The overcrowded schools intensified the local worries, for example, about a decrease in education quality. An interviewee summarized the issue by saying, "It's too popular, there are too many students at schools, (and therefore) there is not enough room. It lacks even a place to play. It's a pity." (F 2013) Despite the reconstruction of school buildings, the problem continued due to a lack of space for further extensions.

**Figure 4 The Change in the Population under 15 Years Old in Osaka City and Nishi Ward**



Source: Created from Statistics Bureau

**Figure 5 The Change in the Elementary School Pupils in Osaka City and Nishi Ward**



Source: Created from Statistics Bureau

#### 4. Conclusion

This study of Japanese gentrification from a women's perspective examined the socio-spatial dynamics of a neighbourhood's change process with a focus on its contradictory aspects. In Bauman's terms, the newcomer mothers in Horie could be interpreted as an "aesthetic community", whereas the long-term women residents and business owners were better defined as an "ethical community". The latter group felt more responsible for keeping the neighbourhood in a good condition and acted on such a sense of duty. On the other hand, the newcomer mothers who were more footloose in terms of their future settlement plans also felt less obliged to participate in the local community activities.

The long-term women residents and business owners made some critical comments about Horie's past revitalization, interpreted against a background of other local governmental changes, such as the privatization of public facilities in Horie, and their own tendencies for self-enclosure. Nevertheless, the daily interests of all of the study participants remained at the local place level without rising to any higher social demand. Therefore, the stance of neither the newcomers nor other women who had a long-term affiliation with Horie could be interpreted as "militant particularism" in the sense that Harvey (2017) used the concept, because their local stances did not result in any political struggles, unless we consider Horie's long-term residents' active neighbourhood roles and duties as a kind of political activity. Although, Horie's different social groups were not active resisters to any political changes at the local or global level, they could be differentiated by how they pursued their "lived lives" (*ibid.*).

The "loyalties" of Horie's women differed according to whether they belonged to the passive-involuntary or active-voluntary followers of the neoliberal city, as children of the Fordist or the post-Fordist era respectively. The former, more elderly group, resisted consumerism, at least in some of their daily practices, such as learning skills from each other at the neighbourhood hall for negligible amounts of money. At the same time, the mother newcomers in Horie were much more involved in the revitalized area's town-making than for example, their absent husbands, together with other women and men who were retired or residing business owners. In that sense, Horie's women came close to the ideas of positive and feminine gentrification, discussed in the previous literature (Patch 2008) by softening the negativities of gentrification through enhanced communication.

This study helps us see how contemporary urban questions, including not only issues, such as gentrification, but also solutions, such as the just city, are approached and re-examined at different geographical scales: at the level of particular places --buildings, streets, and neighbourhoods-- and at a more abstract level --a political economy of space. In this brief article, I tried to combine both of these approaches firstly, by referring to certain dialectical concepts of geography, and secondly, by making a detailed analysis of a Japanese example of neighbourhood change. The

analyses of the women interviews showed that Horie's women differed in their evaluations of the neighbourhood's change and present situation, depending on their relationships (business, residence, and consumption) with the area. Yet, some contradictory ideas and acts could also be observed within these women groups, pointing to the existence of various dilemmas in any case of urban social change. On the other hand, the daily activities of women, especially the long-term residents, had a counter balancing influence on some of these dilemmas that were brought about by the area's revitalization.

The overall suggestion of the original PhD study was developing a "neighbourhood commons", instead of the current area revitalization constructs, including gentrification. The suggested concept expressed "a local environment, providing for the collective spaces and activities for meaningful social encounters and interaction that are free from the compelling logic of urban neoliberalism." (Kirmizi 2017: 156) This alternative has its own limitations, such as the contradiction of trying to solve a systemic problem with the consequence of neoliberal urbanism at the local level, as underlined by Musset (2016). Still, it avoided somehow the local trap by combining the different geographical scales of a neighbourhood and a noncommodified place.

### Notes

- 1) According to Susan Fainstein, just city was a city that provided for equity along with diversity and democracy or participation (Fainstein 2010).
- 2) Raymond Williams was a Welsh writer, known for his contributions to "the Marxist critique of culture and the arts" (New World Encyclopedia 2013).
- 3) According to a local source, the Horie Kindergarten would move out and be privatized in 2.5 years to open up some extra space for the elementary school.
- 4) An Osaka-based entertainment business which was established in the late Meiji Era (Yoshimoto Kogyo Co, Ltd. n.d.).
- 5) The housing estate corporation which was established in 1955 was changed finally into the Urban Renaissance Agency in 2004 (Kobayashi 2016: 21).
- 6) Nagaya were Japanese one-storey row houses, where commoners lived by sharing wells in the Edo Period (Hanley 1991).
- 7) The rise in the crime rates in Japan after the 1990s was explained by socio-economic changes (Leonardsen n.d.). The fall in criminal offenses after the 2000s was mostly attributable to a network of crime prevention activities, centred around the police, and the development of "the Action Plan for the Realization of a Society Resistant to Crime" (2003). (Sakuma 2011: 5)
- 8) The number of children in the waiting list for using the nursery school was 48 in Nishi Ward (approximately %15 of the total number of children in the waiting list in Osaka City) as of 1 April 2017. Nishi Ward had the second highest difference (234 children) among the Osaka Wards

between the number of new use application (*shinki riyō mōshikomi-sū*) and new user children (*shinki riyō jidō-sū*) in 2017. (City of Osaka 2017)

