4

'Everybody loves living here': beyond the idyll in life within the gentrified countryside

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Introduction

Gentrification and well-being have emerged as major research subjects (Figure 4.1), although have relatively rarely been discussed in relation to each other.[1] One of the earliest studies explicitly addressing their relationship is Vigdor's (2002, p. 134) examination of whether gentrification causes 'a reduction in well-being among disadvantaged households' or, indeed, whether it might be a cause of improved well-being, an idea that also animated Freeman's (2012) review of research on gentrification and well-being. This remains the most extended general discussion of their interrelation, although studies have emerged addressing gentrification and well-being in particular population segments (e.g. Formoso et al., 2010; Oscilowicz et al., 2020) and spaces, most notably urban green space (e.g. Haase et al., 2017; Kim & Wu, 2022). In this chapter we both explore general relations between gentrification and well-being and their interrelation within a particular spatial context, namely the countryside.

Within the small number of studies examining gentrification and well-being there has been limited theoretical discussion of the term's meaning, despite well-being being 'a much-debated term in both philosophical conceptualisation and research approach' (Smith & Reid, 2018, p. 823). This chapter seeks to rectify this omission, considering how well-being has been conceptualised and which concepts have been employed in studies of rural and urban gentrification. Particular attention is paid to the emergence of a more-than-representational perspective, which is explored through research examining gentrification in nine villages in England.

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1 A search of the Scopus database using title, abstract and keywords, for instance, resulted in the identification of only eighty-six entries containing references to gentrification and well-being, with only around a third of these including substantive discussions of relations between gentrification and well-being.
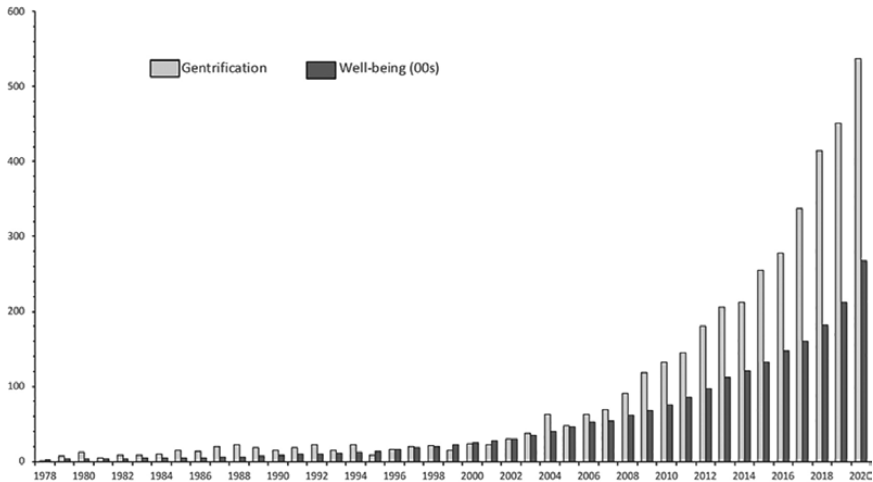
Figure 4.1 Publications on gentrification and well-being, 1978–2020. (Source: Derived from publications identified in Scopus, by title, abstract or keyword.)

Studies of well-being and gentrification

Limited conceptual discussion of well-being within gentrification studies may be unsurprising given the theoretical complexity and uncertainties surrounding the term as discussed in the framing essay, although a concern with conceptual definitions has been a prominent (Phillips, 2005), although not universally valued (e.g. Johnson-Schlee, 2019), characteristic of gentrification studies. However, we would suggest that the six different perspectives on well-being identified in the framing essay can be seen to be enacted, albeit often implicitly, in gentrification studies, as illustrated in Figure 4.2.

