

The Pendleton Riot: a political sociology

Bob Jeffery and Will Jackson examine the background to the unrest in Salford

The incidents that took place in the vicinity of Salford Precinct on the 9 August 2011 occurred prior to and took a quite distinct form from the more widespread rioting and looting two miles away in Manchester city-centre. The riot events in Salford occurred following the Greater Manchester Police's riot-equipped officers pursuing a number of individuals involved in criminal damage onto a social housing estate neighbouring the Precinct. The police remained on the estate for some time as a large crowd began to gather, ultimately engaging the police in a violent confrontation, and going on to attack or loot a number of buildings (including an off-licence, a housing office, a pawn shop and perhaps most infamously a Lidl supermarket). In exploring the dynamics of this event there is a need to focus especially on issues of local context.

Gentrified affluence

The extent of the spread of deprivation across the City of Salford is pronounced, encompassing most of the inner-city areas adjacent to Manchester and Trafford Metropolitan Boroughs, but also including a number of overspill estates on the periphery of the conurbation. It is not only the *extent* of inequality but also the close *proximity* of disparities in income and wealth that characterises inner-city Salford. Adjacent to the city-centre, islands of gentrified affluence exist in a sea of relative poverty, particularly Salford Quays, whose Indices of Multiple Deprivation almost put it into the 40 per cent least deprived small areas in the country, as compared to the adjacent neighbourhoods, which are all well within the 10 per cent most

deprived.

While the impacts of the current recession have been felt disproportionately across the entire North West of England, on a local level, these impacts are concentrated in those neighbourhoods which had been struggling even during the boom years. In Salford those neighbourhoods with the highest proportion of Job Seekers Allowance claimants as of July 2011 include the inner-city districts of Kersal and Langworthy, the latter being the location of the August riot.

Focusing on Langworthy specifically, an analysis of the administrative ward's position on a number of key indicators *vis-à-vis* the English averages illustrates that the people of this area fare considerably worse in terms of their health, caring responsibilities, mortality, educational attainment, employment histories and personal mobility.

The continuing deprivation faced by a residualised inner-city working class in Salford is currently being compounded by state welfare spending cuts, which are decimating vital local services such as youth clubs, homeless shelters, care of vulnerable and disabled adults and drugs and alcohol counselling services (BBC, 2011). The cuts, taking place amidst the continuing subsidisation of private sector development in central Salford (Salford Star, 2011), is part of the dynamic that is creating cynicism, disaffection and anger on the part of local people.

Finally, in terms of local context, we want to make clear that Salford Precinct, or Salford Shopping City to give it its proper name, is not Manchester's Arndale Centre or King Street; no Bang and Olufsen, no Footlocker and no Pretty Green, but instead a rather limited range of pawn-brokers, pound-shops and other low-cost retailers such as Wilkinsons, Bon Marché and Lidl. The riot took place here not because of its intrinsic potential as a profitable place for looting but because of a particular antagonism between the police and the people who live in the social housing estates adjacent to the Precinct.

Nevertheless, we do not deny the consumption motivation on the part



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are 'tectonic social interactions' (Butler and Robson, 2003), these are not a tension-management device but instead a cause of friction, antagonism and conflict.

This allows us to understand that in inner city Salford a space for resistance to regeneration – though without any necessary coherence in the expression of that resistance – is possible precisely because these communities are not simply parallel and non-integrative, but also actively generate friction through their interactions. Resistance to the police in these neighbourhoods is a continual process; the riot events and their policing were not exceptional; rather they stood as a result of a recent intensification of a political project that is increasing inequality.

Stark contrast

The distinction between the Salford 'riot' and the event in Manchester were acknowledged by the Chief Constable of Greater Manchester Police when he suggested that the events in Salford were about attacking the police and not in the first instance about looting.

This stands in stark contrast to the continued line that accompanies official regeneration discourse in which the police are understood to have good relations with 'the community'. Instead, official modes of community engagement tend to exclude the voices of working class residents, at the same time as they privilege those of business interests and more articulate middle class residents.

The convergent focus of both urban policy and criminal justice policy on disorder is explicit in places such as inner-city Salford, with the police being seen by working class residents as defending gentrification by capital and its alignment with the interest of middle class incomers (Johnstone, 2007). Consider for example, the use of dispersal orders in regeneration sites and the more general feeling by residents that the regeneration sites are not intended for them (Henderson et al., 2007). Here, a synchronicity between regeneration and policing is revealed due to the intersection of crime control and the

of those who were involved in the Salford riot. They are, to use Bauman's (2011a) phrase, 'defective consumers', whose inability to consume in the correct manner opens them up to the full force of social stigmatisation. The urban poor are disqualified consumers in a double sense, both in their inability to consume the commodities on offer in regenerated areas such as Manchester city-centre or Salford Quays, but and also in their inability to consume property, which is part of the rationale for their clearance from desirable development sites, what Chris Allen (2008) calls 'gentrification by capital'.

Contrary to Bauman's assertion that 'segregation and polarisation in

cities is today the result of a free and politically uncontrolled play of market forces' (2011), this is palpably not the case in Salford, where gentrification by capital has been directed by central government and embraced by local elites.

Successful consumers

The political management of class polarisation is clear in inner-city Salford. The close proximity between the successful consumers of regeneration sites and the broadly disqualified necessitates an increased role for the police in what is, in the broadest terms, a project of policing the return of capital to the inner-city. While the dynamics between class communities in inner-city Salford



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the inner-city. But in Salford this process is potentially without end – the working class cannot be fully excluded and must be increasingly policed in order to ‘cleanse’ the area of disorder. Yet, paradoxically, the attempt to remove these human signs of disorder through the policing of regeneration creates antagonism and conflict. In this conflict, the working class actively contest the fabrication of a social order that disempowers working class subjects and favours the re-entry of capital, and the return of a middle class who are willing and able to consume the remade inner-city. ■

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representation of class and classed subjects in the contemporary politics of urban regeneration. The working class hinder the trajectory of regeneration, preventing the completion of the return of capital to the inner-city. The working class are therefore, by virtue of their location and inability to ‘join in’, signs of disorder in and of themselves.

Police have been ranged against the working class in the interests of policy since their inception (Neocleous, 2000). What we see in

Salford, and what others have noted elsewhere (Johnstone, 2007; Coleman, 2007), is its contemporary manifestation in the orchestration and management of urban regeneration.

Emphatic expression

The riots served as the latest, most explicit and most emphatic expression of resistance to the enhanced disenfranchisement of the residualised working class, who are in such close proximity to a state managed process of reclaiming