Displacement, Space and Dwelling: Placing Gentrification Debate

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ABSTRACT *This paper is concerned with the conceptualisations of space which underlie debate of gentrification-related displacement. Using Derrida's concept of the spatial metaphor, the paper illuminates the Cartesian understandings of space that act as architecture for displacement debate. The paper corrects this through arguing that the philosophy of Heidegger and Lefebvre better serves to understand displacement. Emphasising the topology of Heidegger's* Dasein *and, following Elden, relating this to Lefebvre's understanding of space, the paper 'constructs' displacement in a way that avoids the abstraction of displacement-as-out-migration and instead emphasises the lived experience of space.*

Introduction

On 21 May 2007, the *New York Times* ran a story entitled: 'Will Gentrification Spoil the Birthplace of Hip-Hop?' In it Clive Campbell, a.k.a. D. J. Kool Herc—a Jamaican-born DJ and one of the founders of hip-hop—says of 1520 Sedgwick Avenue, a brick apartment building nestled next to Major Deegan Expressway, west Bronx, New York City: 'This is where it came from . . . This is it. The culture started here and went around the world. But this is where it came from. Not anyplace else'. The 'it' is hip-hop. And the common room in 1520 Sedgwick is where Kool Herc and his sister, Cindy, began innovating with two turntables and a collection of records from the likes of James Brown and Booker T & the MG's. Kool Herc no longer lives at 1520 Sedgwick. Indeed, he has not for some years, now residing on Long Island. However, he has joined the campaign to 'save' 1520 Sedgwick.

1520 Sedgwick became the focus of community attention when its owners announced they planned to leave New York State's Mitchell–Lama programme. The programme uses state subsidies (tax breaks and mortgage relief) to limit equity and rental extraction. The programme has become increasingly unpopular in recent years, with a one-third fall in participating units since 1985, as real estate owners have found greater profits on the open market. And so, residents and those associated with 1520 Sedgwick have mobilised to petition for a historic listing in order to protect the building. This has not stopped 1520 Sedgwick Associates, the owners of the building, rejecting a bid from tenants to purchase the building.

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They have pushed ahead and withdrawn from Mitchell–Lama. Although rent stabilisation legislation will restrict immediate rent hikes for residents, most will likely face increased rental costs going forward. However, this has not proven the sole focus of contestation. Residents have continued to campaign for the protection of place—via historic listing; particularly for the building's community room where Kool Herc fostered the birth of hip-hop.

The question to be asked of this anecdote is: 'why does the fate of 1520 Sedgwick matter?' If legislation exists so that residents will be (at least initially) protected from excessive rental increases and all will be given 90–150 days notice if they are required to vacate their units (i.e. exposed to the general features of the rental market), why should there be moves to protect the building? Of course, I here exclude the contingent concern of the availability of substitutable/alternative housing elsewhere, since this is not our primary question. Rather, the concern here is for why the protection of 1520 Sedgwick in particular has stimulated a fight to preserve the building against the threat of gentrification. The issue at hand here therefore is one of understanding what is (potentially) lost when a building and/or neighbourhood is threatened with gentrification. In particular, I want to ask if we can understand what is lost through the simple allegory of spatial (i.e. location) eviction? Our brief introduction to 1520 Sedgwick would seem to suggest we cannot, for why would people fight for a historical listing for the building's common room—especially in the absence of protections for their own residential units—in this circumstance? Furthermore, why have those who do not reside in this building become involved in the campaign?

This paper explores this question through an examination of the varied concepts of space which underpin understandings of displacement within the gentrification literature. It asserts that contemporary debate is marked by an absence of phenomenology and associated critical understandings of place. As such, it identifies a particularly strong spatial metaphor (Derrida, 1997) based around the notion of out-migration (i.e. the physical removal of people from homes and/or neighbour-hoods) underlying both conceptualisations and empirical tests for displacement. This, it is claimed, represents a lack of engagement with important space/place tensions (Taylor, 1999). In order to reconcile this, it is argued that the philosophy of space underpinning debate requires greater consideration. The paper contributes to this by examining Heidegger's (1962, 1971, 1982, 1993) ontology and its concomitant understanding of space and Lefebvre's (1991, 2003, 2008) philosophy of space to illustrate the socio-spatial relations bound up, but underappreciated, in discussion of displacement.