Most prominent in discussions of gentrification and well-being are studies drawing, often implicitly, on notions of economic and social well-being. Studies adopting the former perspective frequently employ quantitative indices, such as 'standards of living' and 'quality of life', and conceptualise well-being in relation to material conditions of life and as 'a quality that inheres to the individual' (Atkinson & Joyce, 2011, p. 134), with people viewed as inherently seeking to maximise their well-being (Clapham et al., 2018). Such features characterise the work of Vigdor (2002), which demonstrated a strong focus on material indices of well-being (e.g. housing costs and income levels) and the accumulation of material resources through employment and market purchases, as well as arguing that gentrification could contribute to increasing the material resources of non-gentrifier households. Vigdor claimed, for instance, that gentrification created job opportunities, improved services and/or lowered tax burdens on households.
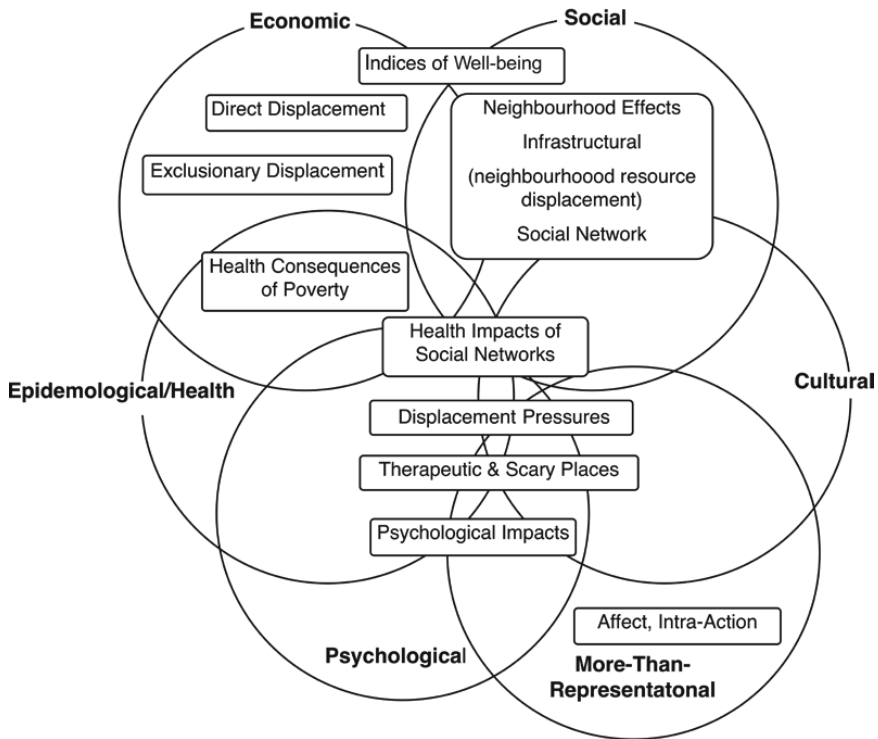
Figure 4.2 Approaches to well-being and gentrification research concepts. (Source: Author.)

These arguments heavily influenced Freeman's (2006) more extensive study, which further suggested that gentrification could improve the well-being of low-income homeowners through increasing the value of their properties, as well as attracting a greater range, and cheaper forms, of retailing.

Vigdor's and Freeman's claims have been widely debated, with research emerging to provide further demonstrations of gentrification's well-being benefits (e.g. Arkaraprasertkul, 2018), questioning the significance of purported gentrification benefits, such as employment and service growth (e.g. Shaw & Hagemans, 2015), plus highlighting further negative impacts, including direct economic displacement, when housing rents increase beyond existing residents' ability to pay, and indirect forms, such as the exclusion of people from moving into areas because of high property costs or areas becoming 'less and less liveable' (Marcuse, 1985, p. 206) because of increased living costs. As Freeman (2012, p. 280) has noted, a major question raised by such research is 'whose well-being is being affected?', with gentrification having the potential to impact 'myriad parties including residents of such

neighbourhoods prior to the onset of gentrification, persons who might move into the neighbourhood if gentrification had not occurred, property owners in gentrifying neighbourhoods, residents of nongentrifying neighbourhoods …, developers, and policy-makers' (Freeman, 2012, p. 280).

Crucially, the well-being of various agents is interrelated, with Lees and Hubbard (2020) observing that gentrification often entails a paradox whereby a supposed 'social good' linked to improved well-being of one group of people is delivered at the expense of the well-being of others. This argument connects to more general claims that gentrification is never 'a victimless process', but rather is a situation 'in which being a winner is often at the expense of creating a loser' (Butler, 2007, p. 759), and potentially to Clark and Pissin's (2020, pp. 1–3) claim that the capturing of potential rents, which has been seen by some researchers (e.g. Slater, 2017; Smith, 1979, 1996) to underpin processes of gentrification, is achieved at the cost of 'potentials for well-being' among both 'human and non-human lives'.

