

From Smokestacks To Skyscraper: Post-industrial Redevelopment & Gentrification

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December 2023

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Post-industrial Redevelopment and Gentrification

Significant scholarship has been dedicated to articulating the uneven temporal and spatial relationships between the widespread deindustrialization in cities of the global North and the gentrification that followed (Harvey, 1996; High, 2013; Smith, 1996; Zukin, 2014). As deindustrialization gathered momentum through the 1970s, manufacturing became spatially decentralized at the local level, shifting outward from inner-city industrial neighbourhoods to suburban areas. These moves were supported nationally as governments sought to leverage the growing powers of finance, technology and creative industries, and perhaps more profoundly, through the broader political and economic forces of globalization with its emphasis on mobile capital. Again, mirroring the metaphor of capitalism as creative destruction, capital sought new forms of investment and profit, turning its sights from no longer productive and therefore less profitable industry, to

property markets. Inner-city, former industrial neighbourhoods, with their depreciated and devalued property, provided an outlet for profitable reinvestment. Harvey refers to this phenomena as the “spatio-temporal fix” in which accumulated or surplus capital seeks new investment opportunities that ultimately restructure the temporal and spatial qualities of capital circulation (Harvey, 2017).

Theories of Gentrification

First identified by British Marxist sociologist Ruth Glass in 1964, gentrification is a process of urbanization whereby professional, predominantly white, middle and upper middle classes move into lower income neighbourhoods that are often populated by racialized communities.

Through a series of improvements to the physical stock or change in tenure from renting to owning, the original inhabitants are economically displaced (Glass, 1964, as cited in Johnson-Schlee, 2019). Sociologist David Ley refers to this advancing front of the middle class as the embourgeoisement of the inner city (Ley, 1996).

Throughout the 1980s and 90s, scholars debated the primary causes of gentrification broadly dividing along two overlapping and interdependent hypotheses: supply-sided, developer-driven economics versus gentrification as a demand-driven, cultural and occupational phenomenon.

Urban geographer Neil Smith (1979, 1996) articulated a supply-side, economic rationale behind gentrification. He argued that in a competitive capitalist economy, land and the property investments in it are considered commod-

ities. Gentrification is the result of the “rent gap”, which Smith defined as the difference between the potential value (if regenerated) of inner-city land and its present devalued state (Smith, 1979). Smith’s rent gap theory is applicable to the uneven spatial development and redevelopment of both residential neighbourhoods and industrial neighbourhoods alike. While it is true that countless factories were shuttered due to global competition and the revitalization of the inner city, they have also been shuttered due to speculative real estate pressure and soaring real estate costs in industrial areas located in the outer edges of cities. Feminist urban geographer Winnifred Curran traced the cascading effect of the displacement of small manufacturers by gentrification in the neighbourhood of Williamsburg in Brooklyn, New York where lower rents paid by industrial users have been converted into the more profitable residential market (Curran, 2007). Of 29 displaced businesses, all but one cited increasing real estate costs as their primary concern or reason for moving. For many, it was difficult to find new locations in the area, with the consequence being indirect displacement for neighbouring businesses, loss of blue collar jobs or longer

commute times for workers, and in some cases, downsizing or closure (Curran, 2007). Curran's case study illustrates the ways in which gentrification-induced industrial displacement extends beyond the specific neighbourhood facing industrial closure to affect the entire economic, social and physical structure of the city (Curran, 2007; Sassen, 1994; Smith, 1996; Zukin, 2014). Other urban scholars have theorized gentrification as a demand-driven, class-based process of neighbourhood change (Gillespie et al., 2021; Marcuse, 1985; Slater, 2009; Stein, 2019). Hamnett (2003), Ley (1996) and Marcuse (1985) identify gentrification's growth as the consequence of increasing demand for urban real estate based on the changing class structure of an expanded middle class with particular cultural, lifestyle and consumption preferences, in tandem with the simultaneous decline or occupational displacement of blue collar workers forced out by rising house prices and low demand for their labour. Ley (1996) locates gentrification as a back to the city movement among baby boomers during the politically progressive era of the late 60s and early 70s. For these members of the middle class, the movement back to the central city was a retreat from, and rejection of, the culturally conforming suburbs,

an expression of a critical cultural politics and an integral part of their socially progressive and cosmopolitan identity formation (Ley, 1996). Consequently, a new group of urban residents emerged with different educational backgrounds, cultural values, preferences, and orientations who also held an interest in the distinctive architecture of older inner-city neighbourhoods (Ley, 1986, 1996).

