Gentrification: What It Is, Why It Is, and What Can Be Done about It

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Abstract

This article outlines the key contemporary debates on gentrification, most of which arise from variations in the process: in interpretations, assessments of displacement, the agents involved and the forms that gentrified cities take. The variations are so extensive that some scholars argue that gentrification has become too broad a concept to retain analytical coherency. Others counter that the logic of gentrification is now so generalised that the concept captures no less than the fundamental state and market-driven 'class remake' of cities throughout the world. The article agrees with the latter position and proposes that gentrification should be considered part of a broader continuum of social and economic geographic change, replacing the useful but out-dated stage model but still accommodating the myriad of variations within its underlying logics. Understanding gentrification as a complex but coherent concept highlights the importance of time and place in the viability of progressive policy responses to gentrification's inequitable effects.

Gentrification, Its Variations and Its Viability as a Coherent Concept

The cities of advanced market economies have changed dramatically in the last 50 years. Disinvestment in the 1950s and 1960s and/or de-industrialisation in the 1970s affected them all, with worldwide reverberations. Gradually, some inner neighbourhoods in most of the larger cities began to experience reinvestment. The process had a pattern, usually involving the restoration of run-down 18th and 19th century housing and requiring the eviction of low-income tenants. The transition from lower to higher socio-economic status residents was accompanied by a shift in housing tenure, from rental to owner occupation. Factories and warehouses also began to be converted to lofts or apartments, and streetscapes were 'rejuvenated' with trees, street furniture and public artworks.

This is the pattern of classic gentrification. The word was made up by British sociologist Ruth Glass in the 1960s, when she observed an influx of 'gentry' – people more affluent and educated than their working-class neighbours and whom she presumed to be the offspring of the landed gentry – buying and renovating old mews and cottages in certain neighbourhoods in inner London. She wrote: 'Once this process of "gentrification" starts

in a district it goes on rapidly until all or most of the original working class occupiers are displaced and the social character of the district is changed' (Glass 1964, xix). She considered the process to have culminated when the original population was entirely removed. The early definitions of the term were very specific, as the following from Neil Smith (1982) indicates:

> By gentrification I mean the process by which working class residential neighbourhoods are rehabilitated by middle class homebuyers, landlords and professional developers. I make the theoretical distinction between gentrification and redevelopment. Redevelopment involves not rehabilitation of old structures but the construction of new buildings on previously developed land. (p. 139)

But in the early 21st century, gentrification has come to be understood as something much more comprehensive: a generalised middle-class restructuring of place, encompassing the entire transformation from low-status neighbourhoods to upper-middle-class playgrounds. Gentrifiers' residences are no longer just renovated houses but newly built townhouses and high-rise apartments. Their workplaces are as likely to be new downtown or docklands office developments as warehouse studios. Gentrification extends to retail and commercial precincts, and can be seen in rural and coastal townships as well as cities. Its defining feature is conspicuous cultural consumption. Designer shops, art galleries, bars and restaurants form the background to a landscape of people in semi-public space (tables on the footpath they must pay to occupy) watching the passing parade and sipping chardonnay from a boutique winery, beer from a microbrewery, coffee from organic beans grown in the developing country *du jour*. As economic growth in urban centres is based more and more on consumption than production (Zukin 1995), gentrification encapsulates a broader range of expressions and becomes all the more important in understanding urban change. In the many different expressions, one thing is common: people who cannot afford to pay are not welcome, and homeless people are moved on.

GENTRIFICATION'S VARIATIONS

Variation in Interpretations

There have long been concerns that the low-income residents of gentrifying areas, especially if they rent their dwellings, do not share in the social and economic up-grading. The transition from rented housing to home ownership was an early defining feature of gentrification (Hamnett and Randolph 1986). Displacement attracted attention right from the start (Fig. 1):

> A number of other terms are often used to refer to the process of gentrification, and all of them express a particular attitude towards the process. 'Revitalisation' and 'renaissance' suggest that the neighbourhoods involved were somehow de-vitalised or culturally moribund. While this is sometimes the case, it is often true that very vital working class communities are de-vitalised through gentrification.

Open doors, street games and stoop-sitting are replaced with iron bars, guard dogs, high wooden fences and a scorn for the streets. (Smith 1982, 139–140)

But more often, the process was presented as a 'rediscovery' of the run-down urban core. Gentrification was an attempt to 'recapture the value of place' (Zukin 1991, 192). Appreciation of the aesthetics and social history of old buildings represented 'a cultural sensibility and refinement that transcended the post-war suburban ethos of conformity and kitsch' (ibid.). The displacement of former residents was not always immediately obvious. The collective move of the middle class into inner New York in the 1970s was represented as an interest in social and cultural diversity – 'a statement about liberal tolerance that seemed to contradict the 'white flight' and disinvestment from the inner-city' of the post-war decades (Zukin 1991, 192). In Toronto and Vancouver, gentrification has been considered by some analysts to result from a 'critical social movement' that in order to escape the hegemony of the suburban lifestyle and all its trappings of 'possessive individualism', chose to move to the inner city in search of demographic diversity and an alternative life of 'radical intellectual subculture' (Caulfield 1994; Ley 1996). It is argued that in Montreal the run-down inner city provided affordable space for single women and opportunities for the formation of gay and lesbian communities and alternative cultures (Rose 1996).

In a long-term analysis of the New York loft market, Sharon Zukin (1982, 1989, 1991) observed that the demand for 'preserved old buildings – with regard to cultural rather than economic value – helped constitute a market

Fig. 1. Graffiti in the rapidly gentrifying neighbourhood of St. Kilda, Melbourne.

for the special characteristics of place' (Zukin 1991, 192). Once that market was established, the nature of the process began to change. Cultural diversity in the inner city was subsumed by a style of elite consumption that of itself necessitated the displacement of the 'traditional' residents that made the place attractive to early gentrifiers (Smith 1996; Zukin 1995). It remains a sociological truism that 'early' gentrifiers not only help destroy the features that lured them to the inner city, but predicate their own displacement in turn (Ley 1996; Zukin 1989).

Preservation of heritage can be used as a deliberate gentrification strategy, of course, with the 'cultural sensibilities' of the middle class pointedly distinguishing between past and future users. In an analysis of gentrification in Sydney, Australia, Wendy Shaw (2005) argues that heritage designations are used to actively exclude the histories of those the dominant (white) culture chooses not to value. W. Shaw observes that, 'as desires for heritage develop and consolidate with gentrification, and become more inclusive of difference, migrant and indigenous heritages continue to remain outside the heritage orbit' (2005, 59).

Interpretations of the cultural effects of gentrification are shaped by the perspective and experience of the person doing the interpreting. It is relatively well accepted that in the built environment, however, gentrification has some positive effects. Many old neighbourhoods need reinvestment in their buildings and infrastructure. Smith (2002) points out that the longer-term solution is to remove incentives for the withdrawal of investment in the built environment in the first place, or to at least circumscribe the opportunities for sustained disinvestment. But this will not resolve existing problems. Gentrification repairs buildings and increases the property tax base, so that local governments can fund improvements to streets and services. The urban regeneration programmes currently operating throughout Europe with national and European Union funding are designed to stimulate private investment in the hope that this will improve infrastructure and reverse the depopulation of struggling regions. Many of these programmes are based on strategies that have been seen to 'work' elsewhere, such as arts and tourism-oriented developments in public–private partnership. The new Guggenheim Museum in the old industrial city of Bilbao in Spain, for example, has assisted a 'spectacular turnaround' in parts of that city (Vicario and Martinez Monje 2005, 153).