There are considerable overlaps between conceptualisations of social and economic well-being, with White (2017, p. 125) arguing that the former was conceptually 'nurtured' within research employing economic indices of well-being, although became 'a cuckoo in the nest, to a degree displacing' this earlier strand of research. This can be seen in studies of gentrification and well-being, with, for example, Vigdor's (2002, p. 144) examination of gentrification impacts through economic indicators of well-being, briefly referencing education and training as 'potential remedies for any harm caused by gentrification', an argument given considerably more prominence in subsequent studies that drew more directly, and positively, on notions of social welfare and well-being.

Freeman (2012, p. 283), for instance, identifies a research focus on the 'institutional infrastructure' of neighbourhoods, and whether gentrification might create 'neighbourhood effects', such as improvements in schools and other public services/resources. Studies of the former include Formoso et al. (2010) and Butler and Robson (2003), who both highlight evidence of gentrifiers sending their children to state schools outside their residential neighbourhoods or to private schools, and Butler et al.'s (2013) examination of the impact of state school selection practices on schools and residential displacement. With respect to social welfare provisions, Freeman (2012) notes that deprived neighbourhoods often have targeted social service provisions, which may be cut as areas gentrify, decreasing well-being among populations in these areas and fostering out-migration to other areas, with Davidson (2008) coining the phrase 'neighbourhood resource displacement' to refer to situations where changes in service provision foster movement away from gentrifying areas.

Butler et al. (2013, p. 565) also argue that a sense of social solidarity, or similarity, is a key influence in middle-class school selection, with parents

making decisions about schooling not solely on the basis of perceived educational quality but also from a desire to 'have an appropriate circle of friends drawn from the same background not just for their children but also for themselves'. Such work provides a counterpoint to research employing what Freeman (2012, p. 281) identifies as a 'social network' perspective, which presents social interaction as a source of well-being and 'upward' social mobility via the provision of information and resources. Freeman's focus is, again, on whether gentrification can create benefits for disadvantaged groups within a neighbourhood, although concludes that there is little evidence supporting hypothesised benefits.

A third strand of research on well-being and gentrification are studies adopting an epidemiological or health focus. Fong et al. (2019), for example, remark that 'epidemiologists have recently begun to investigate the impact of gentrification as a public health concern', while Schnake-Mahl et al. (2020, p. 3) argue that a 'cascade of health consequences' may be associated with displacement. Investigations have focused on the health of both people displaced from a locality and among disadvantaged groups remaining in a gentrifying area, plus attention has been paid to how impacts vary among residents differentiated by age and race (Dragan et al., 2019; Gibbons & Barton, 2016; Smith et al., 2018), while Parish (2019) has noted a rise in private 'wellness' businesses in some gentrified areas. Many studies employ arguments akin to discussions of economic and social well-being, focusing on the health impacts of poverty and social networks (e.g. Gibbons et al., 2018; Smith et al., 2020).

Many studies of health and gentrification reference psychological stresses created through gentrification's impacts on housing costs and insecurity, household budgeting, social networks and feelings of place, belonging and overall well-being (Fong et al., 2019; Gibbons, 2019; Gibbons & Barton, 2016; Tran et al., 2020). Such arguments resonate with claims advanced within psychological conceptions of well-being, but also with many advanced in gentrification studies relating to displacement. A particularly important point of connection has been Marcuse's (1985) concept of ' displacement pressure', which has increasingly been interpreted as highlighting the experiential, emotional and psychological pressures that gentrification creates.

While discussions of displacement pressure refer to psychological impacts, they have generally not drawn upon psychological concepts and theories. Davidson (2009), for example, has explored displacement drawing on a 'phenomenological' sense of 'place', whereby displacement is viewed in terms of dislocations of people's feelings, meanings and emotional connections with places. Phenomenological perspectives were promoted as part of a 'humanistic approach' that influenced discussions of medical and health geographies (Kearns, 1993), although this research was also heavily influenced by a so-called 'new cultural geography', with concepts such as

spaces of security, scary spaces, therapeutic places and restorative environments emerging as part of a focus on detailing the significance of symbolic and experiential senses of place and landscape (e.g. Gesler, 1992; Milligan & Bingley, 2007). These concepts have been drawn most strongly into gentrification studies within discussions over displacement and green/ecological/environmental gentrification (e.g. Cahill, 2007; Shaw & Hagemans, 2015; Twigge-Molecey, 2014).