Refining Displacement to the Abstract

During the fervent and critical gentrification debate of the 1970s and 1980s (e.g. Hartman, 1979; Smith, 1979; Palen & London, 1984) there was little of the introspective consideration that surrounds the issue of displacement today (e.g. Freeman, 2006; Butler, 2007; McKinnish *et al.*, 2008). As gentrification frontiers rolled out across cities such as New York and London during the 1960s and 1970s, by the time debate reached the 1980s displacement was firmly enshrined as *the* consequence of gentrification (Marcuse, 1985). For example, in 1979

Chester Hartman, attacking Sumka (1979), asserted that gentrification had already displaced in excess of one million people from their homes (i.e. physically evicted/ removed) in the US. A little later, Peter Marcuse confidently stated: 'gentrification is as inherently linked with the displacement of lower-income households as it is abandonment' (1985, p. 934). This was subsequently illustrated by LeGates and Hartman who, using 16 studies of gentrifying neighbourhoods across the US, argued: 'displacement imposes substantial hardships on some classes of displaces, particularly lower-income households and the elderly' (1986, p. 197).

By the time debate reached the 1990s emphasis had started to shift and an unpicking of the gentrification/displacement relationship had begun. Much of this related to Hamnett's (1991, 1992) criticisms of Smith's (1979) rent-gap thesis and his subsequent argument that post-industrial demographic transition was leading to a professionalisation of urban social composition (Hamnett, 1994); not polarisation. Hamnett has continued this argument, stating:

> There is a consistent assumption in the literature that gentrification is a direct cause of working-class displacement. While this is undoubtedly true in some cases . . . the slow reduction of the working-class population in many inner-city areas is, in part, a result of a long-term reduction in the size of the working-class population. (2003, p. 2419)

Commenting on Atkinson's (2000) study of displacement in London that demonstrated a strong correlation between middle class population growth and working class decline, Hamnett claimed this demonstrates: 'a gradual contraction of the working class and its replacement by an expanded middle class rather than displacement per se' (2003, p. 2421). Wrangling over the extent and empiric issues relating to displacement has set the tone for recent debate.

Lance Freeman's recent study of gentrification in Harlem and Clinton Hill, New York City, concluded: '[gentrification] 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' (2006, p. 169). Here, he builds on previous work with Braconi where they claimed: 'rather than speeding up the departure of low-income residents through displacement, neighborhood gentrification in New York City was actually associated with a lower propensity of disadvantaged households to move' (Freeman & Braconi, 2004, p. 51). More recently, a study from the Centre of Economic Studies (US Bureau of the Census) has used long-form census data from 1990 and 2000 to argue there is 'little evidence of displacement of low-income non-white households in gentrifying neighborhoods' (McKinnish *et al.*, 2008, p. ii). This conclusion is drawn from their analysis of whether income gains in gentrifying neighbourhoods are attributable to white college graduates or black high school graduates. Here they argue: 'It is the disproportionate in-migration of the former and the disproportionate retention and income gains of the latter that appear to be the main engines of gentrification' (McKinnish *et al.*, 2008, p. ii). While some have challenged these conclusions (e.g. Newman & Wyly, 2006), debate has centred upon proving/refuting displacement's occurrence through studies of in/out migration.

It is acknowledged that this debate is tremendously important. There are questions surrounding the impact of legislative changes, such as those that have increased tenancy protection, on limiting displacement. For example, in 2005 New York City introduced a tax abatement scheme—Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption—to further tenancy protections by reducing the financial incentives for landlords to evict elderly tenants. However, the issue of concern here is not one relating directly to policy, but rather to the philosophies of space that have underlined recent debate of displacement. In particular, it is the connection made between displacement and abstract space (i.e. the house and/or census tract) which is of concern. This, it is claimed, has shaped understandings of displacement (even critical interpretations) in ways that are at odds with socio-spatial politics implicit in Heidegger's ontology (see Elden, 2004a) and explicit in Lefebvre's (1991) understanding of space.

As a consequence, it is argued that through a particular (spatial) understanding of displacement, the loss of place [or lived space (see Elden, 2004b, pp. 190–191; Malpas, 2007)] has been mistakenly equated to a loss of (abstract) space. In addition, through generating an understanding of displacement premised upon an abstract/ calculative conceptualisation of space, the critical humanist philosophy required to challenge Cartesian (and commodified) understandings of space is too often left unexplored. For those who oppose gentrification-related displacement, the paper therefore claims that a different understanding of space is required to underpin an understanding of displacement.

Thinking Displacement as Space/Place

In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida (1997, p. 15; 2001, pp. 140–151) brings attention to the ways in which metaphors, and in particular spatial metaphors,[1] are used in Western philosophy as epistemological foundations. He claims the metaphysical space of ideas upon which philosophy is constructed is reliant upon a spatial imaginary (Lucy, 1995); the imagination of presence, a place where science can be built (Spivak, 1997). In particular Derrida points to the architectural spatial metaphors used by philosophers dating back to Plato (Brodsky-Lacour, 1996), claiming:

> . . . for as long as the metaphorical sense of the notion of structure is not acknowledged *as such*, that is to say interrogated and even destroyed as concerns its figurative quality so that the nonspatiality or original spatiality designated by it may be revived, one runs the risk, through a kind of sliding as unnoticed as it is *efficacious*, or confusing meaning with its geometric, morphological, or, in the best of cases, cinematic model. (Derrida, 1990; cited in Wigley, 1995, pp. 17–18, emphasis in original)

However, Derrida does not call for the abandonment of the (spatial) metaphor. As Wigley argues: '[P]hilosophy can only define a part of itself as nonmetaphorical by employing the architectural metaphor' (1995, p. 18) and, as such, the 'architectural figure is bound to philosophy' (1995, p. 19). Derrida's argument is that the spatial metaphor, the metaphysics upon which philosophy is based, requires both acknowledgement and critical consideration: the knowing application of language and establishment of philosophy [also see Zizek (2006, p. 88) on freedom

and 'the abyss']. Derrida (1997, 2001) therefore argues that it is necessary to peer into the abyss that 'structures' of thought inevitably constructed; to understand this structurally necessary abyss (Wilken, 2007) and interrogate its epistemological implications (Wigley, 1995).

If the metaphor fixes meaning and avoids innocent application (Derrida, 2001, pp. 17–18) we can therefore ask whether particular notions of space and/or place (Taylor, 1999) are employed or suppressed within our understandings of displacement [see Wilken (2007) on information technology]. As argued earlier, recent gentrification literature is marked by a concern with the extent of physical displacement occurring within gentrifying neighbourhoods and the associated politics of method bound up in the empirics. A significant consequence of this has been the reading of displacement as a purely (abstract) spatial process. Hamnett and Whitelegg's discussion of displacement in Clerkenwell, London, is indicative of this where they state: 'Their arrival [gentrifiers] 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' (2007, p. 122). Here, displacement is reduced to the pure spatial re/dis-location of individuals.

The problem with this understanding of displacement is that it reduces a socio-spatial phenomena to a purely spatial event.[2] This leaves us with a number of problematic implicit assumptions, including the notion that spatial relocation equals (a sense of) displacement and that the absence of spatial relocation equates to the non-occurrence of displacement. Put simply, displacement understood purely as spatial dislocation tells us very little about why it matters. We miss the very space/ place tensions (Taylor, 1999) that make space a social product (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 26). This criticism parallels critiques of Cartesian understandings of space [Heidegger, 1962, p. 95; see Protevi (1994, p. 132), on Heidegger and Descartes' spatiality] and its applications (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 329–330, 364).

In the next section, the paper focuses upon the work of Heidegger (1962, 1971, 1982, 1993) and Lefebvre (1991, 2003, 2008) to illustrate that the understanding of displacement currently employed in the gentrification literature is inadequate, reliant as it is upon a particular 'spatial' spatial metaphor. This begins by introducing Heidegger's notion of Being (1962) and his critique of Descartes as a method to approach a phenomenological understanding of displacement. In order to avoid the potential trapping that Heidegger's place-based thinking potentially holds (Malpas, 2007, pp. 68–69), I follow Deluca's (2005) method of 'selecting' a Heideggerian philosophy and Elden's (2004a, 2004b) connecting of Lefebvre to a left-Heideggerianism.

Displacement, Dwelling and Place

In *Being and Time* Heidegger claims Descartes' ontology is fundamentally flawed since it obliterates the sensuous essence of being (1962, pp. 128–130). Through his calculative reason and faith in a mathematical grasp of the subject, Heidegger argues that Descartes objectifies the world before us (1962, pp. 247–250) and, as a

consequence, overlooks the basic elements of being-in-the-world, Heidegger's basic state of Dasein:

> Dasein always understands itself in terms of its existence, in terms of its possibility to be itself or not to be itself. Dasein has either chosen these possibilities itself, stumbled upon them, or already grown up in them. Existence is decided only by each Dasein itself in the manner of seizing upon or neglecting such possibilities. (Heidegger, 1993, p. 54).

This leads Zizek to ask: 'could we not say that we find ourselves in Heidegger the moment we fully assume and think to the end the fact that there is no transhistorical absolute knowledge, that every morality we adopt is "provisory"?' (2006, p. 274). By asserting the subject's existence within the world, Heidegger therefore 'grounds' the subject. As Deluca (2005, p. 74) notes, this leads Heidegger to develop the notion of Being-in the world on earth, the basing of social (see Zizek, 2006, pp. 276–285) and spatial existence. Elden (2004a, 2005) sees Heidegger's engagement with the latter as part of Heidegger's post-1930s shift to consider space, opposed to his earlier emphasis on time. Within this, Heidegger's concept of dwelling is central.