Building on Ley's analysis, Hamnett argued that large-scale gentrification is primarily a phenomenon of the late twentieth-century city with its change in economic base from industrial to post-industrial or service-based economies, which resulted in a fundamental shift in social and occupational structure (Hamnett, 2003). This new and expanding post-industrial urban service class with their greater earning power compared with their working-class predecessors, fueled the demand for central city real estate, in the process, replacing and displacing the industrial working class from desirable inner-city areas. This, in turn, contributed to the growing rent gap (Hamnett, 2003). Marcuse (1985) connects the dual pressures of gentrification on the one hand causing a rise in property values and on the other, abandonment causing property values to fall, with the outcome of both phenomena being

increased displacement for lower income residents (Marcuse, 1985). Displacement thus, is the inevitable result of neighbourhood-based processes of abandonment and gentrification, and according to Marcuse, takes several forms, including direct displacement, exclusionary displacement and displacement pressure (Gillespie et al., 2021; Marcuse, 1985; Slater, 2009). However, as Smith (1996) notes, these gentrification hypotheses are not mutually exclusive. Both depend to varying degrees on consumer preference and the economic restructuring context within which that preference is exercised. Deindustrialization is central to this restructuring:

Gentrification is primarily a result of the continuing economic transformation of major Western cities from manufacturing centers to centers of business services and the creative and cultural industries, with consequent changes in occupational structure, income distribution, gender relations, the housing market, and cultural tastes (Hamnett, 2003, p. 333).

Moving into the early 2000s, gentrification scholars began to sharpen their focus beyond the causes of gentrification

which had dominated theoretical debates of the 1980s and 90s, to more critically examine the social and cultural consequences of gentrification (Hackworth & Smith, 2001; Slater, 2006; Wylie & Hammel, 1999). Smith and Hamnett theorize that the early 20th century represents gentrification's "third wave", the first being sporadic and neighbourhood-based gentrifiers as identified by Ruth Glass in the 1960s, and the second the property-investment gentrification of inner-city disinvested neighbourhoods during the 1980s and 90s. The third wave, in contrast, was marked by large-scale, public-private partnerships enabled through heavy government intervention in the form of capital and zoning changes. In this third wave, economics rather than culture became the primary driver as cities sought new forms of investment in response to welfare state restructuring (Gillespie et al., 2021; Hackworth & Smith, 2001).

In the six decades since Glass identified gentrification as essentially the bottom up renovation of existing housing stock, the process has become state-sanctioned urban renewal (Paton, 2014). Gentrification is embedded in urban economic and planning policies and it is enabled through real estate developers, municipal planners and

policy makers, augmented by rezoning and zoning variances (Curran, 2007). Gentrification has become a key growth strategy for what Harvey has called the “entrepreneurial city” (Harvey, 1989 in Rowland & Bridge, 2005) and a growing emphasis on public-private partnerships have fueled this post-industrial urban growth. In her case study of Pittsburgh, an international symbol of post-industrial rebirth, historian Tracey Neumann notes:

Growth coalitions focusing on redeveloping post-industrial cities, narrowly focused on creating the jobs, services, leisure activities, and cultural institutions that they believed would attract middle-class professionals back to central cities. They made harsh calculations about whose needs they would no longer meet, rather than seeking to better meet the needs of all residents (Neumann, 2016, p. 7). As Slater (2009) notes, “Far too much ink has been consumed arguing about definitions; what is important is that definitions have both analytical and political usage and that class inequality is at the forefront on any consideration of gentrification” (Slater, 2009, p. 295). This return to critical perspectives of gentrification was in large part a response to the celebration of gentrification’s “bourgeois bohemian” hipster, coffee-shop qualities that emerged as

part of gentrification’s third wave and its growing neoliberal urban agenda (Fageir et al., 2021; Hackworth & Smith, 2001; Kern, 2022; Paton, 2014; Peck, 2005; Slater, 2006). It is during this phase of gentrification that Slater (2006) argued for the need to bring critical perspectives back into gentrification research given “the context of distressing evidence of continuing evictions of low-income and working-class residents from neighbourhoods, and continuing embourgeoisement of central city locations resulting in severe housing affordability problems” (Slater, 2006, p. 738). Recognizing that social class is grounded in power relations etched into urban space, Slater advocated that critical gentrification scholarship must consider quantitative and qualitative ways of measuring displacement and take into account different perspectives and experiences of gentrification beyond that of the middle-class professional in which the working class serve only as a backdrop (Slater, 2006, 2009).