The latter area of study, which often highlighted how developments of urban green space were promoted on the basis of their well-being benefits but had contrary impacts related to the stimulation of gentrification, has recently seen calls for the adoption of a further perspective. Pérez-del-Pulgar et al. (2020) described this as 'relational', although their arguments are commensurable with what we are identifying as 'more-than-representational'. A common starting point of work employing such perspectives has been a sense that relations between place and well-being have been reified (Duff, 2011), and Pérez-del-Pulgar et al. (2020, p. 2) effectively enact this argument in their study of gentrification and green space, arguing that both academics and policymakers frequently employ a universalised notion of well-being, whereby it is presumed to be induced by engagement with particular 'material' conditions or necessary things to '*live well*' that are seen to be present in 'green spaces'. Entry into these spaces is seen to produce an improved state of well-being, or alternatively, a decrease, if this space has associations with detrimental conditions and effects, such as high levels of crime, pollution or stressful behaviour (Harris et al., 2020). Pérez-del-Pulgar et al., however, challenge such conceptualisations, arguing that well-being is an outcome of relations between people and a range of non- or more-than-human actants constitutive of a place or environment, which come together, through various ways of acting, to 'catalyse' diverse states or senses of well-being. Similar arguments appear in Smith and Reid (2018), Andrews et al. (2014) and Conradson (2005).

Conradson develops his arguments in a study of therapeutic encounters within a care centre located in rural England. As demonstrated elsewhere in this volume, rural locations have figured strongly in many discussions of therapeutic landscapes and discussions of relations between place and well-being, and in the next section we will consider studies exploring well-being and processes of rural gentrification.

Rural gentrification and well-being

Given earlier arguments about the lack of research examining gentrification and well-being, and the study of rural gentrification being a

'somewhat "neglected other" to the study of urban gentrification' (Phillips & Smith, 2018, p. 3), it is unsurprising to find a call for more research on understanding how processes such as rural gentrification 'impact local well-being' (Golding, 2014a, p. 326). This call was made in a discussion of urban-to-rural migration as a potential cause of rural inequality, which, as discussed in Chapter 1, has been an area of rural research where notions of well-being have been particularly evident, with studies often employing quantitative indicators of economic well-being to evaluate whether middle-class in-migration has negative or beneficial impacts on existing resident populations.

In relation to negative impacts of middle-class in-migration, housing market effects have frequently been emphasised, with studies such as Shucksmith (2000) identifying rising house prices as a cause of rural out-migration. As Phillips et al. (2021b) argue, such work bears the hallmarks of Marcuse's (1985) concept of 'exclusionary displacement', whereby lower-income households are excluded from moving to areas as a consequence of high house prices. Research also demonstrated that, as in urban areas, the impacts of high housing costs often involved more than physical displacement or exclusion from an area, but also encompassed the production of homelessness, poverty and material and social deprivation and marginalisation among both those who physically relocate and those who stay in a location (e.g. Fitchen, 1992; Cloke et al., 1995, 2001). Studies also document middle-class rural in-migration impacting service provision in a manner akin to conceptualisations of 'neighbourhood infrastructure' and 'neighbourhood resource displacement'. Smith and Higley (2012), for example, draw directly on Butler and Robson's (2003) research on the role of school access in residential gentrification, arguing that similar processes are fuelling gentrification in some rural areas. They also note how use of private schooling in rural areas may contribute to school closures in small villages, while Hillyard and Baggley (2014) examined how use of schools outside a village, along with changes in educational policies, disrupt social relations between schools and local communities, an argument that resonates with discussions of urban neighbourhood social networks.

