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Spoiled Mixture: Where Does State-led ‘Positive’ Gentrification End?

Mark Davidson

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Abstract

Over the past decade, policy-makers have introduced social mixing initiatives that have sought to address urban social problems by deconcentrating poor and working-class communities through attracting the middle classes back to the city. Such a policy objective clearly ‘smells like gentrification’. However, some commentators have warned against being critical of these policies, pointing out that the types of inner-city redevelopment generated by them is different from classical gentrification and that state-led gentrification offers benefits for many working-class communities. This paper draws upon research conducted in London to demonstrate how, despite having many commendable aspects, these policy agendas carry with them significant threats of displacement for lower-income communities. The paper also argues that, due to the mutating nature of gentrification, these threats are increasingly context-bound. In conclusion, the paper argues that those state mechanisms which might manage the unjust aspects of gentrification are inadequate.

Whether gentrification is urban, suburban, or rural, new-build or the renovation of existing stock, it refers, as its *gentri*-suffixes attest, to nothing more or less than *the class dimensions of neighbourhood change*—in short, not simply changes in the housing stock, but changes in housing class (Slater *et al.*, 2004, p. 1144).

Introduction

For a process which at its most simple is about changes in housing class, gentrification has been subject to an astonishing

amount of debate. Recent times have been no exception, with a more diverse, complex and geographically differentiated gentrification process (see Lees, 2007, for review) igniting a number of new discussions. Within these, there appears to have been progressively less concern about displacement and related injustice issues (see Slater, 2006). At the same time, gentrification is being embraced by policy-makers as a potential urban renewal solution. Gentrification has therefore had something of an image makeover; a process

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once associated with riots and the forceful resistance of displacement in Tompkins Square Park, New York City (Smith, 1996) has now found favour in some quarters.

Although gentrification has always had supporters, recent academic debate is marked by calls to extradite whatever ‘dirt’ is left sticking to the term. This has been manifest in both academic (Freeman, 2006; Smith and Butler, 2007) and policy debate (Duany, 2001). The changing nature of gentrification has certainly contributed to this rethinking in academic circles. In particular, new and revised understandings have been required as gentrification has become less associated with middle-class couples/families moving into run-down Victorian terraces, displaced working-class tenants, urbane attitudes and sweat equity. For example, both inner-city redevelopment involving residential conversion of ex-industrial structures (Hamnett and Whitelegg, 2007) and new-build developments (Davidson and Lees, 2005) are now considered part of gentrification; albeit with different levels of critical interpretation (Boddy, 2007; Davidson and Lees, 2005).

However, elements of recent discussion have been less stimulated by the need to understand emergent forms of gentrification and more led by attempts to offer new interpretation. Most notably, Lance Freeman (2005, p. 488), in his study of gentrification in Harlem and Clinton Hill, New York City, has argued that “neighborhoods can gentrify without widespread displacement” and that the process

provides the opportunity to improve the quality of life of deteriorated neighborhoods and mix residents from differing socioeconomic strata with benefits for both the indigenous residents and the larger society (Freeman, 2006, p. 169).

In a stringent rejection of Freeman’s conclusions, Slater (2006) has argued such interpretations represent a decline of critical

thought and he explains this decline as a consequence of on-going theoretical squabbles, a widespread lack of concern with displacement and a neo-liberal urban policy context.

This paper contributes to these debates by illustrating how the most unjust aspect of gentrification—displacement—has become both underexamined (Slater, 2006) and undertheorised. In particular, it is argued that most discussion of displacement is limited to direct types (Atkinson, 2002) and, while this form is the most obvious and blatant, it is only one part of a much broader set of displacement processes related to gentrification. Through outlining this broader set of processes, the complex social and temporal character of displacement is illustrated. Notably, this understanding of displacement highlights the prospect of a gradual transition of a neighbourhood from one social class to another. This, in turn, raises the issue of cohabitation. Therefore the gentrifying neighbourhood becomes a potential forum of social mixing, however fleeting and conflict-ridden this may be. It is at this point then that we can see the coalescence of gentrification and current pro-social-mixing urban policy agendas.

Social Mixing and the Policy Context

In Butler’s recent reconsideration of gentrification, he argues that traditional displacement concerns have been replaced by those of social mixing (or lack thereof)

Social displacement is increasingly ‘socially tectonic’—different social groups move past each in close spatial proximity ... —and there is a need to chart these parallel worlds whether in newly formed global regions or in old and declining industrial conurbations ... This is a prime task for extending the geography of gentrification and is a different mapping exercise to that of understanding traditional and

relatively unmovable social structures in which gentrification research was born (Butler, 2007, p. 178).

Hamnett and Whitelegg follow suit in their discussion of gentrified converted commercial and industrial buildings in Clerkenwell, London, where the impacts of the process are not thought to be displacing *per se*

Their arrival and the associated commercial gentrification have, however, significantly and probably irrevocably changed the social mix and ethos of the area which was dominated by social rented housing tenants. This has not, however, been accompanied by significant residential displacement ... it is a clear example of gentrification without displacement although it may well be accompanied by growing feelings of relative deprivation on the part of existing residents (Hamnett and Whitelegg, 2007, p. 122).

Both these papers describe a more complex gentrification process with unclear associations to displacement and highlight that in the perceived absence of displacement the issue of social mixing emerges. Importantly, such discussions come at a time when urban policy programmes across the globe are accused of promoting class-based neighbourhood social changes (Smith, 2002).

In 2000, the UK Labour government established an urban policy programme—the Urban Renaissance—which had at its core the ambition of bringing the middle classes back to the city. Guided by Richard Rogers' Urban Task Force Report (DETR, 1999) that recommended that the government should “bring people back to the city” and “take back control of them”. Subsequent urban policies (DETR, 2000; also see DCLG, 2007, and ODPM, 2003, that embrace similar ideas of social mix and governance under the banner of ‘sustainable communities’—see Raco, 2007) have emphasised creating vibrant and economically ‘viable’ (see Allen, 2008) urban communities. These policies have been

developed so that “people from across the social spectrum want to live, as well as work, in our cities” (DETR, 2000) and to ensure “quality of life in our communities through increasing prosperity, reducing inequalities, more employment, better public services, better health and education, tackling crime and anti-social behaviour” (ODPM, 2003, p. 5). Of course, between the rhetoric of liveability, inclusion and governance and the goal of bringing certain people (i.e. the economically active) into deprived areas to stimulate social inclusion (i.e. as agents of regeneration), “the class nature of the process ... is assiduously hidden in the verbiage of the British Labour government” (Smith, 2002, p. 440).