In his essay 'Building Dwelling Thinking', Heidegger states: 'Dwelling, however, is *the basic character* of Being . . . Building and thinking are, each in its own way, inescapable for dwelling' (1993, p. 362). For Heidegger then, Being is an intimately spatialised process (Malpas, 2007). His concept of Dwelling (*Wohnen*), inspired by Hölderlin's suggestion that 'poetically, man dwells on the earth' is used to capture the notion of dwelling as lived experience. When Zizek therefore states 'Heidegger's greatest single achievement is the full elaboration of *finitude* as a positive constituent of being-human . . . A human being is always on the way toward itself, in becoming, thwarted, thrown-into a situation, primordially "passive", receptive, attuned, exposed to an overwhelming Thing' (2006, p. 273), we have to see this in its full spatialised dimensions. Opposed to viewing Cartesian metaphysics as a route towards a scientific mode of living (Elden, 2004a, p. 188), the finitude and essence of Being is generated, to some degree, by space. This heterogenising of a homogeneous Cartesian space is also echoed by Derrida (2000) where, drawing on Blanchot, he argues literature is never bound to place, but always spatio-historically contingent.

The implications of Heidegger's notion of dwelling are multiple and contentious (see Malpas, 1999, 2007). However, it is important to draw out one particular point here. This is the idea that Being, and by extension certain conceptualisations of place (Malpas, 1999, pp. 7–9, 2007, p. 26), is intricately linked to the lived experience of space. However, as Malpas (2007, pp. 45–49) notes, this connection cannot be made through an equating of place with location:

> . . . 'place' should not be understood as referring primarily to the idea of that in which an entity is located—place is not simply location or position (*Platz*, *Stelle*). To conceive of place as such already makes place derivative of the idea of a certain realm or domain in which there are multiple places. Often this is tied to the idea of space as that realm of extendedness in which a multiplicity of places, and so of entities, can be located. (2007, p. 48)

An understanding of space must therefore proceed from the subject.[3] It therefore becomes impossible to understand Being and its related dwelling by the calculative abstraction of 'location'. And, of course, this was a central concern for Heidegger: the penetration of Cartesian philosophy (i.e. through technology) into the very substance of Being (Zizek, 2006).[4]

The political implications of Heidegger's ontology have been widely discussed. In particular, Heidegger's concern with Being has been repeatedly related to his affiliation to National Socialism. While not to repeat this discussion here (see Elden, 2003; Malpas, 2007, pp. 18–23; Zizek, 2006, pp. 86, 284–285), it is important to note that such place-orientated thinking clearly has close, but not determinate, relations to reactionary politics. In this regard, I follow Malpas (2007, pp. 26–27) when he argues that Heidegger-inspired place-based thinking is not inherently flawed by a problematic politics. Rather, the productivity of this thinking runs the risk of being lost under the weight of such a characterisation:

> simply to reject place because of its use by reactionary politics is actually to run the risk of failing to understand why and how place is important, and so of failing to understand how the notion can, and does, serve a range of political ends. (Malpas, 2007, p. 27)

This risk is obvious within current discussion of displacement, where an increasingly abstractive empirical battleground has lost touch with the very meaning of displacement itself.

In his recent consideration of gentrification's contemporary form, Butler has argued that 'gentrification needs to decouple itself from its original association with the deindustrialisation of metropolitan centres such as London and from its associations with working-class displacement' (2007, p. 162). Similar arguments have been made by Freeman and Braconi where they claim that: 'gentrification brings with it neighborhood improvements that are valued by disadvantaged households, and they consequently make greater efforts to remain in their dwelling units' (2004, p. 51). Most recently, McKinnish *et al.* (2008) have presented the results of a quantitative study of displacement in gentrifying neighbourhoods in US urban areas. In this they find little evidence for gentrification causing displacement. The evidence they use to support this assertion is a synthetic cohort analysis of out-migration which found no correlation with gentrification and non-white household migration.

While these recent studies, and others (see Vigdor, 2002; Freeman, 2005), are related by their questioning of the extent of displacement in gentrifying neighbourhoods, they are also united by a particular understanding of displacement. By this, I mean all construct displacement as a spatialised migratory process, whereby the occurrence of displacement is constituted in the out-migration of individuals from a particular urban space (i.e. the spatial metaphor of embodied migration serves as definition). In this sense, the 'staying put' of incumbent residents within a prescribed space is found as evidence for the absence of displacement. And, while I agree that the spatial migration of incumbent residents is an important part of displacement (see Newman & Wyly, 2006), I also assert that it cannot be used as evidence for a lack of displacement per se. In particular, I argue here that a focus on displacement

as out-migration fails to comprehend the core aspect of the process through a (growing) under-appreciation of place. It is here then that we need to (re)incorporate an understanding of place into our understanding of displacement. Therefore, the continuous battling over quantitative measurements of displacement has to be seen as acting to abstract the essence of the process—place—of which they are meant to 'measure'.