Just as in urban contexts, rural research has also examined connections between gentrification and retail change. As with schools, gentrification impacts have been discussed in relation to both institutional closures and change. In relation to the former, Phillips and Dickie (2019) remark on how counter-urbanisation has been accompanied by increasing centralisation of retail and service provisions, meaning that many gentrified rural areas have experienced service closures. Often, these phenomena were causally unconnected, although studies have suggested that rural businesses have been impacted by incomers' greater propensity to travel to shop (Stockdale

et al., 2000) and that retail and service closures often impact already disadvantaged groups most (Shergold & Parkhurst, 2012). Studies have also suggested that retail and service provision may change to cater for the consumption preferences of incoming gentrifiers, which in turn may lead to displacement of other consumption practices (Phillips, 2002). Phillips et al. (2021b, p. 79) link these changes to Marcuse's (1985) notion of 'displacement pressure' and Davidson's (2008) related concept of 'neighbourhood resource displacement', arguing that declining access to retail and welfare services, as well as employment, may make 'life in villages less materially liveable for people on low incomes or lacking good access to private transport' (Phillips et al., 2021b, p. 79). However, just as in urban gentrification studies, claims have been made about beneficial outcomes, including that higher-income in-migration helps support local shops and other businesses (Beyers & Lindahl, 1996; Bosworth, 2010; Stockdale, 2010).

Arguments advanced about gentrification's health impacts are not as evident within rural studies as they are within urban research. Key (2014) and Smith et al. (2019) have highlighted rural gentrification's role in the ageing of the UK countryside via practices such as retirement and pre-retirement migration, while other studies have explored a range of age-related health issues, such as the impacts of healthcare restructuring on provisions for the rural elderly (Joseph & Chalmers, 1995) and the impact of in-migration on social support networks (Joseph & Chalmers, 1998; Munoz et al., 2014). Reference has also been made to health concerns driving rural out-migration by the elderly and resistance to movement linked to strong place attachments (Joseph & Chalmers, 1995; Smith et al., 2019).

The relative lack of studies of health dimensions of rural gentrification may reflect the influence of cultural representations of rural space. A strong emphasis on idyllic representations of the countryside can, for instance, be discerned within all the foci of research on rural gentrification and well-being discussed so far. Golding's (2014b) discussion of rural migration, for example, included claims that these movements are heavily influenced by idyllic representations of rural living, which also figured strongly in Smith and Higley's (2012) discussion of schooling and rural gentrification. Research on health and ageing has also argued that a rural residence may constitute a realisation of an imagined idyll which is itself 'positive for health', although studies such as Watkins and Jacoby (2007, p. 857) have highlighted how lived experiences may differ significantly from prevailing representations, with people's recognition of this itself having 'serious implications for their health and wellbeing'.

The significance of representations across these areas of study not only accords with the focus given to symbolisations of place within studies of health and well-being discussed in the previous section, but also reflects

Figure 4.3 Study districts.

their strong influence within rural studies (Phillips, 1998). However, just as health and well-being studies have seen moves to more-than-representational approaches, so have rural studies, including some addressing rural gentrification (e.g. Phillips, 2014; Phillips et al., 2021a). In the following section we will further explore this perspective and its relevance to understanding relations between rural gentrification and well-being, drawing on an empirical investigation of gentrification in nine villages in the six contrasting rural districts in England (Figure 4.3).[2]

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2 The overall research project was entitled International Rural Gentrification (iRGENT) and details of it are available at www.i-rgent.com. Within the project, three distinct nationally based projects were created, funded by distinct research funding bodies. The research that this chapter draws on was funded by the UK's Economic and Social Research Council (grant number ES/L016702/1).

A study of rural gentrification in England

This research sought to explore rural gentrification through developing detailed, but theoretically and comparatively contextualised, village-focused studies. Within the nine villages selected for study, a personally administered 'mixed-method' questionnaire (McGuirk & O'Neill, 2016) was conducted, accompanied by use of semi-structured interviews, ethnographic observation, local documentary sources and secondary analysis of Census, planning and house price data. The questionnaire used open and closed questions, plus visual stimuli (photographs, reproductions of paintings) to elicit responses on issues such as people's views of the character of the village; their residential migration and employment histories; changes in their properties; use of retail, welfare and recreational services; and engagement in local organisations and events.