Not all such strategies succeed by any means, but it is a concern to researchers of gentrification that those that do create as many problems as they answer (Lees 2003a; Vicario and Martinez Monje 2005; Zukin 1995). As Zukin (1995) points out, successful regeneration initiatives inevitably create tensions between the economies of scale required for a successful tourist industry and local quality of life:

> At best, residents would have to endure environmental and social irritations such as traffic congestion. At worst, property values would rise so high residents would no longer be able to afford to live there. (p. 107)

Loretta Lees (2003a) observes simply that 'much of this urban redevelopment caters exclusively for the well to do' (p. 571). The dilemma is expressed clearly in the largest Australian cities. Renovation of dilapidated housing in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide, and more recently Perth and Hobart, has improved the condition and increased the longevity of buildings. It has preserved some of Australia's built heritage (Fig. 2), not only through the restoration work but because subdivision of apartment blocks into multiple ownership, a characteristic of gentrification in Australia, significantly reduces the likelihood of future demolition. Associated street and infrastructure improvements are generally perceived to be a good thing. State (regional) governments are embracing major redevelopment projects that bring private investment into former industrial areas, such as docks, riverbanks and rail yards, while the inner cities continue to gentrify with little need for government assistance. And the experience of researchers, housing workers and Tenants Unions is that low-income tenants in the city and around former brownfield or greyfield sites are suffering major rent increases, forcing them to move or driving them further into poverty. New gentrifiers are moving in increasing numbers into rental markets, too, placing further upward pressure on rents.

The irony is that gentrification proceeds most confidently in the places that need new investment least: gentrification-induced displacement is still

Fig. 2. Classic gentrification in Carlton, Melbourne.

so far from the reality of the heavily de-industrialised cities of Europe and rust belts of America, where governments are actively trying to promote 'gentrification' through urban regeneration projects in order to alleviate problems of crumbling infrastructure and miserable poverty (Atkinson 2004) that it is simply not an issue. Not yet. But urban regeneration programmes must carry the caution that, if they are successful – that is, if urban regeneration does 'become' gentrification – then the logical extension is expensive housing, an increase in the white middle-class population and exacerbated social inequalities (Smith 2002).

Variation in Assessments of Displacement

International research repeatedly shows that the displacement of low-income households in areas that are gentrifying is significant (Atkinson 2002). There are obstacles to consensus on this point, however, one of which is that displacement is notoriously difficult to document on a statistically significant scale. First, there is a problem in the distinction between 'involuntary' and 'voluntary' moves, and in assessing what this actually means. Second is the difficulty of tracking large numbers of displaced households, and third, of establishing the impacts of the move. As most people who move out of a gentrifying neighbourhood go to a less-gentrified neighbourhood with better housing for the same rent or equivalent housing for less, 'respondent satisfaction' with their new home is an ambiguous measure.

Nevertheless, there are many small studies using quantitative, qualitative and combined methods that provide evidence of displacement due to gentrification, predominantly of 'poor white and non-white households . . . the elderly, female-headed households and blue collar/working class occupational groupings' (Atkinson 2002, 9). There are no serious studies demonstrating that displacement does not occur at all, or that low-cost housing does not become harder to find as gentrification advances, but some researchers argue that displacement is not as significant as it once was (Butler 2003; Hamnett 2003) or was thought to be (Freeman 2005; Freeman and Braconi 2002).

A small number of quantitative studies suggest that displacement does occur but is not a negative, for example, Vigdor (2001) and various US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) reports. One 1981 US HUD survey, for example, followed households that moved 'involuntarily' from their gentrifying neighbourhood and found that 'displacees have not experienced severe negative changes in housing characteristics' (cited in Vigdor 2001, 17). The study did not seek qualitative information such as how far the displacees had moved from their friends and networks, what the effect was of the disruption to their daily life patterns, how they felt about the move or whether they were using community services – if they existed – in their new neighbourhood more heavily as a result. Nor did it attempt to assess the effects in the gentrified city of increasing social homogeneity or polarisation.

In his own study, Vigdor (2001) refers to Census data showing overall increases in income levels in gentrifying neighbourhoods in Boston, examines units containing the same household over two surveys 4 years apart, and concludes that those low-income households that manage to remain benefit from the improvements in the surroundings. There is no analysis of the increase in the prices of local goods and services; on the contrary, Vigdor (2001) argues that some households become 'non-poor' by taking the jobs created by the new middle class residents in personal service and retail trade (p. 23). This kind of research is not only restricted by its reliance on quantitative surveys, but also neglects an extensive body of fine-grained work that observes displacement, decreasing diversity and social polarisation in gentrifying places (e.g. Atkinson 2002; Beauregard 1990; Carpenter and Lees 1995; Deutsche 1996; Engels 1999; Smith 1996; Zukin 1995). The approach continues to be reproduced, however, with Freeman and Braconi (2002) assessing data from the New York City Housing and Vacancy Survey and finding that low-income households in gentrifying areas are less likely to move than those in less-gentrified areas. They conclude that these households are making an effort to stay in the gentrifying neighbourhood, because they value the improvements in the environment, but without the qualitative data to back this up. In a potent criticism of these studies, Tom Slater (2006) questions their analyses:

> . . . are people not moving not because they like the gentrification around them, *but rather because there are no feasible alternatives available to them in a tight/tightening housing market* (i.e. that so much of the city has gentrified that people are trapped)? (Slater 2006, 749, emphasis in original)

The fact is that there are still no conclusive answers: the right questions are not being asked. Slater suggests that gentrification research itself has become gentrified, with researchers no longer seeing or interested in displacement.

> A process directly linked not just to the injustice of community upheaval and working-class displacement but also to the erosion of affordable housing in so many cities is now seen by increasing numbers of researchers as less of a problem than it used to be, or worse, as something positive. (Slater 2006, 739)

He suggests three reasons for this state of affairs. First, debates over the causes of gentrification have distracted researchers from documenting displacement. Second, displacement remains difficult to track and is still not being adequately documented. Third, neo-liberal urban policies and funding decisions are discouraging future documentation of displacement (see Allen 2008; Freeman 2008; K. Shaw 2008; Slater 2008; Smith 2008; Wacquant 2008; Watt 2008 for a discussion of this argument). These factors combined, Slater argues, have created a collective blanking out of the inequitable effects of gentrification.

In addition to the thorny issue of comprehensively documenting displacement, there are other reasons for the variations in interpretation

and assessment of displacement. These include the differing perspectives of the observers (sometimes researchers see what they want to see and ask questions accordingly), different experiences of the process (most people are affected by gentrification in some way, whether they gain or lose), and real differences in context. The individuals and organisations involved in gentrification also affect the way it plays out.

Variation in the Agents
The literature over the last 50 years has identified a range of characters variously involved in gentrification, from economically marginal, educated, left-wing bohemians (Rose 1984), modest home renovators (Jager 1986; Warde 1991), the 'new middle class' (Ley 1994), corporate investors and developers (Warde 1991), estate agents, banks and governments (Smith 1996).

To understand and accommodate these variations, many studies have made use of a stage model to indicate a progression in the process. The classic stage model typically starts with a 'well-educated but economically struggling avant-garde of artists, graduate students and assorted bohemian and counter-cultural types' (Rose 1996, 132) who rent and share the dilapidated inner city with the longer-term, often working-class residents. This 'marginal' stage usually shows little or no displacement (van Weesep 1994). It is followed by 'early' gentrifiers: cultural professionals who work in public or arts sectors and hold liberal values of tolerance and egalitarianism, who are more likely to own their homes and renovate as a labour of love (Ley 1996; Rose 1996; Warde 1991). These early gentrifiers are Glass' (1964) gentry; their purchases create a flicker in neighbourhood house prices. Next, the area is 'discovered' by people with more money who buy the still inexpensive houses or apartments as a canny home investment, and by developers and property investors who buy to rehabilitate and sell. At this stage – gentrification 'proper' – both the old-established and new-wave tenants are displaced. In the 'final' stage, highly renovated dwellings are returned to the market at greatly increased prices to the most affluent buyers and renters as gentrification takes hold. Social diversity diminishes and the search for the next ungentrified locality moves on (Fig. 3). The end state is supposedly 'the creation of a new set of socially homogeneous middle-to-upper-middle class neighbourhoods with an associated economic and cultural transformation of neighbourhood commercial zones' (Rose 1996, 132).