This requires a move to reassert the place in dis*place*ment. In short, there is a need to ask why displacement matters at all: what does a loss of place constitute? How is a loss of space differentiated from a loss of place? Here, the previous work of humanist geographers is illuminating. In distinguishing space and place, Tuan claimed that 'place is security, space is freedom: we are attached to one and long for the other' (1977, p. 3). Place, from Tuan's Heideggerian phenomenological perspective, therefore has a key ontological role; anchoring identity and existence (also see Relph, 1976). Space is distinguished as less attached to self. A loss of space can therefore be distinguished from a loss of place through the subject's orientation. Here then, the abstracting spatial metaphors that underpin recent debate on displacement represent a significant divergence from Casey's claim that: '*space is now becoming absorbed into place* . . . space is being reassimilated into place, made part of its substance and structure' (1998, p. 340, emphasis in original). Rather, place is being understood as space when it is asserted (e.g. McKinnish *et al.*, 2008) that the spatial relocation of individuals constitutes displacement.

Displacement and Everyday Life

In order for displacement to be understood in its phenomenological entirety, it is necessary to replace the spatial metaphors mobilised by the idea of out-migration with one that captures the full dimensions of the process. Clearly, this involves both an understanding of how space is integral to place, but also how place is constructed, practised and inscribed (Poggeler, 1989). The challenge is therefore to avoid reading place as purely spatial (Malpas, 2007). Only through this philosophical lens can the problems of (a) asserting an association of place to space where none may exist and (b) the failure to identify displacement through a focus of spatial relocation, be avoided.

In attempting to reorient our understanding of displacement through Heidegger's ontology, one is immediately presented with the problem of the ahistoricism of his work. As Elden has claimed:

> Whilst he is exceptionally interested in a historical reading of the philosophical tradition, he is less good on historical detail, with the illustrations often merely passing references. Equally, while he is penetrating in his analysis of the spatial aspects of the Greek polis, he often neglects the more explicitly political aspects of modern appropriations of space. (2004a, p. 93)

Here, Elden recognises the often particularly primitive and romantic origins of Heidegger's workings (Zizek, 1999, pp. 15–16). Zizek extends this critique to Heidegger's blindness to the political economy: 'When Heidegger talks about technology, he systematically ignores the whole sphere of modern "political"

economy, although modern technology is not only empirically, but in its very concept, rooted in the market dynamics of generating surplus-value' (2006, pp. 277–278). Lefebvre's appropriation of Heidegger (see Elden, 2004b), particularly with reference to the city (Lefebvre, 2003), is therefore a required step. Heidegger's lack of personal and scholarly association with the city, symbolised by his rejection of an invitation to teach in Berlin where he asked a local farmer friend for his opinion and simply accepted his shaking head as an authentic answer (see Zizek, 2006), requires a transition of thought to deal with the urban (capitalist) dimension.[5]

Elden (2004a) draws upon Lefebvre to make Heidegger's insights capable of this transition. In doing so, he claims Heidegger represents an unspoken presence in Lefebvre's work. Lefebvre's spatial triad in *The Production of Space* (1991) can therefore be seen as an attempt to incorporate a Heideggerian conception of place (see Malpas, 2007) within a framework of space. Here, place is not subsumed into space (Casey, 1998) but rather place and space can be seen as united [i.e. incorporating space/place tensions (Taylor, 1999)]; capable of analytical application in late capitalist urban society. This is achieved through Lefebvre's explicit connection of the political and social to space. As such, Lefebvre attacks what he views as the dominant Cartesian view of space where it has 'entered the realm of the absolute' (1991, p. 1). Here, Elden finds close parallels in the critiques of Lefebrve and Heidegger:

> As early as 1939, Lefebvre had described geometric space as abstractive ... This can be usefully related to Heidegger's critique of geometric space in Being and Time and other works. For Heidegger ... we encounter space geometrically only when we pause to think about it ... Our mode of reaction to space is not geometric, only our mode of abstraction is. (Elden, 2004a, p. 95)

The (spatial) intersect between idealism (abstract space) and materialism (absolute space) for Lefebvre is 'lived space'. Just as Heidegger's Being was intricately linked to the earth around, Lefebvre's lived space is both mental and physical construct. As Elden (2004a) notes, the parallel between Lefebvre's *habiter* and Heideggers's *wohnen* in terms of their understanding of lived experience are obvious. And so are their critiques of the societal attacks on both of these constructions. For Heidegger, dwelling is abstracted by technology's penetration into everyday life. For Lefebvre, *habiter* is reduced to habitat by the commodification of urbanised late capitalism where 'human being' is limited 'to a handful of basic acts: eating, sleeping, and re-producing' and where 'Habitat, as ideology and practice, repulsed or buried habiting in the unconscious' [2003, p. 81; see Davidson (2007) on gentrification and 'habitat']. There are two points which are necessary to be drawn from Lefebvre's critique here. First, Lefebvre is identifying the loss of what might be said to be a Heideggerian view of place (Malpas, 2007) not with (absolute) space, but also the transformation of lived space. Second, in order to properly enable the essential practice of lived space (or for Heidegger *wohnen*) it is necessary for the subject to engage in spatial practices that are not defined by calculative, rationalist planning and/or commodification.