Challenges surround the implementation of more-than-representational perspectives, including whether they necessitate a complete break with established research methods or whether it is possible, as Latham (2003, pp. 1999–2000) argues, to 'imbue' some of them with attentiveness to issues such as the ordinary, everyday ways people undertake their lives. The latter perspective is one we adopt: while very conscious of the limitations of questionnaires, we think that mixed-methods forms can be used in ways attentive to the 'more-than-representational aspects of life', particularly if attention is paid to the 'stuttering' moments in accounts, where people retract, backtrack or contradict themselves, 'often quite self-consciously' (Phillips, 2004, p. 19).

One problem of employing a questionnaire within a concern to detail the significance of people's everyday actions, feelings, emotions and affective states is the many stories that might be told from the information generated. Questionnaire use is often centred around drawing out commonalities between accounts given by individual respondents, whether via quantitative analysis of the frequencies and co-occurrence of particular responses or through more qualitative forms of thematic analysis. Here we want to adopt a rather different approach, drawing on Haraway's (2006) notions of 'string figuring', which involves the making, or 'figuring', of lines of connection while remaining in the thick of situations being examined. In the context of our study, string figuring involves bringing together accounts of everyday lives, events and feelings offered up in response to our questions, with these accounts, and the people who gave them, appearing as figures we string together in ways that hopefully enable us to act as a 'modest witness' (Haraway, 1997) on aspects of the mass of entangled actants, symbols, relations, practices and affects that we encountered in our research. The text that follows focuses on three 'string figures' in order to locate and trace

out some 'tangles and patterns' (Haraway, 2006, p. 3) that appear of value to 'staying with the trouble' that we, and others, identify as rural gentrification, and more particularly, on the relations between this phenomenon and states of well-being.

String figure 1: everyone loves living here

Reference has already been made to the significance of idyllic rural representations in discussions of both rural gentrification and well-being in the countryside, and as discussed in Phillips et al. (2020), such representations figured prominently within m any answers, including this one made in an interview in one of the Hertfordshire villages:

> It's just a beautiful village, it's just got a feel-good factor about the whole thing … we went to a party with the people we bought the house from, … we got introduced to all these people and the feedback from them was the village is just as it is, 'Everyone loves living here' …. The guy that we bought the house from, he described it perfectly, he says 'I don't like where I live, I love where I live'.

This resident also commented that they liked the peace and quiet of the village and the access it afforded to the countryside, with the village having 'fulfilled all the aspirations … of why we moved here'. Their commentary brings in other figures, most clearly a previous owner of the house where this man now lives, but also other attendees at a party, and indeed 'everyone' living in the village. The phrase 'everyone loves living here' also had such strong resonances with the concept of the rural idyll employed in academic studies of gentrification and well-being that we decided to employ it within the title of this chapter.

Many connections can be drawn between this quoted extract and the comments given by many other people who figured in the questionnaire, with there being, for instance, many expressions of love and attachment by people to their place of residence, although, as in Phillips (2014), a diverse range of materials, beings and affective states were drawn into these accounts. This is not to say that everyone viewed these villages in a positive light, and even those that did often also expressed reservations about life in these villages, albeit often presenting these as issues impacting others than themselves (see Phillips & Dickie, 2019), or making reference, as in the following quote, to changing relations with their place of residence: 'Very quiet, it's picturesque, friendly … I think initially the friendliness struck us. I don't think the quietness made that much impact on me until I had been here a little while and then I, sometimes, found it a bit oppressive, the quietness.'

Connections can be drawn from this quote to arguments advanced within the literature on what we are describing as a more-than-representational approach to well-being. Andrews et al. (2014, p. 219), for example, argue that well-being is far from stable and that attention needs to be paid to the 'ebb and flow' of well-being, both due to new, often less-than-conscious affects emerging, or because of disillusionment or detachment from perceived well-being.

String figure 2: the concept of the village has gone

> I used to think about its location and its quietness, and its friendliness and its conviviality, and the fact that you had a good relationship with your neighbours. But to be quite honest, at the moment … I like my house, I like where I live, but the concept of the village, all those things, has sort of gone. You go down to the local pub and you don't meet the locals, you meet people who come in from Cambridge … And a lot of the people who have moved into the villages have got this idyll of 'village life', 'Constable-type' idyll, and they want 'The Haywain' down by the brook. And when they come here, they won't participate. They take the kids into Cambridge, they won't volunteer, they are always too busy, and yet they have priced everybody else out of the market.