This Third-Way-inspired urban policy thinking has strong parallels elsewhere. Uitermark *et al.* (2007) claim that recent urban policy reform in the Netherlands has mirrored the UK experience where a state-led neighbourhood-based renewal programme has been premised upon stimulating gentrification to remove the ‘neighbourhood effects’ (Kearns, 2003) that are perceived to recreate concentrations of poverty. In the US, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) HOPE VI and Section 8 programmes have also prioritised similar neighbourhood change. HOPE VI has replaced declining public housing with mixed-income, mixed-use urban development and dispersed some of the poor residents of demolished housing into more affluent areas with the hope they can be ‘civilised’ and ‘incorporated’ into mainstream society (Popkin *et al.*, 2004). Section 8 uses an income-supplementing voucher scheme to subsidise the housing costs of those on low incomes, therefore divesting direct responsibility for housing provision from the state and promoting mobility as a poverty-alleviating mechanism (Buck, 2001; Friedrichs *et al.*, 2003). This thinking has also been evident in Australia, where John Howard's neo-liberal government used tenure diversification, via the privatisation of public

housing, to deconcentrate poverty in public housing estates (Wood, 2004).

As the spatial deconcentration of poverty has become a key element of social and urban policy, premised upon a particular understanding of the impact of neighbourhood on social class and mobility, some have characterised these programmes as gentrifying agendas (Lees, 2003; Smith, 2002). However, the types of urban change intended by these policies do not conjure up images of gentrification's displacing impacts, such as forced evictions, landlord harassments and rent increases. Indeed, urban policies like those of the UK government set out an ambitious social policy programme that intends incumbent communities to be the main beneficiaries of reform. As various policy programmes aim to engineer neighbourhood social change, it therefore is important to question if this amounts to a process of gentrification or whether some constructive forms of social mixing may result.

To Mix or Displace?

Given the widespread policy objective to transform urban social geographies, the imperative is great that we address the question of whether or not it is possible to initiate a process of class-based neighbourhood transition without inflicting displacement pressures on existing residents.¹ From even the most cynical perspective, it is difficult to claim that pro-social-mix urban policies set out directly to displace working-class residents. Indeed, it is possible to identify ways in which potentially gentrifying social mix policies might generate positive outcomes for low-income-groups. For example, the UK government (DETR, 2000) has promoted infill, high-density, brownfield development which, rather than displace people, might actually change the social balance of neighbourhoods through population additions and therefore avoid direct displacement. At the same time, local

and national governments have pursued low-income housing through affordable housing requirements demanding that between 25 per cent and 50 per cent of all units within new developments be below market cost. These policies could therefore deconcentrate poverty, increase urban densities, cause no direct displacement and supply additional affordable housing. A similar scenario could be envisaged in the US where HUD's Section 8 and HOPE VI programmes might increase mobility for local income-groups, offer greater neighbourhood choice and provide improved social housing.

Yet, while these pro-social-mix policy agendas may promise a win-win scenario, their premising of reform on the widespread transformation of the socioeconomic status of deprived neighbourhoods clearly signals to the potential they contain to gentrify huge swaths of cities and consequently displace those low-income communities who are identified in policy rhetoric as the main beneficiaries. However, this threat of displacement is often not posed by the immediate prospect of people being forced from their homes to make way for wealthier residents who are willing to pay higher rents for the same home. Rather, the displacement most likely set in motion is the indirect type; an often neglected and undertheorised set of complex and inter-related displacement processes.

In an extensive literature review examining gentrification's consequences, Atkinson (2002) identifies nine interrelated impacts that have become associated with the process: displacement; harassment and eviction; community conflict; loss of affordable housing; homelessness; change to local service provision; social displacement; crime; and, population loss. Atkinson found that displacement was the most commonly associated—over half the time—consequence of gentrification. Yet, he also found it was often associated without strong empirical support

The majority of studies of gentrification identified displacement as a significant problem ... However, this issue has taken on a cumulative weight of its own, often without supporting empirical data in many studies ... The research approach used in these studies was mainly based on census data but only nine studies used multiple censuses to infer displacement from the data, usually in the form of correlations rather than household displacement estimates (Atkinson, 2002, pp. 6–7).

As Atkinson suggests here, the use of census data to identify displacement has limited ability to explain or understand the process; it simply implies movement. And, as Hamnett (1991) has argued, this methodological approach cannot easily decipher between displacement and replacement.

Atkinson's discussion also provides an example of how 'displacement' is often conceptualised in the singular, described using one unifying banner. Much of the gentrification literature mirrors this, considering displacement to be a relatively simple process involving the replacement of household occupation—i.e. direct displacement (Fraser, 2004). This understanding severely limits the extent to which we can understand how gentrifying neighbourhood transition occurs. In particular, a lack of concern with the various mechanisms generating displacement has meant that it is often only conceptualised in terms of middle-class individuals using economic capital to push out existing householders: the direct displacement of household occupants through economic-driven action. In this sense, displacement is caused by the housing market practices of gentrifiers and the rent-gap model (Smith, 1979) serves as causal explanation. However, this explanation leaves other more indirect displacement pressures underexamined.

This underconceptualisation of the various aspects of displacement obscures the numerous ways that gentrification can cause

the divesting of place: *displacement*. There is the need to incorporate better the political, social and cultural neighbourhood changes related to gentrification, as well as wider economic neighbourhood changes, into our conceptualisation of displacement in order to understand the entirety and temporality of the process. And while this alone is necessary in terms of critically understanding the implications of gentrification, it is also paramount given the current policy context. This paper identifies three general types of indirect displacement that can transform neighbourhoods with unjust consequences: indirect economic; community; and, neighbourhood resource. In order to illustrate each type, research based in London is drawn upon to show how these are operating in gentrifying neighbourhoods, particularly in reference to the Labour government's pro-social-mix policy agenda.