The stage model has come in for some serious questioning, first by Rose (1996) and more recently by Lees (2003b) and Van Criekingen and Decroly (2003). Damaris Rose argued that the presumption of an ineluctable progression through all stages had to be re-examined; that

it is not inevitable, even in advanced tertiary cities, that all neighbourhoods where a 'beachhead' of 'first wave gentrifiers' is established will ultimately be caught up in an irreversible dynamic largely driven by major real estate interests and leading to their transformation into homogenous Yuppie preserves. (Rose 1996, 153)

Lees (2003b) challenges the notion of an 'end state', having identified a phenomenon in London and New York she calls 'super-gentrification' (p. 2487) where advanced gentrification shifts up an income bracket and continues on, new corporate executives 'displacing' university professors. Mathieu Van Criekingen and Jean-Michel Decroly, following Rose, argue that cities further down the hierarchy of world cities, such as Brussels and Montreal, contain neighbourhoods in a perpetual state of marginal gentrification and that this represents an 'alternative process of neighbourhood renewal' that should not be confined to transitional status within the stage model (Van Criekingen and Decroly 2003, 2453). They argue that Brussels and Montreal are undergoing an entirely different process of urban change that does not belong in the broad rubric of gentrification.

In a similar vein, Paul Watt (2005) questions whether 'marginal professionals' living in council housing in London, low in economic capital but high in cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984), should be considered gentrifiers at all. They are unquestionably part of the new middle class, but perpetually marginal, prompting him to observe that 'the notion of a structural homology between the "new middle class" and "gentrification" elides the complexity of both terms in this equation, as well-rehearsed debates within the gentrification literature make clear' (Watt 2005, 362).

Fig. 3. Gentrified workers' cottages in Melbourne, protected behind their new fences from the comtemporary working class.

Variation in Forms

As real estate developers 'awakened to the opportunity of offering a product based on place' (Zukin 1991, 193), notions of gentrification expanded in the late 1980s to include a complex range of building forms. Investment

sub-markets 'routinely conflated' in analyses of gentrification (Badcock 1993, 192) included rehabilitated residential buildings, converted industrial lofts and warehouses (Zukin 1989), pockets of in-fill housing and newly constructed townhouses, apartment blocks and condominiums (Rose 1996; Warde 1991). Rosalyn Deutsche (1996) called gentrification the 'residential component of urban redevelopment' (p. xiv) and included new luxury residential high rises on the grounds that they contribute as much to the landscape of upper-middle-class consumption as their rehabilitated neighbours. Redevelopments that 'exploit the taste for old buildings and downtown diversity that gentrifiers "pioneered"' (Zukin 1991, 193) – especially where they retain the historic façade – were so successful that the distinction between the rehabilitated and the redeveloped landscape became almost irrelevant. Brownfield or greyfield developments on former railway, industrial and docklands had similar effects to rehabilitation in terms of patterns of cultural consumption, and further blurred the boundary between gentrification and redevelopment (Smith 1996; Treanor 2002).

In 1996 Smith revisited his original definition of gentrification:

> How, in the larger context of changing social geographies, are we to distinguish adequately between the rehabilitation of nineteenth century housing, the construction of new condominium towers, the opening of festival markets to attract local and not so local tourists, the proliferation of wine bars – and boutiques for everything – and the construction of modern and postmodern office buildings employing thousands of professionals, all looking for a place to live? This after all describes the new landscapes of downtown Baltimore or central Edinburgh, waterfront Sydney or riverside Minneapolis . . . It would be anachronistic now to exclude redevelopment from the rubric of gentrification. (Smith 1996, 39)

When the transformation of commercial and retail areas also appeared in the gentrification literature (Rose 1996; Zukin 1995) David Ley (1996) bit the bullet and called for a broad definition of gentrification that includes 'renovation and redevelopment on both residential and non-residential sites' (p. 34; Fig. 4).

As cases of gentrification are increasingly documented across the globe (the most recent stories from cities most recently opened to the market – East Berlin, Prague, Havana), researchers have also begun 'to no longer restrict the term to processes located in the city centre' (Lees 2003b, 2490). Lees observed in 2003 that gentrification is increasingly used to refer to changes in suburbs and rural townships, and she expressed some alarm that this 'myriad of forms' made the meaning of the term 'so expansive as to lose any conceptual sharpness and specificity' (Lees 2003b, 2490).

> It can be of the *traditional* or *classic* form – that is, by individual gentrifiers renovating old housing through sweat equity or by hiring builders and interior designers and so leading to the embourgeoisement of a neighbourhood and the displacement of less wealthy residents. It is now also increasingly *state-led* with national and local governmental policy tied up in supporting gentrification

initiatives (see Atkinson 2002; Hackworth and Smith 2001; Lees 2003; Smith 2002; Wyly and Hammel 1999). In a departure from the traditional concern with renovating old housing stock, some now argue that gentrification can also be *new build* (see Morrison and McMurray 1999). Nor is it always residential – it can also be *commercial* (see Kloosterman and van der Leun 1999). (Lees 2003b, 2490, emphases in original)

Adding 'super–gentrification' to the list, Lees (2003b) argued that all these descriptions are 'contingent and geographically specific results of different processes operating in different ways in different contexts' and with that, resurrected the argument for gentrification as a 'chaotic concept' (p. 2491).

Fig. 4. New-build gentrification in Melbourne's Docklands.

IS 'GENTRIFICATION' TOO BROAD A CONCEPT TO BE MEANINGFUL?

In the early 1980s, Rose (1984) argued that the term *gentrification* combined unrelated processes into a 'chaotic conception' (p. 57; following Sayer 1982) such that efforts at analysis were necessarily so broad–brush they overlooked the significance of the variations involved. The case for the concept's disaggregation had support: Robert Beauregard (1986, 1990) observed 'chaos and complexity' in his various studies of gentrification and argued for recognition of diversity in trajectories of neighbourhood change. Alan Warde (1991) pointed to the 'world of difference' (p. 224) between the

activities of individual households that buy an old house in an 'improving neighbourhood' and set about restoring it, and large-scale property developers who buy a tract of land to build condominiums.

Eric Clark (2005) points out that the notion of 'chaotic concept' has been misinterpreted and that it properly refers to the 'conflating [of] contingent and necessary relations' rather than the grouping together of contextually different forms (p. 256). The argument is more than a simple matter of definition: his point is that a very broad array of contextually different situations, far from rendering a concept 'chaotic', may in fact assist in the identification of 'deeper more universal truths' (Clark 2005, 256). Clark (2005) argues that identifying 'order and simplicity' in gentrification:

> [D]oes not preclude sensitivity to the particulars and contingencies of gentri-fication processes in specific contexts. On the contrary, it can help us to grasp better these manifestations as opposed to resigning before their complexity. (p. 257)

Smith (1987) also contested the notion of gentrification being 'too broad' by emphasising its universal characteristics. He replied to Rose (1984) that insofar as gentrifiers are united in their relation to the means of production, the obvious class character of the process renders the variations in form and identity insignificant. Only the marginal gentrifiers do not fit in this typification, and Smith (1987) argued that they are indeed *marginal* to a process 'already defined by its more central characteristics – the change of inner-city neighbourhoods from lower to higher income residents' (p. 160). To the suggestion that the role marginal gentrifiers play in gentrification is neither insignificant nor benign (Rose 1984; Zukin 1982) Smith responded:

> Marginal gentrifiers are important particularly in the early stages of the process and may well be distinguished by cultural attributes and alternative life-styles . . . but to the extent that the process continues and property values rise, their ability to remain in the gentrifying neighbourhood is dependent more on their economic than their artistic portfolio . . . (Smith 1987, 160)

That is, he argued, if they do become significant in the gentrification process they are no longer 'marginal', culturally or economically. If their marginal status does not change, if the products of their work do not become more valorised by the people moving in, then they will join those moving out.