The figure in this account outlines how they used to 'think about' the village in terms of its quietness and the relations they had with neighbours. In other parts of the interview, this woman states that in the past she felt she 'knew everybody in the village', despite having been born in London and only moving to the countryside when they 'had two young kids'. She adds that at this time 'there were a lot of people in the village … who had young kids', with these children all going to the local pre-school, primary school and secondary school 'together', with there being a resultant 'community' of parents and children that she did not expect, being 'extremely surprised to find how friendly it was'. It hence appears that although this woman moved into the village not knowing 'what to expect', she quickly came, seemingly as a consequence of the social networks that she and her children came to be enrolled in, to think about and value the village as a place of 'friendliness' and 'community'.

Such an account can be connected to conceptualisations of social well-being focused on the impacts of networks of neighbourhood sociability, including arguments about the positive and negative impacts of gentrification, and also to claims within more-than-representational studies concerning the significance of the performance of actions and agencies. References to friendliness, conviviality and community are, for example, expressed in connection with active involvement in a school-centred social network, although the respondent goes on to acknowledge that their early

thoughts about the village were not reflective of their current feelings, which, at the time of the interview, were more narrowly focused spatially on the house in which they lived, with the 'concept of the village' having lost its efficacy to them. An explanation is then given which focuses on perceived absences and presences of 'locals' and 'people from Cambridge', with the latter being characterised as residents who seemingly accepted an idyllic concept of 'village life' as enacted in paintings such as Constable's *The Haywain*, although presented by this respondent as people who were disengaged from active participation in such a life.

Connections can be drawn between this account, and many others generated through our interviews, to arguments concerning the impacts of gentrification on economic and social well-being, such as those referring to the neighbourhood effects of incoming village residents' school selection choices and exclusionary displacements. There are also more biographical readings of this account that could connect to the arguments advanced in more-than-representational approaches about temporal variability of senses of well-being and to the significance of activities in their formation. For example, another resident in the Cambridgeshire village gave an account that seemed to express similar feelings of a loss of an earlier state of well-being or contentment associated with involvement in a school-centred social network:

> When we first moved here … there was a primary school, and I guess everyone would sort of meet there, and there was just more of a sense of togetherness. As we've gotten older obviously … people have drifted apart a bit. I suppose there probably is still that village closeness with some of the younger children here and the new families, but I think, as for my family, it kind of just feels like the community spirit has sort of gone a bit.

This respondent relates changes in well-being to their life course and associated shifts in activity patterns, rather than linking them to transformations in the social composition of the village and associated attitudes and practices, although there have been studies seeking to connect life-course transitions and gentrification (e.g. Smith et al., 2019). The quotes of both these residents also connect to arguments advanced in more-than-representational approaches to well-being that highlighted temporal instabilities in well-being and the significance of activities in its formation.

String figure 3: atmospheres and that lovely damp smell

> [T]he village hall … completely changed, because that's been rebuilt. Some parts for the better but a lot of us say 'Oh it's not the same atmosphere'. You don't get that lovely damp smell when you go in. It's quite big and modern and slightly lacking in atmosphere.

Elaborations of previous string figures have started with a human figure, but in this section we want to focus on a less materially distinct figure presented in a quote, namely that of atmosphere. The notion of atmosphere has figured in more-than-representational studies of well-being (e.g. Andrews et al., 2014) and gentrification (e.g. Butcher & Dickens, 2016), in part because the term traverses a series of dualisms, such as between material and virtual, individual and collective, people and space, human and non-human, academic concept and everyday speech. Regarding the last distinction, references to atmosphere figured within many interviews, with many, although not all, of these appearing as part of positive descriptions of life in the countryside. It has been already argued that idyllic representations of rural life draw in a range of materials, properties and actants, and this was equally the case of description of atmospheres, which ranged across the views of smoke curling up from houses on a 'crisp winter's morning', to the feelings associated with particular locations, such as the village green, or buildings such as a house, a pub, church, village hall or school. There are also references to a range of activities – such as walking, sitting, talking, drinking or playing games – which connect to arguments about the significance of practice in the formation of states of well-being. These accounts also drew on a range of embodied sensings, particularly sight, which has been seen as central to middle-class engagements with the countryside (Carolan, 2008; Phillips, 2014), but also sound, or lack of it, and, as in the case of the quote at the start of this section, smell. Several of the quotes also raise issues of temporality – with atmospheres forming, improving and being lost.