Indirect Economic Displacement

Discussing gentrification and displacement in New York City, Peter Marcuse (1986) outlines exclusionary displacement, a form that does not involve one household being forcefully removed to make way for a middle-class occupant(s). Rather, it is concerned with the externalities that a gentrifying reinvestment of capital can generate

Exclusionary displacement from gentrification occurs when any household is not permitted to move into a dwelling, by a change in conditions which affects that dwelling or its immediate surroundings, which (a) is beyond the household's reasonable ability to control or prevent; (b) occurs despite the household's being able to meet all previously imposed conditions of occupancy; (c) differs significantly and in a spatially concentrated fashion from changes in the housing market as a whole; and (d) makes occupancy by that household impossible, hazardous, or unaffordable (Marcuse, 1986, p. 156).

Although this form of displacement clearly overlaps with definitions of 'direct' displacement used elsewhere (for example, see Atkinson, 2000), it is important to distinguish it as indirect. In the classical process of gentrification, where single properties are vacated by non-gentrifiers because they cannot afford to stay or are forced to leave, the economic displacement is direct (Grier and Grier, 1980) because it involves the competing demands of non-gentrifiers and gentrifiers on a single property. Indirect forms differ since changes in housing costs and security of tenure are not alone the direct consequence of immediate competition for inhabitation of a particular residency.

Indirect displacement therefore associates 'price shadowing' (Atkinson, 2002; Hall and Ogden, 1992; Vicario and Monje, 2003) not only with housing market change, but also with the related influx of economic and cultural capital. This includes the gentrification of surrounding housing and the development of new high-status commercial and residential buildings which generate a property 'hot spot'. An example of this is offered by Vicario and Monje's (2003) study of state-led regeneration projects in Bilbao, Spain, where landmark cultural and residential developments have generated neighbourhood change

It has been seen how the new vision for the city led to the formulation of different strategies in which large-scale emblematic redevelopment projects (i.e. Abandoibarra and the Guggenheim Museum) have become central tools used to transform the image and physical environment of the city ... To date, one of the outcomes of such strategies has been the apparent urban 'renaissance' now being enjoyed by Bilbao (i.e. the 'Guggenheim effect'), but another has also been the accentuation of existing social and spatial inequalities. The central district has been revitalised and renewed, clearly furthering its exclusive, exclusionary nature (Vicario and Monje, 2003, p. 2397–2398).

Here, newly constructed commercial and residential buildings have both directly rehoused middle-class residents (i.e. the residential Abandoibarra development) and attracted middle-class residents (i.e. the Guggenheim Museum). Together, the projects have increased the desirability of previously unfashionable neighbourhoods and, in turn, increased local housing costs and stimulated gentrification. It is the adjacent attraction generated by a variety of development that creates displacement.

Indirect economic displacement, specifically in terms of adjacent development generating housing market change, is clearly of importance given the current policy context—particularly in the UK, where brownfield, infill development is accompanied by a social mix rhetoric that obscures an obvious concern for gentrification and displacement (Lees, 2003). As a process driven by adjacent economic and cultural capital (re)investment, it certainly lacks the obvious manifestations of direct displacement; where forced evictions, uncontrolled rent increases (see Smith, 1996, for US examples) and rental contract terminations (for example, in Australia) are used. Instead, the steady reduction of housing affordability associated with price shadowing and a creeping gentrification frontier, along with other neighbourhood changes (see the next section), make it increasingly difficult for residents to 'stay put' (Hartmann *et al.*, 1982) over time.

This temporal consideration is important since indirect economic displacement is concerned with mounting affordability pressures. While initial gentrification may well be welcomed in neighbourhoods long suffering from disinvestment (Freeman, 2006), the long-term implications of it may result in once-welcoming residents being eventually forced from their homes and/or their family and friends being unable to live in the area. In short, the promise of renewal for some

residents of poverty-stricken neighbourhoods may prove to be a false hope; especially if the gentrification which surrounds them does not aid their own financial position. Generational displacement and community recreation therefore become important questions here. While low-income homeowners, rental-controlled apartment-dwellers (i.e. in New York City) and social housing tenants may be insulated from some indirect displacement pressures, others may not. Clearly, this has significant consequences where place-based social networks are relied upon.

Community Displacement

Many studies of gentrification have recognised that gentrifiers change neighbourhood governance and place identity (Butler and Robson, 2003; Freeman and Braconi, 2004; Mele, 2000; Slater, 2002; Zukin, 1989). However, few have noted how these changes can generate displacement. Those that have made this connection have shown how social (Chernoff, 1980) and political (Betancur, 2002) changes related to gentrification are deeply connected with a loss of place experienced by many incumbent residents. Therefore, while some recent debates have begun to pay closer attention to the community and political aspects of gentrification, there is a need to engage this debate with that of displacement; to connect issues of place (re)creation and power to displacement.

Two recent studies are particularly illustrative here. In his study of gentrification in Chattanooga, Tennessee, Fraser (2004) identified how an influx of gentrifiers into the city has not only changed social balance, but also has led to wider transformations in community and place

A part of the revitalisation of neighbourhood and urban space is the on-going struggle to define the meaning of a city and for whom it exists. Notwithstanding economic displacement, a central area of inquiry that has been underrepresented in studies of neighbourhood

is an examination of how community, state, and capital intersections produce other forms of exclusion that mediate the ability of people to claim rights to produce and inhabit space in these transforming neighbourhoods (Fraser, 2004, p. 443).

In Chattanooga, the claiming of rights and creation of place have become key battlegrounds of neighbourhood politics; posing incumbent communities who are attempting to protect their place against more recent arrivals who are seeking to create place in their own image. Community displacement, specifically in terms of control of political apparatus, has also recently been highlighted by Martin in Atlanta, Georgia, where incumbent residents

expressed concern about the rising political influence and involvement of new residents and worry that long-time residents would lose both power and belonging in their neighbourhoods (Martin, 2007 p. 623).

Resulting neighbourhood-based political struggles have had mixed results for incumbent communities. In particular, Martin found the presence of cohesive, long-term communities to be highly important in defending established political jurisdictions.