The debate trailed off in the early 1990s during the global recession, amid premature pronouncements of gentrification's demise (see Bourne 1993). But in the late 1990s, with renewed growth in most market economies, gentrification returned along with the questions provoked by its ever increasing complexity. In 1999, Liz Bondi said of the term:

> . . . the more researchers have attempted to pin it down the more burdens the concept has had to carry. Maybe the loss of momentum around gentrification

reflects its inability to open up new insights, and maybe it is time to allow it to disintegrate under the weight of these burdens. (Bondi 1999, 255)

But Smith (1996) continued to argue for understanding gentrification as a coherent process, with a more complex definition:

Gentrification is no longer about a narrow and quixotic oddity in the housing market but has become the leading residential edge of a much larger endeavour: the class remake of the central urban landscape. (p. 39)

With Jason Hackworth, Smith went on to develop a schema of gentrification that goes some way to explaining the variations discussed here, and accounts authoritatively for marked differences at different times of the role of the local and national state.

ACCOUNTING FOR THE VARIATIONS? WAVES OF GENTRIFICATION

Hackworth and Smith (2001) identify three distinct, global waves of gentrification since its conception. The first wave, which began in the mid-to-late 1960s and early 1970s in Western Europe, the northeast of North America and the southeast of Australia, was sporadic and confined to small neighbourhoods within the major cities. It was prior to the global economic recession in late 1973 and occurred with government assistance, often accompanied by a 'discourse of ameliorating urban decline' (Hackworth and Smith 2001, 466). This assistance was provided via incentives to purchase and improve properties, such as easing access to home ownership (K. Shaw 2005a) and providing restoration grants (Beauregard 1990). While the first wave is often associated with marginal gentrification and considered relatively benign (Carpenter and Lees 1995; Ley 1996; K. Shaw 2005a), Hackworth and Smith (2001) remind us that the effect of state involvement even then was 'highly class specific' (p. 466).

The second wave of gentrification came with the revival of depressed markets in the late 1970s. Hackworth and Smith call this the 'anchoring' of gentrification as new neighbourhoods were converted into real estate 'frontiers'. It was deeper and more widespread than the first wave, the distinguishing feature being the 'integration of gentrification into a wider range of economic and cultural processes at the global and national scales' (Hackworth and Smith 2001, 468). But it was uneven still, with some localities being leap-frogged in its advancement. The authors note that the second wave was largely market-led, with local state efforts, where they existed, mainly confined to prodding the private sector. A third distinction of the second wave was the presence of resistance, especially in areas 'where homelessness, eviction and the increasing vulnerability of poor residents was directly connected to gentrification' (Hackworth and Smith 2001, 468).

The stock market crash in 1987 and inner-city residential land market crash 2 years later put an end to the second wave. Despite the predictions

of 'de-gentrification' made during the global recession of the early 1990s, when land values certainly decreased temporarily, reinvestment again took hold when the third wave began in the late 1990s. This time, Hackworth and Smith (2001) argue, the process is linked to large-scale capital more than ever 'as large developers rework entire neighbourhoods, often with state support' (p. 467). They propose that the third wave of gentrification is distinct from the first two in four key ways: it is expanding within partially gentrified neighbourhoods and outwards in a much more comprehensive way; it involves larger-scale developers; resistance is declining as 'the working class is continually displaced from the inner city' (Hackworth and Smith 2001, 468); and finally, the state is more systematically involved.

Hackworth and Smith explain the current state facilitation of gentrification in terms of the global neo-liberal shift away from Keynesian governance and regulatory obstacles to economic growth. In particular, they argue that the reduction of national funding to local governments makes the latter more reliant on the 'attraction and retention of the middle class to increase tax revenue' (Hackworth and Smith 2001, 470). As the 'private market expansion of gentrification in most cities has generally exhausted itself' and the most easily gentrified neighbourhoods are already fully reinvested (Hackworth and Smith 2001, 468–469), further gentrification must extend into economically risky neighbourhoods – remote locations, small pockets, protected land, dark industrial quarters – requiring direct state assistance. 'Retaking the city for the middle classes' says Smith (2002, 443) now 'involves a lot more than simply providing gentrified housing':

> Third-wave gentrification has evolved into a vehicle for transforming whole areas into new landscape complexes that pioneer a comprehensive class-inflected urban remake . . . Most crucially, real-estate development becomes a centrepiece of the city's *productive* economy, an end in itself, justified by appeals to jobs, taxes, and tourism. In ways that could hardly have been envisaged in the 1960s, the construction of new gentrification complexes in central cities across the world has become an increasingly unassailable capital accumulation strategy for competing urban economies. (Smith 2002, 443)

In their comprehensive textbook on gentrification, Lees et al. (2008) accept Hackworth and Smith's model of the three waves and suggest that some parts of the USA are experiencing a fourth wave of gentrification, characterised by 'an intensified financialization of housing combined with the consolidation of pro-gentrification politics and polarized urban policies' (p. 179). They argue that this fourth wave can be distinguished from the third by a shift in policy context, which involves the consolidation of existing national policies operating in favour of the wealthiest households and dismantling 'the last of the social welfare programs associated with the 1960s' (Lees et al. 2008, 183). Most usefully, Lees et al's analysis consolidates the notion that different places are going through different waves of gentrification at any one time.

In most global cities (Sassen 1991) with strong economies, the third (or fourth) wave of gentrification is more systematic and comprehensive than ever before. But as Van Criekingen and Decroly (2003) argue, cities like Brussels and Montreal persist in their state of ongoing marginal gentrification, suggesting first or second wave at most. As gentrification 'cascades down the urban hierarchy' (Lees et al. 2008, 171), many second, third and lower order cities are gentrifying at a slower pace and scale. In some places, gentrification appears to have stalled altogether. In 2003, Van Criekingen and Decroly reiterated Rose's challenge: how do cities that do not proceed as predicted through the stage model of gentrification fit within the concept? Does perpetually marginal gentrification in one city, when others are undergoing third or fourth wave gentrification, also constitute a class remake, or should it be considered something else entirely?

DO WE NEED A NEW 'GEOGRAPHY OF NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL'?

Van Criekingen and Decroly's (2003) call for a new geography of neighbourhood renewal was made on the grounds that the processes of urban change in cities at different levels in national and international urban hierarchies are entirely different (p. 2451). Rather than add to the continually expanding, unifying theory of gentrification, they proposed a 'typology wherein gentrification is precisely delimited as only one among several distinct processes of neighbourhood renewal' (Van Criekingen and Decroly 2003, 2452).

The two researchers attribute the state of ongoing marginal gentrification in Brussels and Montreal to three key factors. First, because each city occupies a 'relatively modest' position within the 'national or international urban hierarchies' (Van Criekingen and Decroly 2003, 2452), they offer relatively few highly paid professional jobs in the advanced tertiary sector. Second, growing flexibility in the labour markets of 'Western post-Fordist economies' generally is swelling the ranks of the tenuously employed, and third, 'socio-demographic restructuring' is 'reshaping the life courses' of young, middle class, highly educated but modestly earning professionals in Western societies such that they are delaying marriage and children (Van Criekingen and Decroly 2003, 2455). Their research shows that, while some small areas of Brussels and Montreal are gentrifying more fully, the 'living conditions supplied by inner-city neighbourhoods are particularly suited to the specific social reproduction needs of young adults in both familial and professional transitional positions . . . [as] most of the not-too-expensive rental housing supply is concentrated in inner-city neighbourhoods' (Van Criekingen and Decroly 2003).