We want to briefly explore one further set of threads of interconnection, linked to the significance of location in these accounts. Anderson (2014, p. 139) argues that a feature of an atmosphere is that it ' "surrounds" and "envelops" something particular', be this 'people, things, sites'. A focus on atmospheres is seen to be bound into their emergence, and perpetuation and dissipation, but also is irreducible down to them, an argument with strong resonances with discussions over the significance of place in the formation of well-being. Anderson also argues that atmospheres are 'not necessarily sensible phenomena' (Anderson, 2014, p. 140), in the sense that not everyone within a location necessarily senses them, a claim that also resonates with arguments about the need to avoid reifying the impacts of place on well-being, as well as with evidently very divergent assessments of the atmosphere of many locations in the villages we were studying.

One set of locations subject to divergent interpretations were 'village halls', which are buildings established by various agencies, including local landowners, councils and community groups, to provide a public venue for meetings and activities. Divergent interpretations of these facilities were often expressed in interviews, although most strongly in relation to actual, or

proposed, attempts to rebuild them. The quote at the start of this string figure, for example, described how a village hall – that was variously described by other residents as 'grotty', 'dusty and dirty' and 'like a Nissen hut with a couple of toilets bolted on', but also characterised as an 'amazing place', 'packed with people' – had an 'atmosphere' that was lost after the hall was replaced by a new-build hall, with a kitchen, bar, stage and backstage changing facilities, as well as a large room capable of seating ninety people. In another village, a proposal to similarly replace an old village hall was met with protests and then a local referendum, after which the plans were abandoned and the original hall maintained, although almost a decade later the issue still figured strongly in many people's accounts, with references being given that the proposal had left 'the village … quite bitterly divided' and people still feeling 'disappointed' and 'upset'. The strength of emotions surrounding these developments appears to exceed their significance to material well-being, and indeed arguably the affective power of the atmospheres that, at least for some respondents, seemed to be generated in connection with them. This may in part reflect the way these places, and their redevelopment, had become intertwined with affective responses and understandings of social differences and dislocations connected to processes of gentrification occurring in the villages. Degan and Lewis (2020, p. 518) argue that people 'construct particular and partial readings of atmosphere, which are mediated through their embodied feelings and social histories …. to make particular claims to place', an argument that potentially accounts for the continuing significance still given to both actualised and attempted redevelopments of village halls. The destruction or retention of a village hall, in this line of argument, could be interpreted as an erasure or assertion of a claim to have a place in the contemporary village, with recounting these changes also being an opportunity to reassert these claims.

Conclusion

We have explored the concept of well-being as employed, sometimes explicitly but more generally implicitly, within studies of gentrification. Given the expansive literatures on both well-being and gentrification, if not on their interrelationship, our exploration has sped through a large literary terrain at great speed, and there were numerous areas where we would have liked to have paused to investigate issues more intensely and consider lines of connection to, and difference from, other points in our investigation. In outlining six approaches to well-being, we have mentioned overlaps between them, but there are also points of difference within them warranting examination, such as the differences between non- and more-than-representational approaches. Likewise, regarding our own research on

rural gentrification in nine villages in England, we have employed the notion of 'string figures', but have only been able to very briefly explore three of these, and even then, only pull out a few threads of interconnection between comments generated through a multi-method questionnaire and the preceding exploration of the literatures on gentrification and well-being. The nine villages studied were selected in part because they were different, but we have avoided pulling out these differences to stress complexities in the formation, and dissolution, of well-being in relation to just three string figures we discerned in our research, related to idyllic constructions of rurality, temporal changes in well-being and the atmospheres of particular locations. There are many more connections and patterns that could have been drawn from the material presented, and many more string figures that could be drawn out and connected even to just these three figurings, including ones that make much more direct reference to the significance of green space, which, as highlighted in this chapter, has been an important focus for discussions about well-being and gentrification in urban contexts.

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