Both of these studies illustrate how gentrifiers are central to the re-imagining of place and often are highly involved in the reorganisation of neighbourhood social welfare provision. Gentrification, as a class-based process of neighbourhood change, is therefore centrally concerned with power and control of local cultural and political apparatus. Of course, issues and processes of community displacement are being amplified in an era of neo-liberal governance where local residents are increasingly encouraged to take on the functions of the state (Peck and Tickell, 2002) with regards to such things as urban renewal, service provision and education. Hence, the stakes around community displacement are higher in the latest wave of gentrification

(Hackworth and Smith, 2001). Furthermore, the ability of incoming groups to define place identity, local politics and service provision clearly implicates community displacement within various strategies of middle-class reproduction (Butler and Robson, 2003). Issues of community displacement cannot therefore be divorced, or left unpoliticised, from attempts to understand gentrification using Bourdieu's concept of habitus (Butler, 2007).

Neighbourhood Resource Displacement

Recently, the *New York Times* ran a story about 82-year-old Calvin Copeland. Calvin had started his 547 West 145th Street Harlem catering business, Copeland's, in 1958. For almost 50 years, his business had survived riots and looting and, later, crack cocaine and AIDS epidemics. Yet, the *New York Times* was reporting that this story of survival was coming to an end. Calvin's soul food restaurant has been unable to overcome its latest challenge

Gentrification has pushed away many of the Black families who used to patronize his business. "The White people who took their place don't like or don't care for the food I cook," he said. "The transformation snuck up on me like a tornado." After falling behind on rent and bills a year ago, Mr. Copeland tried to hold on to his business, investing more than \$250,000 of his savings, he said. Finally, in May, he acquiesced to defeat (Santos, 2007).

Calvin's loss of livelihood and Harlem's loss of a soul food restaurant is a story of gentrification. It is about the stresses that neighbourhood infrastructure comes under when gentrification takes hold. So the loss of Copeland's is not unrelated to the renovation of surrounding brownstones. As Calvin's clientele has disappeared, his business has been unable to keep up with rent increases. With the loss of Copeland's, surrounding residents who consider Harlem home see

another part of their neighbourhood replaced by another community's services. These processes are therefore commensurate; the gentrification of Harlem takes place both through the conversion of sub-divided brownstones and replacement of soul food restaurants.

Neighbourhood resource displacement involves the changing orientation of neighbourhood services and the increasing 'out-of-placeness' of existing residents. It recognises that, as a neighbourhood transitions, not only does the neighbourhood social balance change, but also local shops and services change and meeting-places disappear. The places by which people once defined their neighbourhood become spaces with which they no longer associate. As Marcuse describes

Displacement affects many more than those actually displaced at any given moment. When a family sees its neighbourhood changing dramatically, when all their friends are leaving, when stores are going out of business and new stores for other clientele are taking their places ... pressure of displacement is already severe, and it's actually only a matter of time (Marcuse, 1986, p. 157).

Of course, upgraded local services may be interpreted as a neighbourhood improvement. For example, Freeman (2002, 2006) finds that gentrification-related changes to local neighbourhood services have had positive benefits for most residents

Low-income households actually seem less likely to move from gentrifying neighborhoods than from other communities. Improving housing and neighborhood conditions appear to encourage the housing stability of low-income households to the degree that they more than offset any dislocation resulting from rising rents (Freeman, 2002, p. 4).

While Freeman's interviewees (see Slater, 2006, for critique) suggest that improvements are widely welcomed, these changes are undoubtedly dependent upon various residents'

positionality and socioeconomic status. Furthermore, and related to the temporal aspects of indirect economic displacement, upgraded facilities and affordable housing may not always co-exist. As both Waitt (2004, p. 27) and Wyly and Hammel (2005, p. 18) note in Pyrmont-Ultimo, Sydney, and Cabrini Green, Chicago respectively, new spaces of consumption once widely welcomed have often become later associated with displacement.

Equating the Outcome?

Conceptualising displacement simply in terms of direct kinds (i.e. forceful eviction, rent increases, rental contract terminations and harassment) poses few questions about whether it is just. Housing market competition, enabled through legitimate or illegitimate means, for particular dwellings is ultimately decided by the highest bidder. However, this perspective that equates displacement with a brief moment of household turnover is problematic for it underappreciates wider transformations in place that also contribute to displacement; particularly so given the current policy context and the latest mutations of gentrification. Yet, at the same time as this context has made it more difficult to provide simple critical judgements of gentrification, it has become possible to envisage ways in which various urban policy programmes, such as the UK government's, might have positive outcomes not only for gentrifiers, but also for incumbent groups. As some have noted (Atkinson, 2002; Freeman, 2002; Freeman and Braconi, 2004), these include physical renewal, reversal of neighbourhood decline, windfall profits for existing residents, the upgrading of local services, increased political representation, the deconcentration of poverty, social and ethnic mixing, fiscal budget increases and enhanced neighbourhood economic sustainability. And while this set of potential benefits might seem limited in terms of dealing with widening social inequities (Slater, 2006), they do highlight the

requirement for a balanced account of neighbourhood change.

How then to equate the balance? The first thing to note is that it is highly unlikely that there will be a clear scenario of winners and losers. Any number of possible processes can operate in a gentrifying neighbourhood and the particular combination of these which develops will produce differing negative and positive scenarios for different neighbourhood actors. In particular, there are a multitude of local and contextual factors that will influence where and with whom the costs and benefits of gentrification fall (Engels, 1999; Shaw, 2005). For example, the strength of existing community organisations (Fraser, 2004), local patterns of tenure (Shaw, 2005), legislative protection (Freeman, 2005), community consultation processes (Raco, 2007) and social relations between incomers and long-term residents (Martin, 2007) will all shape neighbourhood change. While not to justify the displacement of any one person, it is therefore important that empirical work should inform debate on both how displacement is generated and how it is encountered.