Others have cautioned of the need to be wary of disguising gentrification as part of an improved “social mix” (High, 2022), a point that is particularly salient given the growing interest among gentrification researchers who are examining the relationship between gentrification and

the inequalities of race, class and gender. Gentrification scholarship has tended to focus more on class than race, gender, ability and age, however, this is changing (Kern, 2022). Many gentrification researchers are taking an interdisciplinary lens rooted in the concept of racial capitalism. Racial capitalism views capitalism as an inherently racialized system as racial standing in capitalism's hierarchy defines value and profit accumulation (Rucks-Ahidiana, 2022). Racial capitalism sees class structure, racial differentiation and hierarchy as inextricably linked, contributing to territorial stigmatization and spatial differentiation (High, 2022).

Gentrification and race are intertwined. In the United States, research has shown that black neighbourhoods are ascribed lower price and value than white neighbourhoods. Revitalization projects occur disproportionately in lower income neighbourhoods of Black and Hispanic residents leaving them more vulnerable to not only physical displacement, but cultural displacement as well as white and non-white middle-class residents move into their neighbourhoods (Robinson et al., 2020; Rucks-Ahidiana, 2022). In many instances, government actions in American cities have contributed to

gentrification's racial segregation through discriminatory policies such as redlining that determines which neighbourhoods are eligible (and which are not) for mortgages and insurance or other forms of loans and investment (Kern, 2022). A major consequence of policies such as redlining is that racialized communities have not been able to build the same wealth as white people through home ownership (Moskowitz, 2018). "By theorizing gentrification as a product of racial capitalism, gentrification [can be] defined as a racialized process of class change" (Rucks-Ahidiana, 2022, p. 174).

Gentrification as Cultural Erasure

While the debates about the primary causes and consequences of gentrification persist in the literature, there is growing discourse as to the growing realities of gentrification in the post-industrial city, notably increasing physical displacement, economic dislocation and the cultural erasure of working-class, racialized and lower income households. As the forces of gentrification took hold and factory lands were redeveloped, property values rose and workers were ultimately forced out of their homes and communities (Frisch, 2022; High & Burrill, 2018). Working-class neighbourhoods experienced these effects disproportionately to the managerial classes:

Executives, like all white-collar employees, tend to live in areas that mix people from different industries. Workers, however, live in areas where individual firms and industries are concentrated. Therefore, when plants, companies, or networks of customers and suppliers in related businesses lay off workers, the communities where they live and shop are devastated (Zukin, 1991, p. 9).

The uneven geography of deindustrialization is also experienced at the level of different neighbourhoods within a single city as large-scale job loss and changing labour markets play out through differences of gender, race, and class inequalities across spatial locations (Strangleman et al., 2013). Furthermore, those displaced from industrial jobs suffer long periods of unemployment and receive lower pay and fewer benefits in the jobs they do find (Curran, 2007). With these material and physical losses, workers also experienced cultural impacts, as they lost their social place, status and identity (Frisch, 2022).

Gentrification is identified as a contemporary form of colonization as gentrifiers remake neighbourhoods in their own image, suiting their tastes and preferences (Kern, 2022). “Overwhelmingly white, gentrifiers homesteading in the urban wilderness have revealed a pioneering mindset that is problematic at many levels, not least because it reproduces the language of settler colonialism and European imperialism” (High, 2022, p. 19). Smith is also pointed in his critique of gentrification as class conquest

of the city, a form of displacement and cultural erasure as well as legitimized systematic eviction. Smith equates gentrification as an “imperial frontier” inextricably linked to the new global order whereby:

... new urban pioneers seek to scrub the city clean of its working-class geography and history. By remaking the geography of the city they simultaneously rewrite its social history as a preemptive justification for a new urban future. Slum tenements become historic brownstones and exterior facades are sandblasted to reveal a future past... Physical effacement of original structures effaces social history and geography; if the past is not entirely demolished it is at least reinvented — its class and race contours rubbed smooth-in the refurbishment of a palatable past (Smith, 1996, p. 25).