What therefore is the lesson here for gentrification scholars and the study of displacement? The first, and most obvious, is the danger of spatial abstraction.

Put simply, it is impossible to draw the conclusion of displacement purely from the identification movement of people between locations (e.g. McKinnish *et al.*, 2008). People can be displaced—unable to (re)construct place—without spatial dislocation, just as much as they can with spatial dislocation. Conversely, people can be spatially dislocated without losing place if they did not engage in these practices before. Second, the growing authority of purely quantitative studies of displacement that simply relate spatial relocation (or lack thereof) to displacement represents a significant empirical void in terms of gentrification and displacement. Notable, however, has been the way in which gentrifiers themselves, and their place-making practices, have been subject, using Bourdieu's concept of habitus (Bridge, 2001; Butler & Robson, 2003), to such attention (Lees, 2007). Finally, (abstract) spatial studies of displacement have moved critical attention away from the very problems Lefebvre concerned himself with: the abstraction and commodification of urban space.

Displacement as Lived

Spatial abstraction and the equating of displacement to movements of individuals across absolute space are prevalent within recent gentrification literature. For example, in Boddy's recent critique of Davidson and Lees' (2005) new-build gentrification thesis he claims that while new-build development may generate a host of changes associated with gentrification—social upgrading, landscape change and reinvestment of capital—they simply do not displace people, with most of them, at least in the UK, being developed on brownfield sites:

> [G]entrification is almost too quaint and small scale a concept to capture the processes at work ... In the absence of displacement and overt conflict over space, however, new residential development in the UK at least has not provided any real focus for politicisation. (Boddy, 2007, pp. 103–104)

Just as McKinnish *et al.* (2008) dismiss the association between gentrification and displacement because of a perceived lack of spatial dislocation, Boddy also makes the same abstractive manoeuvre. He does this at the same time as acknowledging a whole set of processes, generated by gentrification, that are transforming place.

This problem represents the continued presence of an empirical and theoretical void where displacement is not fully understood in its correct dimensions. This can certainly be said to reflect the presence of a dominant spatial metaphor (Derrida, 1997) with displacement continually being spatialised/located (Malpas, 2007) and the spatial dislocation of incumbent residents being held up as the litmus test for displacement and, by extension, gentrification (Slater, 2006). This stated, there have been some attempts to shift dominant conceptual frameworks. These include Fraser's study of neighbourhood politics in a gentrifying neighbourhood of Chattanooga, Tennessee, where he claimed: 'there are a wider set of factors that constitute the marginalization, displacement, and exclusion of certain populations of people from effectively making claims on neighborhood space' (2004, p. 454). Unfortunately, similar studies are small in number and there has been no attempt to

engage with the question of how place-making activities are altered, commodified and/or destroyed by gentrification processes.[6]

There have been a number of consequences related to displacement being thought about only in its abstract spatial dimension. These, almost certainly, include the diminishing presence of critical work within recent gentrification scholarship (see Slater, 2006) since the absence of spatial relocation has been read as an absence of displacement and, consequently, an absence of class antagonisms and social injustice more generally (Wacquant, 2008). However, I want to make the point here that a general failure to understand lived space in its entire dimensions in recent gentrification scholarship represents a particularly significant problem for critical commentary.

Recent studies (e.g. Freeman, 2006; McKinnish *et al.*, 2008), that have claimed gentrification does not generate significant displacement, have been refuted on a number of grounds. In challenging Freeman's (2006) study of gentrification in New York City, Newman and Wyly claim it significantly under-estimates the extent of displacement: 'We found that between 8300 and 11,600 households per year were displaced in New York City between 1989 and 2002...We expect that both figures underestimate actual displacement' (2006, p. 51). Newman and Wyly's (2006) study is an invaluable contribution to gentrification debate and certainly questions the extent to which some scholars have dismissed displacement (e.g. Butler, 2007). However, what Newman and Wyly are focusing on here is a refuting of the extent to which people are spatially dislocated as a result of gentrification. What this does not achieve, and what is generally lacking, is an informing of debate by a philosophy of space that allows displacement to be captured in its appropriate dimensions.