> Moreover, one can presume that a significant part of these young households will leave the inner-city once their familial and professional long-term stability is secured. At the neighbourhood level, marginal gentrification is therefore likely to imply, in many cases, a turnover of marginal gentrifiers (those leaving the neighbourhood as they get familial and professional stabilisation being

replaced by others still lacking these conditions) rather than a replacement by necessarily higher-income gentrifiers. In the authors' view, marginal gentrification can thus be thought of as lying outside the framework of the classic stage model – that is, as a specific process of neighbourhood renewal distinct from gentrification, rather than as a temporary prelude to the inevitable transformation of the neighbourhoods into new wealthy inner-city enclaves. (Van Criekingen and Decroly 2003, 2455–2456)

Leaving aside the rather contestable life-course presumptions here (which are challenged by Watt's [2005] research in London, for example, with various of his marginal professional interviewees maintaining their 'non-traditional' lifestyles and remaining in the inner city), Van Criekingen and Decroly's research really only accounts for the ongoing production of marginal gentrifiers and their demand for cheap inner-city housing. As Rose argued in 1996 – that in Montreal 'there were not enough wealthy potential gentrifiers and the city's economy was too weak . . . to unleash a dynamic of wholesale transformation' (p. 161) – the authors point out that neither Brussels' nor Montreal's economy is strong enough to justify substantial house price increases *at this time*. As there is only a very small market for highly gentrified housing, there is little incentive to produce such housing and, therefore, no reason why gentrification would proceed past the marginal stage. The moment of 'discovery' of substantial profits has yet to be realised. It is possible that it never will be.

The argument does pose a challenge to the stage model, certainly: the proposition that all gentrifying cities will inevitably go through all stages must be done away with. Furthermore, the boundaries between stages need to be blurred: it is not helpful to adhere to the original, rather mechanistic transitions between each closely defined stage. There are degrees of 'marginality' and of all other stages, and any number of possible increments in both upward and downward trajectories of neighbourhood change. But the stage model should not be abandoned simply because of the flawed prediction that all gentrifying areas will progress through all stages to the same end. The insights of the model enable an appreciation of the scope of gentrification – from the de-industrialised towns and neighbourhoods in Europe, America and Australia undergoing some degree of regeneration, to parts of London, New York, Los Angeles and Sydney where the demand for gentrified housing seems infinite – and most importantly, the propensity for cities to change.

Large-scale variations between cities (for example, London and Manchester) can be accounted for by position in the urban international and national hierarchies, and by global conditions; smaller-scale variations (say between Islington and Lewisham) are related to the neighbourhood's position in regional and city hierarchies, and local conditions. The point is that these conditions are unstable. If those young households in Brussels decide to remain in the inner city when their 'familial and professional long-term stability is secured' (Van Criekingen and Decroly 2003, 2455), or indeed if they remain and retain their marginal status, then vacancy rates will

decline, placing pressure on rents and reducing the access of the next 'generation' of marginal gentrifiers. A strengthening of the regional or national economy and an increase in jobs in the advanced tertiary sector will see a city gentrify beyond the marginal stage. Conversely, a weakening of the economy may see a place de-gentrify, as was briefly observed in the short recession of the early 1990s (Bourne 1993). These shifts (or lack of them) and differences do most certainly require analysis of the 'geography of gentrification' (Lees 2000), but they do not constitute entirely different processes of urban change.

CAN GENTRIFICATION BE UNDERSTOOD AS PART OF A CONTINUUM: COMPLEX, BUT COHERENT?

Rather than letting the concept of gentrification disintegrate under its own weight (Bondi 1999) or disaggregating it into fragments with little theoretical unity – separating 'marginal gentrification and gentrification' as 'distinct processes' (e.g. Van Criekingen and Decroly 2003, 2455) – and thereby losing the conceptual scope and political currency of the term and the process, it is more useful to locate gentrifying neighbourhoods and cities on a continuum of social and economic geographic change. The continuum need not imply that all neighbourhoods will move through all 'stages', nor that they will reach the same end state, nor, indeed, that they can only travel in one direction. This conception is neither chaotic nor overly broad: it is complex, indeed, and contextually inclusive, and reinforces the common, underlying logics of gentrification.

Before exploring this way of conceptualising gentrification, we need to look at these underlying logics. The causes of gentrification have been the subject of debate from the moment the phenomenon was identified. Many commentators and scholars agree that the discussion must move on from the causes and effects of gentrification to what to do about it (Lees et al. 2008; Slater 2006; K. Shaw 2005a). For the purposes of the argument in this article, though, we will go through a brief account of the more commonly accepted explanations for the process. For more detailed summaries and syntheses of the various perspectives, see Atkinson (2002); Lees (1994); Lees et al. (2008); Rose (1984); K. Shaw (2002); Lees et al. (2008); van Weesep (1994).

The Underlying Logics of Gentrification

Gentrification has been studied in cities of advanced market economies throughout the world, from Glasgow (Smith 1996) to Amsterdam (van Weesep 1994) to Sydney (Engels 1994; W. Shaw 2000). It has been documented in Paris, London and New York (Carpenter and Lees 1995; Hackworth and Smith 2001), Philadelphia (Beauregard 1990), Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal (Caulfield 1994; Lehrer 2008; Ley 1996; Mills 1988; Rose 1996; 1984), Adelaide (Badcock 1989, 1993, 2001) and Melbourne

(Jager 1986; Logan 1985; K. Shaw 2000). The process has been observed more recently in post-communist cities (Bernt and Holm 2005; Sykora 2005) and in cities such as Havana that are being opened more gradually to the market (Scarpaci 2000). It is finding its way into the cities of Central and South America, the Middle East and Asia (Porter and Shaw 2008).

Despite their detailed awareness of the variations and debates outlined above, Juliet Carpenter and Loretta Lees (1995) concluded from their comparison of gentrification in neighbourhoods of Paris, London and New York that 'despite different local contexts, the symbols of affluent consumption from all three neighbourhoods appear to adhere to a global code, with only minor contextual differences' (p. 300). Smith (1992) notes that:

> [G]ritty industrial metropolises such as Baltimore and Pittsburgh have completely transformed their images; even Glasgow, known for its shipbuilding, its steel and textile industries, its militant working class, and more recently for its chronic deindustrialisation, celebrated 1990 as European Capital of Culture . . . (p. 64)

Explanations for gentrification range as wide as theories of all urban change. On a spectrum of degrees of inevitability, they extend from social ecology (gentrification is inevitable) through political-economic and post-modern cultural analyses to neo-classical cultural choice theory (nothing is inevitable). We can do away with the extremes of the debate fairly quickly. Ecological urban ideologies present the spatial organisation of cities as the natural product of biological, social or technological evolutions (for example, Park et al. 1925). They are deeply deterministic, holding that cities have natural stages of decline and improvement in their organic 'life cycles' and, therefore, legitimising existing or imminent urban conditions as unavoidable. These arguments are most commonly employed by advocates of the investment decisions that capitalise on and contribute to these changes, with support from 'neutral' government policy statements and the mass media (Rose 1984). Such analyses are not only insubstantial but also insidious: they neutralise the political character of the city (Deutsche 1996), they reduce individuals to cogs in the organic 'machine', and they actively militate against challenges to urban conditions that can and do cause cities to take on different shapes (Castells 1983; Sandercock 1998; K. Shaw 2005b).