As centralized urban policy, gentrification has been cast as the solution to the devastation and decline wrought by deindustrialization (Paton, 2014). Gentrification often assumes a “hero narrative”, heralded as a creative and entrepreneurial response to the dirty industrial city with its abandoned neighborhoods in need of saving (Kern, 2022). Oral Historian Steven High notes, contemporary

gentrification scholarship seems to mention deindustrialization as little more than a footnote as gentrification scholars have largely turned their backs on working-people and the politics of resistance that once animated that field (High, 2013). The reasons for this may be practical as well as philosophical. Gentrification is shrinking the remaining lands zoned for employment use as residential development, with its higher use value, encroaches on the city’s commercial areas. Between 2006 and 2018, Toronto, similar to many other cities of the global North, lost 9.8 percent of its designated employment lands (Dingman, n.d.). Many large metropolitan centres, or global cities, like New York, Toronto and Paris have come to resist the deindustrialization label altogether. As High notes, these cities are now “so thoroughly post-industrial that their former industrial lives have been all but forgotten” (High, 2013). What and who are rendered visible or invisible by the process of deindustrialization plays an important role in shaping public understanding of the contemporary public realm and social institutions that govern it (Clarke, 2011). With this state-driven cultural amnesia, working-class people have experienced a double erasure: first they lost their jobs as factories and mills shut

down and second, as the lands were either demolished or turned into lofts, condos and art galleries, they experienced residential displacement (High et al., 2017).

Where smokestacks had long stood as markers of industry and prosperity—identifying cities as industrial and “working-class”—their closure and demolition saw the marginalization of industry and industrial workers within both the material and symbolic constructions of place... Abandoned industrial sites came to dominate visual depictions of the city. These changed conditions reflected a new urban aesthetic in which cities with more positive imagery are associated with the post-industrial era, the future, the new, the clean, the high-tech, the economically upbeat and the socially progressive (Rhodes, 2013, p. 57).

Call and Response: Global Cities and Culture-Led Urban Regeneration

Globalization has intensified the uneven geography of post-industrial society, particularly in cities identified by Sassen as “global cities”; those are cities which serve the primary purpose of facilitating business and financial transactions associated with the transnational flow of capital and that provide hubs of related functional services (Sassen, 1994). The growth of globalization during the latter part of the 20th century coincided with the reorganization of the manufacturing sector geographically as well as in production and distribution. During the 1990s and 2000s, industry moved further from urban regions to expanding logistic clusters that coordinated the flow of goods into and out of population centres (Stein, 2019).

It is in the global cities, including London, Paris, New York, Sydney, San Francisco, Amsterdam, Toronto and Vancouver, that the changes in industrial and occupational structure, the scale of gentrification and a developed rent gap is most pronounced (Hamnett, 2003). Those cities with declining industrial bases, such as Pittsburgh, Buffalo, Detroit, the Ruhr, Liverpool, or Manchester have not

historically faced the same extent of gentrification (Hamnett, 2003) (although that is arguably changing now as the middle class are increasingly being priced out of cities, large-scale global and mid-sized post-industrial alike).

One of the ways in which deindustrialized towns and cities have sought to rebuild their economies, lure new kinds of people and businesses, and redefine their identity, was by supporting a collection of cultural, artistic and new technology strategies, an approach that has since become known as ‘culture-led regeneration’ (Stanton, 2006).

Research on the impact of gentrification on working-class communities is often framed in the discourse of creative or cultural cities (Catungal et al., 2009) as cities seek to rebrand themselves in the post-industrial economy in order to attract the creative class and knowledge workers of the ‘new cultural economy’ - an economy shaped by synergies of arts, technology and attributes of place’ (Mckenzie & Hutton, 2015, p. 8).