Key to Lefebvre's spatial triad is the notion that various manifestations of space—representational space (conceived), spatial practice (perceived) and representations of space (lived)—construct social space (1991, p. 40). For Lefebvre then, space is not an inert thing, but rather something which is integral to social process: '(*Social*) *space is a* (*social*) *product*' (1991, p. 26). The various elements of space all operate together:

> The perceived–conceived–lived triad...loses all force if it is treated as an abstract 'model'. If it cannot grasp the concrete (as distinct from the 'immediate'), then its import is severely limited, amounting to no more than that of one ideological mediation among others. (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 40)

Lefebvre reminds us that the mediation between the spatial elements need not be, and most often is not, consistent. This, of course, is apparent within the capitalist production of space whereby certain conceptions are predominant. Here, the relations between Heidegger and Lefebvre again become apparent. It was Heidegger's distaste for the mediating and abstractive impact of modern technological society that drew him to develop an 'authentic' notion of dwelling. For Lefebvre, capitalist society has made similar inroads into representational space. Though he defines representational space as (still) alive: '...it speaks. It has an affective kernel or centre: Ego, bed, bedroom, dwelling, house; or: space, church, graveyard. It embraces the loci of passion, of action and of lived situations' (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 42). He continues on by

identifying the spread of abstract space with commodification: 'Capitalism and neocapitalism have produced abstract space, which includes the "world of commodities", its "logic" and its worldwide strategies, as well as the power of money and that of the political state' (1991, p. 53).

It is the dialectical relations between aspects of the spatial triad that therefore concern Lefebvre: 'Today, more than ever, the class struggle is inscribed in space. Indeed, it is that struggle alone which prevents abstract space from taking over the whole planet and papering over all difference' (1991, p. 55). Importantly, however, Lefebvre sees the capitalist hegemony of abstract space operating covertly:

> Abstract space works in a highly complex way. It has something of a dialogue about it, in that it implies a tacit agreement, a non-aggression pact . . . A space of this kind presupposes the existence of a 'spatial economy' closely allied, though not identical, to the verbal economy . . . there is to be no fighting over who should occupy a particular spot . . . This attitude entails in turn a logic and a strategy of property in space: 'place and things belonging to you do not belong to me'. (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 56–57)

Lefebvre goes on to directly contrast this to communal and shared spaces that (re)constitute different social relations. His point is that each individual confronts a 'pre-existence of space conditions' (1991, p. 57) and this, in turn, conditions the subject. Consequently, and using the example of the Marais district in central Paris, for Lefebvre spaces of class struggle have been continually destroyed by the bourgeoisie to restrict a certain mode of (spatial) conditioning. Can we not extend this example to understand the gentrifying transformation of working class neighbourhoods under various urban policy programmes (Smith, 2002) over the past decade where various subjectivities have been targeted for conditioning? For Lefebvre, the challenging of capitalism's abstraction therefore pivots on an alternative production of space:

> By seeking to point the way towards a different space, towards a space of a different (social) life and of a different mode of production, this project straddles the breach between science and utopia, reality and ideality, conceived and lived. It aspires to surmount these oppositions by exploring the dialectical relationship between 'possible' and 'impossible', and this both objectively and subjectively. (1991, p. 60)

Conclusion: Towards a Re-spatialised Theory of Displacement

There are two implications I want to draw from Lefebvre's conception of space for the study of gentrification-related displacement. First, Lefebvre's emphasis on abstract space and its utility within/for the capitalist city warns against the pure critique of displacement upon this terrain. This, I claim, represents a theoretical space where Heidegger's ontological emphasis on Being, and its relationships to subject and place (Elden, 2004a; Malpas, 2007), is of vital importance. Second, the implications of Lefebvre's philosophy of space mean that empirical posturing over

the extent, and indeed pure occurrence, of displacement within the gentrification literature has to be provided with a more adequate—one might say, through relating Heidegger and Lefebvre, 'placed'—conception of space. By this, I mean that the critique of the loss of space/place associated with displacement requires a philosophical underpinning that asserts the importance of space to Being. Without such a basis, the assertion of the 'right to space' (Hartman, 1984) can be said to subject Being (and space) to the same commodification that allows gentrification and displacement to prosper in the first place (Lefebvre, 2003).

Lefebvre states: 'Social relations, which are concrete abstractions, have no real existence save in and through space. Their *underpinning is spatial*. In each particular case, the connection between this underpinning and the relations it supports calls for analysis' (1991, p. 404). Here Lefebvre points towards the web of spatiality that social relations are bound in. For Lefebvre then, the socio-spatial dialectic is an essential part of capitalism, and by extension the capitalist city. As a consequence of this insight he argues that the Western metaphysics of Descartes, and the particular conception of space associated with this, require abandonment (Lefebvre, 2003, pp. 406–408): 'The transition here considered is characterized first of all by its contradictions: contradictions between (economic) growth and (social) development, between the social and the politics, between power and knowledge (*connaissance*), and between abstract and differential space' (2003, p. 408). In the alterative (production of) space, Lefebvre sees 'a shift from domination to appropriation, and the primacy of use over exchange' (2003, p. 410).