Case Study: Displacement in Three Gentrifying Neighbourhoods

The final section of the paper draws upon empirical work² in London to illustrate how the processes of displacement discussed earlier are operating within the context of a pro-social-mix and gentrifying policy-led development process. It examines new-build developments that, whilst drastically upgrading the social balance of surrounding neighbourhoods, have not directly displaced pre-existing residents since they were built on brownfield sites. The three study sites—Brentford (west London), Wandsworth (south-west London) and Thamesmead West (south-east London)—were all positioned along London's riverside (see Figure 1). In these areas, once-redundant riverside

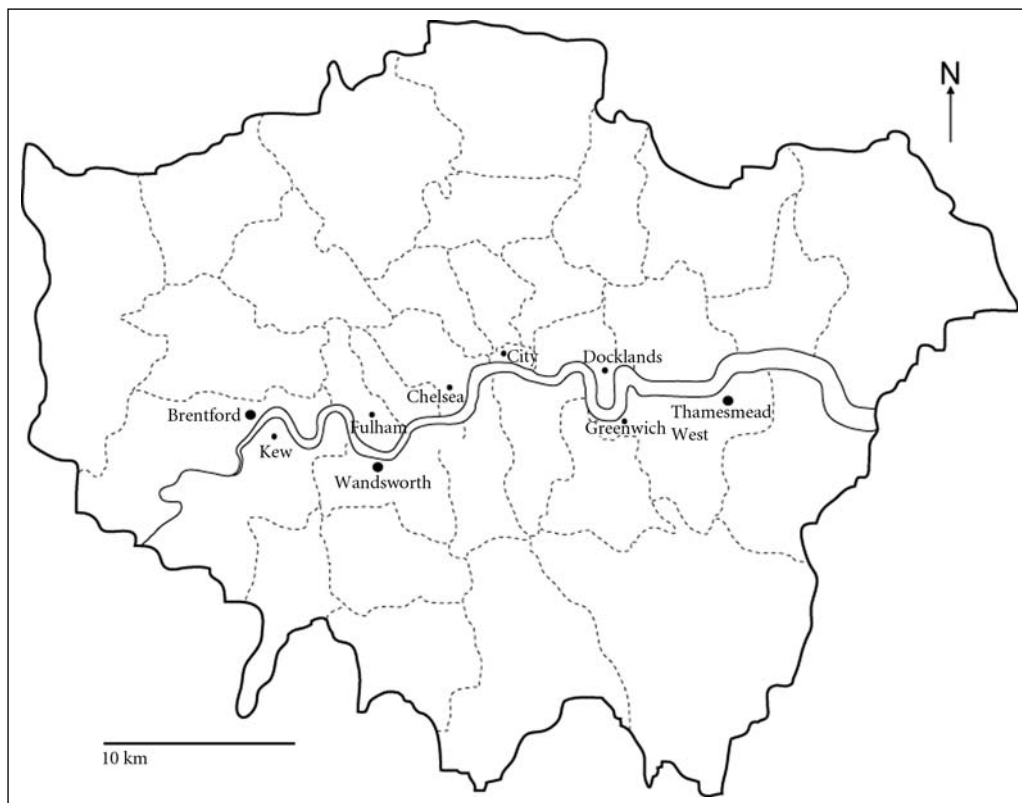


Figure 1. Locations of the London study areas

brownfield sites have been purchased by real estate developers and converted into prime residential space over the past 10 years (see Davidson, 2007; Davidson and Lees, 2005). Much of this has taken place under an urban policy umbrella (DETR, 2000; ODPM, 2003) that has promoted socially mixed neighbourhoods and cohesive neighbourhood communities. Notably, however, much recent riverside development commenced before the re-formed Greater London Authority established and enacted its own urban policies and associated affordable housing recommendations (GLA, 2004).

Although the impact of redevelopment has been different across the three neighbourhoods,³ all have witnessed a substantial increase in the population of high-income-groups and consequent upgrading of social

mix. Furthermore, all the areas have witnessed significant decreases in the population of low-income-groups (see Davidson and Lees, 2005). These changes have therefore been broadly in line with the UK government's vision of rebalanced neighbourhoods (Lees, 2003). Whether this represents a complete success will clearly depend upon whether the types of mixed and co-operative communities envisaged actually come into being; whether a positive form of gentrification is achieved. Of course, if this success is not achieved, there are significant risks that the changes instigated will actually produce negative impacts—i.e. displacement pressures—within incumbent riverside communities. In the following sections, survey and interview data are drawn upon to consider whether the applicable forms of displacement are evident along the Thames.

Pushed Out of Boom Town ...

The most obvious indicator of indirect economic displacement along the Thames is rapidly inflating house prices. After year-on-year growth in house prices, in 2004 average house prices in the three study areas were £183 548 (Thamesmead West), £252 395 (Brentford) and £389 512 (Wandsworth). In 2007, after a period of tapering growth, these figures had further increased to £244 931 (33 per cent increase), £289 013 (14 per cent increase) and £423 383 (9 per cent increase) respectively. Of course, inflated house prices are a London-wide and nation-wide concern (Cook, 2005). Teasing out any increases in local house prices associated with riverside development is therefore difficult. This stated interviews conducted with local real estate actors and residents clearly indicate that the neighbourhoods are considered property hot spots as a consequence of recent riverside redevelopment.

All the neighbourhoods were considered 'up-and-coming' and therefore 'good investment areas'. As one estate agent explained in the most deprived area studied

Sure this area [Thamesmead West] is a bit rough, but just watch how it changes over the next few years. Better transport and the re-generation will make this area change beyond recognition.

Elsewhere, other riverside neighbourhoods have been rebranded. For example, Brentford is now being marketed as 'Brentford-upon-Thames' by real estate actors and local journalists; associating it with more affluent neighbouring areas. As one resident of a new-build development confidently stated: "Brentford is one of the hottest property spots in London". With the opening up of once-closed parts of the riverside and their transformation into spaces of 'riverside living', these neighbourhoods have therefore been given new identities. In the minds of

real estate actors and gentrifiers interviewed, riverside development has undoubtedly had the effect of putting once-marginal neighbourhoods upon the property investment map. An example of how this has begun to impact on adjacent areas can be illustrated by affordability issues and the expected residential trajectories of those living in new developments.