Scholars including Stanton and Linkon have explored how these new cultural economy strategies often target the adaptive reuse of post-industrial landscapes within cities to attract creative, new economy business, tourism and recreation activities. Former sites of industrial production, given their distinct histories, cultures and landscapes, are converted into spaces of cultural production and consumption, providing opportunities for entrepreneurial placemaking and the manufacturing of images that foster economic development (Stanton, 2017). These strategies have become so effective that cultural production has become associated with these heritage environments where an “alluring and paradoxical aesthetic of the brick and iron of an older industrial vernacular mixes with a contemporary aura of technology, globalization and modernity” (Mckenzie & Hutton, 2015, p. 9).

Popularized by Richard Florida’s 2002 publication, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, that connected culture and economic development through the three T’s of talent, tolerance and technology (Florida, 2002), growing numbers of cities began to enthusiastically expand their creative economies through the commodification of culture and the urbanization of neoliberal cultural policy.

These new creative economy policies were not designed to promote public engagement with the arts or expand creative opportunities for collective or individual expression (Mckenzie & Hutton, 2015). Rather, they were supply-side interventions, intended to support entrepreneurial urban place-branding that allowed for inter-urban competition for creative types and attracted private investment. Cities attracted to Florida’s theories increased their focus on creating cultural districts to encourage tourism and middle-class consumption. These cultural districts also sought to drive cultural production, often in the creative areas of film, television, music and new media, that could attract the highly skilled knowledge workers who would in turn, lure mobile firms dependent on their specialized skill set (Catungal et al., 2009; Mckenzie & Hutton, 2015; Peck, 2005; Stanton, 2006).

According to Florida, the creative class seek geographies of ‘cool’ typically associated with gentrification and mixed-use, inner-urban neighbourhoods, and that include ‘authentic’ historical buildings, converted lofts and plenty of coffee shops (Florida, 2002). As political economist Jamie Peck writes in a critique of Florida’s work, “Creatives want edgy cities, not edge cities”

(Peck, 2005, p. 745), while simultaneously diluting creativity as a unique and authentic form of expression and diluting progressive politics of the 20th century such as the women's and civil rights movements as relics of the preCreative era (Peck, 2005).

The culture-led regeneration policies of post-industrial cities that sought to preserve and repurpose industrial landscapes — while in some instances have helped to revitalize areas that may otherwise have fallen into disrepair — have ultimately contributed to gentrification and displacement (Mckenzie & Hutton, 2015). This is an irony noted by High and Burrill.

In insisting on the preservation of the remaining residual symbols of the old industrial culture, even condo-ized ones, we have largely failed to acknowledge the direct and indirect ways that industrial heritage discourse and site preservation contribute to culture-led regeneration and gentrification” (High & Burrill, 2018, p. 1).

Florida's work in particular, has attracted criticism for its enthusiasm of catering to the needs and aspirations of the creative class while neglecting intra-urban inequality and

working poverty. Florida's work has essentially dismissed the underclasses as servants of the creative class, advocating for a form of creative market trickle-down economics rather than one of social redistribution (Peck, 2005). Working in tandem with Florida's creative cities hypotheses, are state-sanctioned policies, heritage designations and public-sector financial incentives that support the revitalization of heritage districts. These are deemed as culturally appropriate forms of gentrification that recapitalize neighbourhoods, but that ultimately result in increased rents, property values and displacement (Mckenzie & Hutton, 2015). Such entrepreneurial creativity strategies ultimately extend the market, consumption and property-led economic development strategies of the entrepreneurial city (Harvey, 1996; Peck, 2005)

Toronto's Liberty Village is a case-in-point. Once a manufacturing and heavy industry district located on the western edge of Toronto's downtown, in the 1990s after two decades of industrial decline, the area was rebranded 'Liberty Village', so named to convey the sense of an urban village or 'school-like' campus distinct from the downtown corporate environment. Liberty Village was

redeveloped as a creative class employment centre by private developers supported by an ambitious Business Improvement Area, and aided by the City's Culture Plan for the Creative City (2003). Liberty Village has since attracted new economy cultural production industries attracted to the alternative workplace ethos and the aesthetics of industrial architecture. However, as rents have risen, creative class diversity has decreased. The original post-industry inhabitants such as artists, craftspeople, photographers and arts organizations who served at the vanguard of the area's economic revitalization and moved to the area during the low rent era of the 1970s and 80s, have been forced out (Catungal et al., 2009). In privileging this new middle class of cultural producers, Liberty Village has ultimately displaced the cluster from its broader urban and neighbourhood context while decreasing local economic and artistic diversity.

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