While Lefebvre is vague with regards to what the particulars of this transition might look like, his critique can directly inform our understanding of displacement. This can begin with a recognition of the social utility of 'home' and 'neighbourhood' (see Tuan, 1977); something which is so often absent from discussion of displacement. In this sense, the conception of displacement as out-migration becomes inadequate and the preservation of space as a political goal holds no guarantee of protecting place. Here then, Hartman's (1984) call for the 'right to stay put' requires extension. It must also encompass the right to (make) place; the right to dwell. These, of course, can—as Heidegger and Lefebvre argue— be denigrated or destroyed even if one stays in a particular space. The protection and appropriation of (abstract) space must therefore be accompanied by the ability to enact/produce space. We can therefore see why Lefebvre endorses Heidegger, in the same breath as criticising his [at least in *Being and Time* (see Malpas, 2007)] elevation of time over space, by stating: '[S]uch quasi-tautological propositions add little to Heidegger's admirable if enigmatic formulation according to which "Dwelling is the basic character of Being in keeping with which mortals exist"' (1991, p. 122).

For both Heidegger (1971) and Lefebvre (1991, 2008, pp. 140, 169), everyday life therefore becomes a key site of politics [albeit with radically different interpretations (Zizek, 2006)] and both see it as increasingly under assault by modern/ capitalist socio-spatiality. Both want to (re)introduce the spatial notion of poetic dwelling (Elden, 2004a, p. 96). To view space—and consequently displacement— through the conceived and abstract lenses alone therefore presents both a philosophical and political problem. In reference to the former, the engrained debate over the measurement and extent of displacement as out-migration leaves

important aspects of space silenced; aspects which are themselves, as Heidegger's ontology so powerfully demonstrates, central to the phenomenological subject. And in regards to the latter, without a claim for an alternative socio-spatiality that is not continuously understood and dictated by abstractive Cartesian under-standings of space, we have to question the extent to which a political challenge to the very causes of displacement is possible (Lefebvre, 1991). In this sense, the case against displacement must be accompanied by a call for the 'right to place' and the 'right to dwell'. As Lefebvre's spatial triad sets out, the protection of (spatial) commodity in the face of the world of commodities is unlikely to provide an adequate political basis.

If we return to 1520 Sedgwick we can therefore see why both former and current tenants and members of the community are mobilising to get the building a heritage listing. It is not simply that (abstract and commodified) space is being threatened by capital and that, as a result, current tenants who are likely to face rent hikes (although these are important!) are attempting to maintain location. The efforts of those completely detached from the economic relations bound up in the withdrawal of Mitchell–Lama status cannot be explained via such commodity relations. Nor can the efforts to preserve the communal meeting place within the building in its current capacity be explained as a pure space claim; especially given this preservation is unlikely to be accompanied by tenancy protection. Rather, what is vividly demonstrated by this community mobilisation are the various social relations bound up in (urban) space and, importantly, the vital role these play in the attempt to create place and dwell. Threats of (physical) relocation are therefore only part of this displacement process. The loss of place threatened by the commodifying actions of the building's owners also promises to unravel the socio-spatial relations that shape those subjects enacted in the dialectic.

Notes

[1] Derrida, in describing the operation of 'spatial metaphors' argues: 'Before being a rhetorical procedure within language, metaphor would be the emergence of language itself. And philosophy is the only language; in the best of cases . . . philosophy can only *speak* it, state the metaphor *itself*, which amounts to *thinking* the metaphor within the silent horizon of the nonmetaphor: Being . . . one can write by crossing out, by crossing out what already has been crossed out: for crossing out writes, still draws in space' (2001, p. 140).

[2] Here Derrida's notion that particular spatial metaphors act to structure epistemology is evident, and similar to how Wilken (2007) identifies particular notions of space/place shaping under-standings of communication technologies.

[3] This is the principle connection, based upon a shared critique of Descartes, between Heidegger's and Lefebvre's understandings of space.

[4] While it is not the intention here to define each and their relations, it is important to recognise that Lefebvre's spatial triad (and in particular lived space; 1991, pp. 3, 35) relates closely with a Heideggerian 'place' (Malpas, 1999, 2007). However, as the confrontation between Sartre and Lefebvre over *Being and Nothingness* demonstrates, there is no simple equivalence.

[5] Here, it is possible to say 'place-based thinking' (Malpas, 2007) is subsumed within a broader framework that incorporates capitalism's necessary production of abstract (commodified) space.

[6] A notable exception to this has been Chris Allen's (2008) recent work on housing renewal programmes in the UK.

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