Concerns about unaffordable and inflated houses prices were consistently mentioned in interviews with both development and neighbourhood residents. For development residents, affordability was manifest in housing choices, with them describing how their location (i.e. neighbourhood choice) and unit size had been limited by affordability concerns. Of course, this simply relates to the purchasing power of the resident. Affordability concerns for neighbourhood residents were often discussed with reference to the pressures created by inflating housing costs. For private renters this involved growing insecurities over rising rents and the problems that would be encountered if they lost their current tenancy. For owners, affordability concerns were often made with reference to life-stages. Here, the growth of their housing asset was countered with related lock-in effects—specifically, their ability to move home and/or the problems that their children and relatives may face in finding housing were major concerns. For example

I would love for our John [son] to be able to get a place around here, but that's not going to happen ... It breaks the wife's heart to think she might not be able to see her grandkids that often. I mean, we have chatted about moving closer to where the kids are. We will just have to wait until I retire.

Here, the interviewee highlighted the close connection between various forms of indirect displacement; with indirect economic pressures related closely with community displacement.

While inflating housing costs impact low-income groups, the expected residential trajectories of new-build development residents signal that further displacement pressures are growing. Interviews with gentrifying residents explored their views of the local neighbourhood and future housing aspirations. Interviews revealed that, whilst many gentrifiers would not previously have considered living in the neighbourhood surrounding their development, now they had become more acquainted with the area, they would consider buying a property locally, particularly as their lifestage/circumstances change. A growing familiarity with the local area, and indeed knowledge of the changes already taking place within them such as new restaurants opening and changing politics, meant that in even marginal areas (for example, Thamesmead West) new-build gentrifiers were considering pushing the gentrification frontier further through the neighbourhood. This consideration would often take place with reference to changing life-stage. When explaining their possible motivations for moving, the desire to have children would be referenced; particularly with regard to the unsuitable nature of apartments for raising a family. Prospective residential trajectories of gentrifiers therefore signal to how residential development, seen by some to be devoid of displacement concerns (Boddy, 2007), is now threatening significant displacement.

Where Did My Neighbourhood Go?

Changes in the social, cultural and political infrastructure of riverside neighbourhoods signal to further indirect displacement along the Thames. Notable signs of community displacement involve a number of conflicts occurring in riverside neighbourhoods that have posited newly resident gentrifiers in competition with incumbent groups, particularly over planning and development issues. And while the full implications of these conflicts

are yet to be played out, they signal to the fact that neighbourhood residents are being divided into gentrifiers and non-gentrifiers, each with their own particular agendas and institutions.

In Brentford, residents of a number of riverside developments had become involved in political contestations surrounding plans to redevelop the neighbourhood's commercial district (see Figure 2). Brought together with other neighbourhood groups under local governance structures that encourage resident participation (Kearns, 2003; Raco, 2007), development residents were represented by leaders of their own development-based residents' associations. As a consequence, their representation tended to be well organised and resourced. In the consultation process surrounding Brentford's redevelopment, these residents and their representatives have been drawn into conflict with existing residents over the vision for the new commercial street. While both groups wanted to see significant upgrading of their dilapidated High Street, each had quite particular demands. Many neighbourhood residents argued for the retaining of current services and commercial tenants, improving green spaces and limiting the provision of commercial premises that might attract greater levels of traffic. In contrast, development residents have argued for a more complete transformation, with the removal of many current commercial services, greater provision of cafés, bars and restaurants, and the foundation of farmers' markets and cultural events selectively to attract others into the area.

The neighbourhood visions of these groups therefore differed significantly and through a consultative and community-led urban redevelopment process they have been drawn into conflict. Both have quite different expectations of place. The achievement of either group's agenda will involve winning a political battle. This is something both are



Figure 2. A section of Brentford's High Street poised for regeneration

acutely aware of and, consequently, both are manoeuvring in order to secure control of neighbourhood political apparatus and the planning consultation process. As a neighbourhood resident explained: "We have to get the councillors on board and get people involved. If we don't they will get what they want". The stakes for this resident and the incumbent community are therefore their place and their ability to (re)create place. If they lose, many aspects of their community will be displaced and the neighbourhood will be recast by gentrifying residents.

Issues of place definition and creation were evident in other planning conflicts. At a particular riverside development (Capital West) in Brentford, a luxurious apartment complex has been constructed on a site containing a disused church building. As part of their development agreement, the real

estate company (Barratt Homes) responsible had agreed to remove the church building. However, after leaving the building's removal until the residential development was inhabited, a number of gentrifying residents organised to save the building. As one explained

I really like the church. It gives the place some authenticity. It is nice to have that historical look next to the new apartments buildings ... I just don't see the point of taking it down.

Here, connections to the aesthetics (Jager, 1986) and habitus (Bridge, 2003) of classical gentrification are evident. However, this connection does not consist of differing tastes and practices; residents in the surrounding neighbourhood also appreciated the building. Rather, many resented the way in which gentrifiers had managed to alter previously

established planning agreements according to their own preferences

I think they have a bloody cheek in all honesty... After all, it was their development that meant the thing was going to be taken down. I just don't figure how they can come in and change the direction of things as they wish. We went through the process in the first place!

This resident's complaints were based upon the apparent ease with which development residents stopped demolition of the church and a perceived absence of his own community's ability to achieve similar interventions. Again, vocal development-based resident associations were referenced as a reason behind this apparent disparity.

In Wandsworth, a similar story of conflict over place creation was occurring. Here, a group of residents at the Riverside West development had petitioned local government to close a refuse site located next to them (see Figure 3). While this facility has long

been located on the site, the noise and smell generated from it had united a number of development residents to fight for the facility's closure. This campaign had caused significant resentment within the wider community. As one neighbourhood resident and community group member explained

They have come in here, knowing the dump is there, and then decided they want to get rid of it. But they knew about it before they came! It is part of the area. Local people use it and it has always been here ... I've heard they will get the thing shut because they have good connections on the council. They know what they are doing.

Here, incumbent and development communities are in conflict over their neighbourhood vision with it again not primarily driven by the content of campaigns, but rather the perceived ability of each group to control local affairs and shape place. The stakes are high in Wandsworth where the removal of the



Figure 3. Wandsworth Riverside: the Riverside West development (left) and the neighbouring refuse facility (right)

refuse facility will only open up more riverside development land and further reinforce gentrification in the area.

