

SECOND EDITION

Key Concepts in Urban Studies

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SAGE Publications Ltd
1 Oliver's Yard
55 City Road
London EC1Y 1SP

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2455 Teller Road
Thousand Oaks, California 91320

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B 1/1 Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area
Mathura Road
New Delhi 110 044

SAGE Publications Asia-Pacific Pte Ltd
3 Church Street
#10-04 Samsung Hub
Singapore 049483

Editor: Chris Rojek
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Marketing manager: Michael Ainsley
Cover design: Wendy Scott
Typeset by: C&M Digitals (P) Ltd, Chennai, India
Printed and bound by CPI Group (UK) Ltd,
Croydon, CR0 4YY



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First published 2016

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2015939826

British Library Cataloguing in Publication data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-84920-198-8
ISBN 978-1-84920-199-5 (pbk)

At SAGE we take sustainability seriously. Most of our products are printed in the UK using FSC papers and boards. When we print overseas we ensure sustainable papers are used as measured by the PREPS grading system. We undertake an annual audit to monitor our sustainability.

This is not a call for exclusive men's clubs, segregating boys and girls in the classroom, or creating a new gender hierarchy. It is, however, a cry for constructive definitions of masculine identity, and the provision of venues (cultural, literary, political) in which men are encouraged to examine their masculinity in honest, unclouded terms. The disappearing man is being replaced by what is increasingly becoming a walking penis with fists. A troubling sight indeed. (Petty, 2003)

The above observations are interesting precisely because they introduce the important concept that spaces in our culture are both real and virtual (see entries on *Nightscapes and Urban Escapades* and *Social Production of Space*). However, the claim that, actually, existing environments are increasingly bi-sexually controlled, may be an exaggeration. Societies still invest men with the power to dominate. That fact alone implies that, in most spaces, it is male-biased activities and influence that will prevail. Thus, the creation in society of spaces that are uniquely feminine or which cater to the sensitivities and needs of children, for example, remains an important consideration in social planning.

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Gentrification and Urban Redevelopment

This process involves the inflow of capital investment into the real estate of an already existing place in a metropolitan region whose values are depressed. Related to the decay of place, both gentrification and urban redevelopment



(or ‘renewal’) are cycles of capital investment in urban real estate. Gentrification in the US and many parts of Europe is usually characterized by the convergence of apartments into condominiums (studios) and the renovation of select homes in a specific area. As more upscale residents move in, candle-lit restaurants and stores catering to people with higher incomes displace convenience and bargain shopping stores. Rents rise as landlords realize they can attract professionals and business people as tenants. Older residents on limited incomes then have to move out. In London, the predominance of owner-occupation has seen the professional classes appropriate large three-floor Victorian houses or developers convert them into apartments and studios. The combination of predominant owner-occupation and the widespread cosmopolitan nature of London makes it more complex than its US counterparts (Hebbert, 1998). However, quite large tenure changes, from low-income private rental to higher-income owner-occupation, have been a consistent feature of gentrification over the last 30 years. In other UK cities, competition for international sporting and cultural events, for example the Olympics, Commonwealth Games, the European City of Culture, city marketing and the location of cultural centers has led to a rise in gentrification in the last 10 years. The central agency of this change has been real estate interests marketing waterside developments and associated lifestyles to urban professionals. Waterside developments appear to be a consistent feature of contemporary gentrification in most cities, for example Sydney.

The housing market tends to sort the population by income into different areas. Racism may add another type of sorting. If an area is increasingly filled by lower income residents, landlords have an incentive to not maintain their properties. If they were to invest in upgrades, they’d need to charge a higher rent to make this a profitable investment. People with higher incomes who could pay the higher rents may not be willing to live in that neighborhood. So landlords simply ‘milk’ the decaying buildings of their rent. By putting off repairs, they can save money to buy other buildings elsewhere. (Wetzel, 2002: 1)

London has not suffered the level of ghettoization experienced in other cities. The level of inter-racial marriage is high and there is a complex social and cultural geography. However, as older residents of Asian or Afro-Caribbean extraction move out of gentrifying areas, they tend to be replaced by younger, mainly white, professionals (Wetzel, 2002).

The failure to continually upgrade buildings and replace the worn-out building site with inflows of new cash amounts to a process of disinvestment – a shrinkage of capital – in an area. As a space becomes more of a low-rent district, some houses may be cut up into separate rooms or apartments to increase the rental revenue. This leads to further deterioration of the housing stock and the community environment. If a declining area is close to centers of employment, the availability of cheap housing and novel aspects, such as interesting architecture and small restaurants nearby, are incentives for capital to re-enter the area and invest in real estate, thus starting the investment cycle all over again. To make



investment in new construction and rehabilitation profitable, developers must be able to attract residents that can pay higher rents, such as professionals (the 'gentry'). Once this process gets underway, the less affluent residents are pushed out of the area.

When an area gets 'gentrified' prices go up for all neighborhood services. Writing about the changes that took place in the 'Hell's Kitchen' section of Manhattan, on the west side, Michael Gwertzman focuses on the little things that are so costly to previous residents, they are forced to move. 'He remembers eating at a restaurant ... which served Cuban-Chinese food for \$3 a plate. Six restaurants later in the same space, a new "Latino" restaurant serves the same food for \$10 a plate' (1997: 2).

The process of displacement that often accompanies gentrification may result in political struggles as older residents resist the incursion of new capital. Thus the process of dis-investment and re-investment results in cycles of decline and gentrification that afflict the housing stock of the city. Community concern and resistance accompanies these changes, including the emergence of political protests and, occasionally, social movements (see entry on *Urban and Suburban Politics*).

Gentrification and urban redevelopment are not necessarily the same thing. Looking at the rapid growth of urbanization in Asia one sees a variety of redevelopment programs; for example, in Seoul in South Korea the Joint Redevelopment Programs seek to transform shanty-type settlements into high-rise commercial housing estates in urban areas. The driver is not gentrification, *sui generis*, but real estate interests exploiting rent gaps, underwritten by a central state whose commitment to social redistribution is limited.

Too many of the academic commentators on gentrification take it as read that gentrification is a parameter and not a variable in urban redevelopment. That is, it is assumed that regeneration in itself improves urban habitats as a whole rather than creating different forms of tensions and conflicts between groups and individuals within them. For example, the East Asian Crisis of 1997 had less impact on South Korea than on Thailand because of the latter's exposure to a real-estate-induced financial bubble created by speculative office and housing developments. Similarly, the distinction between structural and cyclical changes in the urban habitat is often either overlooked or conflated.

Too often urbanists display category errors in their attempt to analyze urban change. That is, a property is ascribed to a thing that could not have that property. Unfortunately, gentrification and urban redevelopment are examples among rather too many of this type of error.

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