Cultural choice theory − a product of neo-classical urban economic theory − is at the other end of the spectrum. It assumes that urban change is the result of constellations of individual consumer decisions. It has trouble, therefore, with the international consistency of gentrification. The main problem for its proponents is that cultural choice requires that individual preferences must 'change in unison not only nationally but internationally − a bleak view of human nature and cultural individuality' (Smith 1996, 55). Jon Caulfield (1994), a proponent of this view, asks why, if the choice of free-thinking individuals is not an explanation, the inner areas of cities 'now seem to satisfy middle class aspirations for which they were perceived as largely ill-suited only a generation ago' (p. 132).

He suggests that the contemporary inner city holds an 'existential appeal' that represents city dwellers' 'feelings about the culture of everyday life' and that the key question is how to account for the 'new canons of good taste' (Caulfield 1994, 132–134).

In constructing this argument, however, Caulfield (1994) acknowledges that the 'amenity packages' of the 2000s – 'stylish restaurants, art galleries, fashionable architecture', are no less rooted in a culture of consumption than those of the 1950s – 'landscapes of house-pride, late-model cars, convenient appliances and massive retail malls' (p. 132). This raises the compelling suggestion that it is less about 'choice', and more that certain conditions produce similar responses wherever they apply. Why indeed would masses of individuals in disparate cultures throughout the advanced capitalist world decide simultaneously that they must have a new house in the suburbs and all available 'mod cons', and 50 years later, an inner-city warehouse apartment with timber floors, unless there were some inter-nationally occurring logic to these particular options? There is an unavoidable argument that the phenomenon of suburbanisation in the 1950s was a result of global economic restructuring in the precisely the way gentrification is today (see, for example, Boyer 1983). That is, people's choices are shaped by the options available. Just as new suburban houses were 50 years ago, now inner-city warehouse conversions and high-rise docklands apartments are not only available but also heavily marketed in lifestyle magazines, real estate supplements and television images. There are clearly economic motives for the provision of particular forms at particular periods in time.

Lees (1994) identifies two theoretical strands, located in the camps of political economy and postmodern cultural analysis, that best account for the similarities among gentrifying cities. These two strands are the strongest in a simple dichotomy where 'production side' explanations emphasise supply, and 'consumption side' explanations emphasise demand. The first strand is a neo-Marxist analysis of urban economic restructuring, which explains the production of gentrifiable neighbourhoods. The second is a theory of 'post-industrial' urban social restructuring which explains the existence and choices of the gentrifiers, under a set of globally occurring conditions (Lees 1994; Smith and Williams 1986; Warde 1991). Both explanations are firmly rooted in global processes and, as we shall see, closely entwined.

THE PRODUCTION OF THE GENTRIFIED ENVIRONMENT: DISINVESTMENT AND REINVESTMENT IN URBAN CORE

Political–economic theory attributes an active role to capital and the state in creating the necessary preconditions for large-scale reinvestment in the inner city. Neil Smith (1996) has developed the most comprehensive neo-Marxist theory of gentrification. It is based on the fundamental notion of uneven development in capitalist societies and the concept of the 'rent gap' as a prerequisite for gentrification.

Smith's thesis builds on David Harvey's analysis of the central Marxist concept of crises of capital, where the necessity to accumulate leads to falling rates of profit and an overproduction of commodities, creating a barrier to further investment and forcing capital to invest elsewhere. Harvey (1985) devised a model of 'circuits of capital' in the late 1970s to explain the activities of capital markets following the global deflation of 1972 – the beginning of the major economic slump which ended the long post-war boom of the 1950s and 1960s. In an effort to clearly link urban restructuring to wider processes of economic restructuring, Harvey theorised the urban built environment as a destination for capital invest-ment, the profitability of which is linked to the state of the wider economy (Hall 1998, 24).

Harvey's model is based on the premise that over-accumulation periodically occurs in the 'primary circuit' of the production process, necessitating alternative forms of investment. Viable alternatives include a switch into another sector – the secondary circuit of the built environment, or the tertiary and quaternary circuits of high-tech industry and tourism and their associated service sectors – or into another region. A sectoral switch opens up a new market; a spatial (geographic) switch seeks cheaper location and labour costs, better access to plant and equipment and additional markets for surplus stock (Harvey 1985).

Because of the long turnover period, investment in the built environment is itself particularly prone, not only to over-accumulation, but also to 'devalorisation', as capital returns are received slowly in a piecemeal fashion. Depreciation provides a rational incentive to landowners to reduce expenditure on the existing investment in the form of repairs, and to find other, more profitable areas to invest in (revalorisation). If this occurs, further depreciation ensues, and the building enters into a devalorisation cycle of under-maintenance followed by active disinvestment (Smith 1979).

Smith argues that this devalorisation cycle 'prepares' a neighbourhood for gentrification 'by a basic economic process that is rational by the standards of the capitalist free market' (Smith and LeFaivre 1984, 50). It is here that the rent gap appears, defined as 'a gap between the ground rent actually capitalised with a given land use at a specific location and the ground rent that could potentially be appropriated under a higher and better land use at that location' (Smith and LeFaivre 1984, 50). When the rent gap becomes wide enough 'to enable a developer to purchase the old structure, rehabilitate it, make mortgage and interest payments, and still make a satisfactory return on the sale or rental of the renovated building, then a neighbourhood is ripe for gentrification' (Smith and LeFaivre 1984). The rent gap has spawned more specific theorisations, such as 'value gap' (Hamnett and Randolph 1986) which explains the pressure to convert housing from rental to owner-occupied, and 'functional gap' (Sykora 1993) which explains the pressure for highest and best use of property (for detailed summaries, see Lees et al. 2008).

The logic behind uneven development is that 'the development of one area creates barriers to further development, thus leading to underdevelopment, and that the underdevelopment of that area creates opportunities for a new phase of development' (Smith 1982, 151). Smith argues that it is this logic that caused capital to abandon the inner city in the 1950s for the suburbs, where rates of profit were higher, only to return again, in a 'locational seesaw', when the inner city was sufficiently run down to offer even better returns. Government intervention via stimulatory planning policies was an important component of early suburbanisation and gentrification processes, and, as Hackworth and Smith (2001) argue, has become significant again in the third wave. Smith stresses, however, that the process of investment and disinvestment is a knowing activity on the part of all the 'producers of gentrification' – the investors, developers, real estate agents, banks, governments and mainstream media – who act in effect as the collective initiative behind gentrification.

One of the inadequacies of this theory, which Smith acknowledged in 1987, is the absence of the people, from the economically marginal, bohemian and countercultural types who move in early and rent their residences, through to those who respond to the real estate hype, take advantage of the turnaround in lending policies and buy gentrified property. We still need an explanation for emergence of consumer demand.

THE PRODUCTION OF THE GENTRIFIERS: CULTURE, CONSUMPTION AND THE NEW MIDDLE CLASS

The postmodern cultural approach to gentrification emphasises cultural practices and consumption and the notion of 'post-industrialism' (Lees 1994). Post-industrial theory is based on the changing structures of production leading to economic and social restructuring, with its roots firmly in Harvey's (1985) model of circuits of capital. It is explicitly dependent on the assumption that over-accumulation occurred on an international scale in industry and manufacturing in the late 1960s and early 1970s, precipitating a crisis of another kind in the older manufacturing cities when they lost much of their industry to different regions and investment to the built environment. De-industrialisation left the inner areas of these cities, which traditionally housed blue-collar workers in close proximity to their workplaces, with non-functioning factories and warehouses and an 'underclass' of unemployed people who were unable to follow their jobs to the outer suburbs or off-shore (London and Palen 1984).

As Soja (1983) has pointed out, manufacturing was selectively replaced by other types of industry, especially information, entertainment and service industries based in or around the offices of corporate command centres. This pattern of de-industrialisation and selective re-industrialisation (as opposed to 'post'-industrialisation) has occurred in large cities throughout the advanced capitalist world. David Ley (1980, 1994, 1996) is perhaps

the strongest proponent of the post-industrial theory of gentrification, arguing that the process has precipitated a new rationale for government allocation of urban land to different uses (Ley 1980).