These neighbourhood relations contrast sharply to those envisaged in current UK urban policy. Opposed to the scenario of socially mixed communities operating in co-operation, neighbourhood social change along the Thames has often resulted in escalating conflict between newly juxtaposed groups. As other processes of displacement impact upon incumbent residents, facing these political challenges has become increasingly difficult. This coalescence of displacement processes was narrated by the leader of a neighbourhood church group in Brentford when explaining that the dispersal of the congregation due to rising housing costs had severely impacted both the church's activities and its role in neighbourhood affairs

It has definitely become more difficult over the past few years. You know, people have moved out quite a lot. They can't afford to stay or buy, so they move a bit further out ... What usually happens then is they stay in contact and attend for a while, but over time it is hard to constantly make trips in and out. In the end, we lose people ... I don't think we have had any new members come in from the new developments ... I would say this has become a bigger and bigger issue, just because we have less active people. We can't do as much within the area, and getting events organised and making them successful is quite a challenge. It is a losing battle I guess.

Indirect economic displacement and community displacement are here seen to be operating together, one reinforcing the other. As members, and particularly young members, of the congregation are not given the opportunity to remain in the neighbourhood, the organisation is declining in number and its local presence is diminishing. Opposed to the current policy vision, newly stimulated social mix appears to be causing social displacement. Social mixing that is occurring is temporary and conflictual.

Cheap Veggies Lost, Expensive Veggies Gained ...

The transformation of community and commercial services associated with gentrifying urban social change can have significant displacing effects: neighbourhood resource displacement. This can feature the direct displacement of commercial existing tenants (Krase, 2005) and wider shifts in local service provision. For example, falling utilisation of public services—as a consequence of neighbourhood social transition and growing levels of utilisation of local private services—can, particularly under neo-liberal modes of accountability (Peck and Tickell, 2002), lead to their scaling back or complete withdrawal. The displacement of local services can also, in turn, feed back to stimulate other displacement processes, such as loss of sense of place.

In the riverside neighbourhood of Brentford, the state-led process of redevelopment described earlier is threatening to transform completely the neighbourhood's commercial services. The implications of this change/loss of neighbourhood resources will clearly extend across the forms of displacement discussed here and subsequently have significant impacts on the social composition of the area. Clearly, this example is a particular place-based manifestation of metropolitan change and current metropolitan and national policy frameworks. Hence, one has to be careful using it as an example of these displacement processes. However, through comparison with the other study areas which were not witnessing similar programmes, the specific implications of commercial redevelopment in Brentford can begin to be deciphered from more general trends where new-build developments have stimulated a wider reorientation of local services.

Riverside redevelopment in Wandsworth has taken place alongside established processes of gentrification in the wider neighbourhood that have seen a small pocket of terraced townhouses thoroughly restored and

gentrified. While this has certainly affected the area, the huge influx of high-income-groups as a consequence of riverside redevelopment is now extending the reach of gentrification across the entire neighbourhood. The most obvious sign of this is the recent redevelopment and changing tenancies of a much-maligned local shopping centre. Once the haven of discount stores, the centre has recently performed an about-turn and has begun to attract a quite different commercial tenant. Most notable of these is the up-market supermarket Waitrose. This chain caters to the niche, high-end of the grocery market (Segal and Giacobbe, 1994) and is mostly found in London's affluent suburbs. The move of Waitrose into the shopping centre represents the latest gentrification frontier in Wandsworth and marks the extent to which the process has transformed the area.

The extent of this change was expressed by a long-term Wandsworth resident

What the hell is that doing there? Have you been in? Have you seen the prices? I nearly died. I can't believe anyone would shop there, really ... Of course it is for the new folk. We, folk around here, would never go there regularly.

Development residents, and gentrifiers from the surrounding area, provide a different, albeit cautionary, take. For example

I'm glad we have it [Waitrose]. We like their stuff and it is convenient ... I still don't like the centre though. It is still scruffy in places, you know down the off-shoot alleys. So it will take time to get the whole place right.

So here, while the arrival of Waitrose signalled a welcome beginning to a major commercial transformation, the continued visibility of remaining discount stores was still viewed problematically by this resident.

Just as in Brentford, other neighbourhood residents have become worried at the declining availability of commercial services. One

interviewee discussed how the prospect of losing the local shops they regularly used would present major issues with regard to managing household tasks, childcare and family activities

You know, I was pleased when Waitrose arrived. I thought it would be nice to shop there. But after going a few times, I can't really afford to buy from there. It is really expensive ... So, I'm a bit concerned we might lose other places now. If the butcher and greengrocer in the centre go, I'm really going to have to get the bus to Wimbledon or something ... I can't believe the changes.

Where the establishment of new commercial services catering to higher-income groups was resulting in a loss of existing services, displacement pressures are mounting for many residents and the severity of this pressure is intricately associated with other displacement processes.

Conclusions: Spoiled Mixtures?

Enabled by the prospect of waterside views and riverside living, recent redevelopment along the Thames has certainly provided a working example of New Labour's Urban Renaissance, given that previously working-class and/or poor neighbourhoods are now being jointly inhabited by the middle classes. This production of socially mixed neighbourhoods has been achieved primarily through the construction of high-density, new-build developments on brownfield sites. As a consequence, it becomes possible to envisage a gentrifying process of neighbourhood change that does not inflict displacement upon incumbent communities. This is the conclusion reached by Boddy in his recent examination of new-build development in Bristol

As to whether such developments represent a form of third-wave, postrecession gentrification, or whether anything is to be gained

from describing them as such, the conclusion must be that the concept has indeed been stretched beyond the point at which it has continued usefulness and distinction (Boddy, 2007, p. 103).

He goes on

Gentrification is almost too quaint and small scale a concept to capture the processes at work (Boddy, 2007, p. 103).

Leaving aside the issue of displacement, a cursory examination of the past 40 years of gentrification scholarship does not leave one with the impression that it has ever been a quaint process. The state's longstanding role as a key instigator of gentrification clearly implicates the process in a wider politics (Hamnett, 1973; Smith, 1979). Furthermore, a literature that has detailed the global spread of gentrification down the urban hierarchy and across the developing world (Atkinson and Bridge, 2005) dispels the idea that gentrification remains small. And even where the process was/is at a neighbourhood scale, to describe those aggressive processes of displacement witnessed and fought against during the 1980s (see Hartman *et al.*, 1982) as "quaint" is mistaken. To consider the widespread processes of reinvestment and urban change associated with the UK government's urban policy agenda, or also that propelled by HUD in the US, as too large as to be considered gentrification therefore makes little sense. If these policies are extending gentrification across the urban landscape, the task is to incorporate, not develop another descriptive.