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## Appendix

**Table 1 Profiles of Horie's Women Interviewees**

Pseudo-nym	Age (2015)	Education Level	Occupation	Work Condition	Approx. Year of Residence	Place of Origin	Interview Place and Time
A	64	Vocational	Nurse	Retired	35 (NW)	Fukui Pref.	Horie, 7 Oct. 2013
B	65-70	???	Housewife-tea ceremony teacher	Not working	10-20	Okayama Pref.	Horie, 4 Oct. 2013
C	73	???	Housewife	Local duty	62-63	???	Horie, 7 Aug. 2013
D	72	???	Housewife	Local duty	47	Wakayama Pref.	Horie, 26 Aug. 2013
E	59	???	Housewife	Local duty	59	Horie	Horie, 26 Aug. 2013
F	66	???	Housewife	Local duty	35	Hyogo Pref.	Horie, 7 Aug. 2013
G	52	University (abroad)	English teacher	Working	~50	Osaka Pref.	Horie, 8 Aug. 2013
H	66	University	Housewife	Local duty	40	Osaka Pref.	Horie, 18 Oct. 2013
I	25	Vocational	Interior design, sales (present)	Working	0 (Osaka City)	Osaka Pref.	Horie, 27 Aug. 2014
J	61	Vocational	Designer (past), shop-owner (present)	Working	20 (NW), 3-4 (Osaka City)	Nara Pref.	Horie, 8 Sept. 2014
K	65	College	Shop-owner (family business)	Working	65	Wakayama Pref.	Horie, 12 Sept. 2014
L	48	Vocational	Designer (past), shop-owner (present)	Working	7 (Horie), 3 months (Kobe)	Nara Pref.	Horie, 30 June 2015
M	53	University	Housewife	Part-time work	28	Osaka Pref.	Horie, 29 Sept. 2015
N	45	???	Computer instructor (past)	Childcare (1)	24	Tokushima Pref. (foreign husband)	Horie, 29 Nov. 2013
O	36	Junior college	Office employee (past)	Childcare (1)	5	Ishikawa Pref.	Horie, 6 Dec. 2013
P	30	High school	Baby massage (present)	Flexi-work + childcare (2)	3 (NW)	Osaka Pref.	Horie, 25 Nov. 2013
R	48	Vocational	Hairdresser (past)	Childcare (1)	8 (NW)	Hyogo Pref. (Mixed; foreign husband)	Horie, 29 Nov. 2013
S	34	University	Hotel employee (present)	Parental leave (1)	2	Osaka Pref.	Horie, 22 Nov. 2013
T	41	University	Environmental analyst (present)	Parental leave (1)	10	Gifu Pref.	Horie, 13 Dec. 2013
U	39	University (abroad)	Translator (past), shop-owner (present)	Weekend work + childcare (1)	3	Nara Pref. (foreign husband)	Horie, 29 Nov. 2013
V	30	Vocational	Sales (past)	Childcare (1)	1	Gifu Pref.	Horie, 25 Nov. 2013
Y	45	University	Pharmaceutical chemist (present)	Parental leave (2)	15-16	Wakayama Pref.	Horie, 29 Nov. 2013
Z	31	University	Credit Union employee (past)	Childcare (2)	3	Osaka Pref.	Horie, 22 Nov. 2013
AA	38	Vocational	Waitress (past), home care worker (present)	Working + childcare (1, mixed)	13 (NW)	Osaka Pref. (divorced foreign husband)	Horie, 23 Apr. 2016

## Patterns of Women's Perceptions of their Revitalized Osaka Neighbourhood

Meriç KIRMIZI

This paper is part of a three-year qualitative study of Japanese gentrification, conducted in the Horie neighbourhood in Nishi Ward, Osaka. The research was based on participant observation and 51 interviews with various social groups, affiliated with the area, including long-term residents, newcomers, and area businesses such as wood-related businesses, real estate agents, and cultural entrepreneurs, as well as organizational representatives. The overall finding of this research was that Japanese gentrification differed from the gentrification models of the Global North and South in terms of motivation, process, and outcomes. However, recently, it is becoming more similar to the neoliberal urban patterns of the Global North. In the case of Horie, a local policy emphasis on creating a convenient area for child-care was observed.

This paper focuses on the 24 women participants including eleven newcomer mothers, eight long-term residents, and five business owners and employees in Horie. Therefore, this paper is based on a diverse sample of women interviewees of different age groups and social standing from Horie. The research questions are: What is the stance of women on Japanese gentrification? How do women interpret the upgrading of their neighbourhood, and how are they influenced by it? Several studies include theoretical discussions of gender and gentrification in terms of women's role as gentrifiers (Patch 2008; Kern 2010; Ronald and Nakano 2013), "gendered precarity" (Kern 2013) in gentrification, genderfication as urban policy (Van den Berg 2013), and the possible outcomes of feminine gentrification or a feminized city versus a feminist city. This study argues that in the context of gentrification, women are highly vocal and involved in city (re)making processes in Japanese urban neighbourhoods. However, these Japanese women did not achieve togetherness, since their understanding and expectations of a good neighbourhood as well as their loyalties differed.

**Keywords:** Japanese gentrification, Osaka, women's perceptions of the city, gender and urban policy, mothers and urban lifestyle