Post-industrialism clearly does take international structural forces into account, but the central tenet of its application to gentrification is that the current inner-city transition is the product of cultural choice, under given conditions. The quadrupling of oil prices in the early 1970s (Knox 1993), the maturation of the baby-boom generation, the perceived 'blandness' of suburban living (Caulfield 1994), the impact of feminism and the rise of economically independent women (Rose 1984), restructured labour markets, the availability of low-cost, inner-city housing and its proximity to city offices and places for cultural consumption all combined to create demand for 'recycled' inner-city neighbourhoods (Ley 1994). This demand was expressed by a 'new middle class', typified by London and Palen (1984, 15) as 'relatively affluent, young, child-free couples' in professional, managerial and advanced service occupations – a direct function of the increase in these professions in post-industrial cities (Ley 1994). The influx of service industry and white-collar workers and residents into the inner city has meant that cultural taste, interest in heritage and a 'locally consensual aesthetic' (Warde 1991, 224) have come to dominate urban and metropolitan planning policies and land use regulations in the formerly industrial city.

There is no conflict so far between the postmodern cultural explanation and the political-economic analysis: the economic restructuring of the inner city creates real incentives for the new middle class to live there. Consumers of the gentrified city like the idea and the aesthetic; the producers like the profits. But Ley goes further to identify a subgroup in Canada he calls a 'cultural new class', whose presence he argues actually precipitates gentrification. The cultural new class is made up of 'professionals in the arts, media, and other cultural fields accompanied by pre-professionals (students), who may well be non-conformist in their life-style and politics' (Ley 1996, 56). It has links with 'avant-garde arts circles and leftist political organisations', is the most urbanised of the 'new class fractions', and the most predisposed towards a home in the central city (Ley 1994, 57):

> In its collective identity, geography matters, for central city living is far more than a convenience for the journey to work; it is constitutive of an urbane life-style. (Ley 1994, 69)

Ley (1994, 1996) mounts the argument that gentrification is initiated by the arrival of artists and writers and other 'cultural professionals' and that their presence accounted for an important left-liberal reform movement in local Canadian politics (Ley and Mills 1993). Clustering in the inner city allowed the formation of alternative communities with a 'critical social practice' oriented to maintaining social diversity and enhancing local quality of life (Caulfield 1994; Ley 1996), but which unwittingly made the place 'more attractive to other middle class residents who may

not have shared the progressive values of the cultural new class who had preceded them' (Ley 1996, 258).

This account does deviate from political economy. The key difference is that the neo-Marxist explanation of gentrification passes over these marginal gentrifiers, and certainly does not accord them the causal power that Ley's account does. Consistent with the view that marginal gentrifiers are marginal to the process, they are grouped with the longer term, usually working-class occupants prior to capitalisation on the rent gap. The two perspectives converge at the period of revalorisation, where the investors and developers capitalise on sales to the more affluent home buyers who have suddenly found easy finance for their inner-city purchase.

Gentrification on a Continuum of Social and Economic Geographic Change

In recent years, the gentrification research community has broadly accepted that economic and cultural explanations for gentrification both have a part to play (Atkinson and Bridge 2005; Clark 2005; Lees 2000; Lees et al. 2008). Clark (2005, 261) observes that,

> [M]uch energy has been spent in the gentrification literature distinguishing between and arguing for and against production/supply-side theory and consumption/demand-side theory. But neither side is comprehensible without the other, and all present theories of gentrification touch bottom in these basic conditions for the existence of the phenomenon.

Lees et al. (2008) state simply: 'Today, most observers acknowledge that both production and consumption perspectives are crucially important in explaining, understanding and dealing with gentrification' (p. 190). If gentrifiers as consumers are not to be 'the mere bearers of a process determined independently of them' (Rose 1984, 56), their political, cultural and housing choices must be taken into account. Urban economic restructuring provides a particular set of options: initially low-cost space in a given location, a new 'post-industrial' social order, and opportunity for revalorisation. The cross-cultural consistency of these options is explained by the global character of the restructuring. Transnational and local media, with capacities to reflect and shape cultural trends, play powerful supporting roles.

If the economic and cultural logics are understood to be compatible, then gentrification's myriad of variations can be easily accommodated on a continuum of social and economic geographic change. Consider such a continuum, with maximum disinvestment, or 'filtering' (the formation of 'slums') at one extreme, and 'super-gentrification' (where the corporate executives displace the university professors) at the other. Consider also that regeneration and gentrification, both of which are processes of rein-vestment, are not synonymous. Regeneration, which is simply the process of reinvestment in a disinvested place (Porter and Shaw 2008), may or may

not become gentrification, depending on whether displacement or exclusion occurs. The concept of 'exclusionary displacement' (Marcuse 1985) is important here: if people are excluded from a place they might have lived or worked in or otherwise occupied had the place not been 'regenerated', then this should be considered gentrification as much as had they been directly displaced.

The range of gentrification's expressions is coherent if neighbourhoods are seen to evolve – from a state of disinvestment, perhaps, to a benign form of regeneration which overlaps with marginal gentrification: where no displacement occurs, which almost certainly demonstrates a degree of class change, and which may set up a social dynamic that increases demand for a particular place, but which the political-economic analysis barely notices because it exhibits social but not – at that time – economic change. The process may or may not proceed to the period of revalorisation – the closure of the rent gap and gentrification 'proper' – depending on the area's position in the international, national and local hierarchies, on global conditions, and on local particularities such as housing characteristics, levels of opposition and the nature of government interventions (see K. Shaw 2005a for an expansion of these qualifying particulars). The same factors influence whether the place continues on to more advanced gentrification, with, perhaps, the appearance of a new gap between actual and potential rent (based this time not on disinvestment but 'under-investment', or under-capitalisation, in light of even higher and better uses). Unlike the organic evolutionary metaphor, gentrification on the continuum may slow or stop, or go backwards, or remain in a perpetually marginal state.

Thinking of a continuum is useful because it contains the whole concept of gentrification – seeing it as a *process* rather than a *phenomenon* in a context of inherently unstable cities – and in doing so, highlights opportunities in time and place for interventions into gentrification's passage. Like the stage model, the continuum allows gentrification to be understood as complex and multi-faceted, but with greater capacity for its variations and nuances. The call for a new geography of 'neighbourhood renewal' has an important instrumental problem. In decoupling marginal gentrification from gentrification proper, the potential for one to proceed to the other can be overlooked, and with it the opportunity for preventative policy interventions. The choice of terms removes the politics and anticipation of displacement from marginal gentrification – as Smith (1996) points out, renewal is a more benign word that conveniently elides negative connotations. Gentrification's 'delimitation' would lead to fragmentation both of understandings and possible responses. Rose herself reached a similar conclusion in 1996 in a reconsideration of her call for gentrification's disaggregation:

> I am inclined to believe . . . Sayer's [1992] observation that 'it is not always possible or desirable to reduce the object so that it is less chaotic, because it may nevertheless be of interest as a whole, perhaps because, chaotic or not, it

is to such objects that people respond' . . . I would suggest, then, that future research on gentrification be grounded in the historical specificities of particular cities and particular neighbourhoods but never lose sight of how locally experienced change relates to broader processes of economic and social restructuring. (Rose 1996, 161)

THE POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF UNDERSTANDING GENTRIFICATION AS PART OF A CONTINUUM

Most gentrification scholars are working now to identify new forms and cases of the process, especially as its reach becomes truly global (see Atkinson and Bridge 2005). Some are analysing the role of governments and public policy in driving gentrification (Lees et al. 2008; Slater 2006; Smith 2002). Still others are documenting policy responses that are mitigating (or are intended to mitigate) the inequities of displacement and polarisation (see Lees and Ley 2008; Porter and Shaw 2008). Lees, who in 2003 reiterated the notion of gentrification as a 'chaotic concept', more recently observed with Mark Davidson (2005) that 'we should not allow the term gentrification to collapse under the weight of the mutation of the process itself' (p. 1187). Instead, she and Davidson argue that 'keeping hold' of the term retains its politics, and that 'these politics are important to those of us who feel it is important to be critical of gentrification processes' (Davidson and Lees 2005, 1187). Perhaps because of the dominant 'global neo-liberal discourse of regeneration and renaissance' (Lees et al. 2008, xvii), the question of what to do about gentrification has become one of the key contemporary debates (Freeman 2008; Slater 2006, 2008).