These issues raise the question of whether current neighbourhood, pro-social-mix policy agendas, in the absence of displacement, offer an effective and just social policy tool. The relevant point here is that the success of these policies should not be measured by a lack of displacement, but rather by the improved circumstances of those that most

desperately need help. In short, the benefits promised within pro-social-mix policy agendas have to be shown to be amassing at an appropriate rate. To date, in the UK (see Allen, 2008; Allen *et al.*, 2005; Levitas, 2005) at least, the evidence to suggest that poverty and social inequality are reducing as a result of urban social mix, and associated effects, is weak.

While some (Boddy, 2007; Butler, 2007) have dismissed displacement as a significant gentrification concern, this paper has argued that, through careful consideration of the various ways in which low-income communities are divested of their neighbourhoods, such claims should be made very carefully. Direct displacement is much less of a concern for many third-wave forms of gentrification—for example, new-build developments and building conversions—and particularly so in the UK where protective legislation remains. However, as previous (Marcuse, 1986; Palen and London, 1984) and more recent debate (Fraser, 2004) has found, the issue does not start and end here. Put simply, an obvious absence of direct displacement cannot be interpreted as a lack of displacement altogether. This stated, it must be recognised that other aspects of displacement are more difficult to identify, measure and conceptualise. In particular, the temporal aspect of indirect displacement causes difficulty in conceiving of and measuring the process. Indirect economic displacement can operate both over the short and long term, and community displacement can be premised upon the unpredictable outcomes of political conflict (Sullivan, 2007). Sweeping statements about the winners and losers of gentrification are therefore difficult to make.

Gentrification research must therefore proceed with an understanding of displacement as process and remain critical of the potential for injustice bound up in it. The research presented here about London's riverside demonstrates that new-build, infill development is often not a benign process

of urban densification and renewal. Rather, it has set in motion a host of other processes, some displacing, that are slowly transforming surrounding areas. Of course, this is what policy intends: the complete transformation of poor neighbourhoods into lively residential spaces that embrace Richard Rogers' vision of urban vitality (Lees, 2003) and the UK government's more recent goal of sustainable urban communities (Raco, 2007). The question is therefore whether or not the externalities perceived in policy can be achieved. Unfortunately, a recent Joseph Rowntree report (Allen *et al.*, 2005) examining the impacts of tenure-based social mix programmes in the UK has argued that there is little evidence to suggest these policies are achieving significant success.⁴ Displacement pressures therefore appear unlikely to be countered.

While the images of someone being forcefully evicted from a New York City apartment or harassed from their home in London make most people horrified, indirect displacement occurs much more quietly (Marcuse, 1986). Affordability squeezing affects people individually as rent contracts are individually negotiated and personal financial circumstances vary. Community displacement has the potential to create significant political conflicts, yet the loss of place associated with the process will undoubtedly be felt in varying ways across a neighbourhood. The same differentiation is likely to occur for neighbourhood resources where the slow reorientation of services will variously and progressively affect users of different circumstances. While the result of these complex processes may mean that some people manage to remain in their neighbourhood (Freeman, 2006), others will simply lose their home and community.

Nuanced perspectives on gentrification and its consequences should not therefore mean that a critical concern over injustice be lessened. In the case of the London-based

research presented here, the perceptible loss of home and community felt by residents in riverside neighbourhoods should not and cannot be dismissed. And while pro-social-mixing urban policies may bring benefits for some, via such things as windfall profits for some incumbent homeowners and smart cafés and bars, the costs associated with displacement that are inflicted on others should not be viewed as minor concerns. Put simply, how many people should be displaced—lose their home and neighbourhood—before it becomes a problem?

Home and place are human needs (Tuan, 1977); they are things which should not be premised solely upon ability to pay or the residential desires of other, more affluent, groups. For critical researchers, the intention should therefore be to shed light on other possible forms of urbanism that, rather than 'manage' gentrification (Freeman, 2006), look to produce alternative urban futures. The first stage of this must be to show how current policy does not offer the prospect of enabling people to define their own urban space. Residents subject to gentrification and displacement do not hold the power to protect place through secure alternative forms of tenure in an era where private property is the basis of hegemonic political philosophy. For the most part, communities do not have the ability to define, control and hold their community infrastructures. And political control appears increasingly up for grabs in neo-liberal forms of governance. At present it is therefore difficult to envisage how gentrification can be managed in such a way that low-income-groups can avoid displacement pressures. Indeed, we need to question whether they should even be asked to organise and engage in a defensive political battle that simply seeks to secure their claim on space. Critics of gentrification therefore have to continue to illustrate the injustices of the process *and* engage a policy and political debate that offers an alternative for

low-income communities. Whilst the choice between gentrification and continued poverty has been recognised as a false one (DeFilippis, 2004), critical gentrification research has to do a better job at contributing to the production of a real choice, a just urban future worthy of managing.

Notes

1. Of course, it is also important that the question of whether or not this is an effective poverty reduction tool be asked.
2. The research combined quantitative and qualitative methods to examine gentrification-related neighbourhood change in the three neighbourhoods between 2002 and 2006. Particular elements of the research used here include the postal social survey distributed to 150 new-build gentrifying households and 300 neighbourhood households (average response rate: 24 per cent) in each area and the 51 semi-structured interviews conducted with residents and neighbourhood actors. Interviews generally were 60–90 minutes in duration.
3. For example, Wandsworth has been undergoing gentrification for the past 25 years and therefore the impact of recent redevelopment has been to reinforce and exacerbate this trend. However, according to the 2000 UK census, Brentford and Thamesmead West have remained under-represented by higher socioeconomic groups. Therefore, recent upgrading represents a significant change in social trajectory.
4. For example, the research related to the project only found one example of an unemployed household finding work through the informal help of a neighbour. In addition, the report claims that “There was little or no evidence that mixed tenure produced ‘bridging’ social capital or a ‘role model’ effect” (Allen *et al.*, p. 9).

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