There is little argument that as levels of reinvestment increase, so do the polarising effects. It is also true that the farther up the continuum, the lesser the positives are in their own right – for example, in the high-rise, high-density city waterfront redevelopments that quickly plateau out in new investment but are socially homogenous, destroy environmental quality and often require demolition of formerly protected heritage buildings. Recognition of the potential for land values to rapidly increase in neighbourhoods in an apparently perpetual state of marginal gentrification should conditions change – over-investment in nearby regions, arrival of new corporate headquarters, persistence of 'marginal' gentrifiers who become less economically marginal as they become more professionally secure, influx of a cultural scene displaced from elsewhere, formation of a new scene – would encourage researchers and policymakers to plan for equitable policy interventions. Such planning would acknowledge the positive effects of reinvestment in economically marginal regions (increase in the property rate base, improvements to buildings and local infrastructure, preservation of heritage) and work to prevent gentrification (displacement of low-income tenants and businesses, social and cultural homogenisation or polarisation).

The possibilities for intervention are critically entwined with scale. Hackworth and Smith (2001) concentrate primarily on the national and supranational state (the World Trade Organisation, European Union) and on the transnational reach of corporate powers as the key drivers of gentrification. They consider the local state primarily as a hapless facilitator under inexorable economic pressure. But there are competing pressures, and in some important respects local governments are better equipped than they ever have been to make more complex responses. Notwithstanding the general reduction in national funding to local governments (Hackworth and Smith 2001), some city–states are growing in power as nation–states increasingly devolve control to regional and local scales (Pike et al. 2007). Mark Purcell (2002) points out that:

> This devolution means that local governing institutions are increasingly responsible for duties such as economic development, social services, the provision of infrastructure, and spatial planning (Painter 1995; Staeheli et al. 1997). In this context, governance institutions in cities have taken on greater authority and responsibility to make policy for urban areas. They are less beholden to governing institutions at the larger scales, particularly national-scale states. (p. 100)

The factors that precipitate change in the international urban hierarchy are usually well beyond the influence of any single government, especially local government, but gentrification is affected by regional and local conditions and events. Local planning and policy initiatives can and do have an impact. They can encourage and exacerbate gentrification. The burgeoning literature on 'creative cities' (Florida 2003; Landry 2000; Montgomery 2004), which encourages cities to employ 'creative city strategies' to increase their competitiveness in the global economy, is a collection of recipes for locally induced gentrification. Even though many do not work unless rather more important conditions are met (Peck 2005), some do, for example, in Bilbao and Dublin, where the development of 'cultural quarters' was driven primarily by local or regional government (Montgomery 2004; Vicario and Martinez Monje 2005; Zukin 1995). Conversely, local government initiatives to provide lower-cost living and/ or working space can prevent or limit displacement, as they have in neighbourhoods of Amsterdam, Barcelona and San Francisco (Cohen and Martí 2008; Pascual and Ribera-Fumaz 2008; K. Shaw 2005b; van de Geyn and Draaisma 2008).

Local government-managed regeneration programmes in the UK are making much-needed improvements to the building stock and local services. In some cases, they encourage middle-class occupation and displace the lowest-income households (Atkinson 2004; Porter 2008); in others, they retain low-cost housing security (Saunders 2008). Community workers and housing activists in Western Europe understand this grey zone: many are in favour of the current regeneration programmes for cities and regions experiencing greatest poverty, and are working with local governments

and low-income communities to increase bottom-up control of spending decisions and encourage policy initiatives that will ensure they are not displaced or otherwise disadvantaged (Robinson and Shaw 2003). Others are watching social housing sales (a regeneration strategy in itself) and trying to reach agreements with city governments on minimum levels. When these levels are approached, the city can expect resistance from activists and squatters (Draaisma 2003; Stienen and Blumer 2008; van de Geyn and Draaisma 2008). Overall, the sense is that regeneration is a reasonable policy to assist underused, declining or deprived neighbourhoods, cities or regions, as long as gentrification is anticipated, and another kind of intervention occurs to maintain a low-income housing stock to prevent displacement, or at least introduce ameliorative social policies if and when gentrification begins to be observed.

In seeing gentrification as part of a coherent process of social and economic geographic change with a continuous array of expressions in place – from disinvested, to regenerating, to gentrified and gentrifying further, with all the different meanings, assessments, people involved and forms these states can take – opportunities for prevention of displacement and the loss of social and cultural diversity open up. The critical element is the timing. The period prior to closure of any rent gap, while a degree of relative diversity exists, has the greatest policy potential both substantively and politically. It is when land values have not leapt up (again), and while there is a population of people open to new approaches and willing to take risks, that social policy and planning initiatives, such as protecting the places of low-income communities and marginal cultures, spending on community facilities and constructing and facilitating affordable housing, are at their most economically practical and electorally viable (Lehrer 2008; Ley 1996; Rose 1996; K. Shaw 2005a,b). Consider San Francisco's SoMa district: a relatively 'underinvested' area in a highly gentrified city, where a new rent gap has opened up. Local community workers, housing activists and academics (university professors not yet displaced by corporate executives) – who are all still there by virtue of a long history of political activism and anti-gentrification struggles in that city – are again organising successfully for low-cost housing provision and public benefits, with 'a variety of policy advocates . . . making progress in recent years in shifting the policy framework to the left' (Cohen and Martí 2008).

A rent gap may not emerge in a neighbourhood if market conditions and position in the urban hierarchy are not right. Or it may emerge and not be capitalised on as a result of government intervention. An array of strategies, including planning permissions, regulatory controls, heritage protections and careful negotiations (K. Shaw 2005b) can be used to produce outcomes other than highest and best economic use. That relatively few governments have shown interest in progressive policy interventions into gentrification is in part a failure of urban researchers – as both Lees (2003a) and Dorling and Shaw (2002) observe – to communicate their

conclusions that gentrification exacerbates social inequalities, but indication also that politicians and policymakers prefer where possible not to see the negatives. In the late 20th century, this was due in large part to the reluctance of neo-liberal governments to intervene in market processes. In 1994, van Weesep observed that 'in the present mood of deregulation, privatisation and decentralisation of governmental responsibilities, the public sector has little room to manoeuvre' (p. 77). But the myth of the non-interventionist state has been left behind in the last century, and a role is emerging for local and regional states that require a new kind of intervention. The problem for these governments, as it always has been, is not *whether* to intervene, but in whose interests. For cities lower down in the global city hierarchy, and further back along the continuum – in a state of relative disinvestment, or in early periods of reinvestment and even early waves of gentrification ('stuck' at marginal gentrification, for instance) – the possibility and viability of progressive interventions are real.

Here is a rich field for gentrification researchers, activists and academics: to communicate effectively the well-established findings on the negative effects of gentrification; to lead and encourage public debate; to examine where different cities, neighbourhoods, streets and sites are along the continuum; to investigate progressive and equitable policy initiatives that will prevent or ameliorate gentrification; and to recognise the conditions and timing for their political viability. Principled and widely disseminated research on the benefits and dangers of reinvestment (Porter and Shaw 2008) will go a long way to producing more equitable cities in the 21st century.

Short Biography

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