

Лекція 9. Джентрифікація (Gentrification)

Slides 1-3

Recent advances within gentrification theory suggest that gentrification is an inherent global feature of the neoliberal city (Slater, 2017). Like neoliberalism itself, it assumes different forms in different contexts, but it nevertheless remains true to its mission: the class remaking of the city (Davidson, 2018). In order support such a claim, the conceptual and geographical domains of gentrification theory have expanded considerably during recent years, partly due to Neil Smith's (2002) characterization of gentrification as a global urban strategy and partly due to gentrification's increasing conceptual "sprawl" into adjacent themes within urban studies (Smart & Smart, 2017).

Slides 4-6

The effects of gentrification on the social characteristics of place remain at the core of the research endeavor. "Classic" gentrification as described in most research conducted until the turn of the millennium is a gradual process of urban sociospatial transformation leading to the erosion of existing neighborhood community structures because of the characteristics and preferences of the newcomers (Dangschat, 1988).

Slide 7

Long considered an anomaly in the urban sociospatial structure of a limited subset of (global) cities, gentrification started to become more widespread until it was temporarily slowed down by the recession of the early 1990s. By the time most Western economies recovered, the stage was set for gentrification to regain momentum in what soon came to be known as "the third wave" of gentrification (Hackworth & Smith, 2001; Smith, 2002). As a result, the long-lasting decline of the inner-city areas of North American and (many) Western European cities came to a halt, and in some cases it was even reversed, often dramatically so. Underlying this change is a combination of altered cultural preferences, (second) demographic transition, and the maturity of rent gaps—three aspects that have been at the center of much controversy in gentrification research since the 1980s (Buzar, Hall, & Ogden, 2007; Rérat, 2012b). Third-wave gentrification is said to involve the expansion of gentrification beyond its traditional inner-city confines, often as part of urban regeneration or neighborhood renewal strategies orchestrated in tandem by developers and public-sector actors (Smith, 2002).

Slide 8

Gentrification is traditionally conceptualized as an evolutionary process that can be described using phase (or wave) models (Dangschat, 1988; Hackworth & Smith, 2001), with the wave "model" being the most influential, having spurred a torrent of papers on, for example, second-wave (e.g., Bounds & Morris, 2006) or third-wave (e.g., Murphy, 2008) gentrification. However, the linearity of the process was soon to be put into question by research that focuses on the non-Anglo American experience of gentrification (van Criekingen & Decroly, 2003). In CEE, for example, the three waves appear to be compressed and independent from one another, meaning that gentrification simultaneously unites different types of processes that have different intensities depending on context (Bernt, 2016; Holm, Marcińczak, & Ogródowczyk, 2015; Kovács et al., 2013). NBG in this region is thus not preceded by but is accompanied by trends that are characteristic of the first and second waves, of which there were few signs until the mid-2000s (Sýkora, 2005); prominent reasons include the unclear property rights situation in several countries, restitution policies, the absence of a long-term mortgage market (until the early 2000s in some countries, still today in others), the only recent emergence of a "postsocialist" middle class of professionals, and the preponderance of owner occupation. In addition, land in postsocialist cities was characterized by a very high share being used for industrial purposes (Bertaud, 2006; Gentile & Sjöberg, 2006), nowadays available as brownfield material, the removal of which opens up for the exploitation of substantial rent gaps.

Slides 9-11

Like gentrification itself, newbuild gentrification (NBG), as this phenomenon has come to be known, has a rather elastic and highly contested definition, spanning from what essentially amounts to a denial of its existence (Boddy, 2007), to a process that may involve “swathes of disused brownfield sites” (Davidson & Lees, 2005, p. 1170). Central to any definition of gentrification is whether and to what extent displacement—direct or indirect—is taking place. In most instances of NBG, displacement can only be indirect via price shadowing effects (Boddy, 2007), although recent work based in non-Western contexts demonstrates its association with widespread direct displacement via the demolition of low-rise, often informal, dwellings and their replacement by high-rise, formal and higher-status, condominiums (Harris, 2008; Shin, 2016). Some scholars, however, argue that displacement should also be understood as a form of phenomenological dispossession, as a loss of neighborhood place induced by gentrification (Davidson & Lees, 2010). NBG is claimed to have similar effects but with a sudden forwardgoing time warp: Newbuilds are frequently large developments that bring many new residents and much fresh capital into a specific area within a relatively short period (Davidson & Lees, 2005). A global brand of gentrification is spreading its tentacles across urban space, increasingly decoupling and distancing itself from local context; in the process, it is often supported by state or municipal authorities; for example, in the guise of social mixing policies (Davidson, 2010; Lees, 2008), slum clearance (Choi, 2016; Nagy & Timár, 2012), or urban regeneration (Harris, 2008; Smith, 2002). Newbuilds often come with eye-catching architecture that imprints a mark of distinction within the cityscape (Andersen & Røe, 2017), responding to the “global” lifestyle preferences of the expanding class of professionals (Davidson, 2007) and, to use Richard Florida’s (2003) language, of its “super-creative core.” The residents of newbuilds tend to be young and relatively affluent (Davidson, 2007), although Rérat’s (2012a) study in the Swiss cities of Zurich and Neuchâtel suggests that the higher prices of newbuilds vs. existing stock tend to exclude the younger segment of gentrifiers, who typically have less starting capital (see also Rérat, Söderström, Piguet, & Besson, 2010). Rérat (2012a, 2012b) also suggests that NBG be placed within a life course perspective and that the gentrifiers appear to be “stayers,” rather than newcomers to the inner city, who are motivated by the comfort of inner-city life.

Slide 12

The literature on the effects of NBG is a bit ambivalent. On the one hand, there are studies, particularly from London, that indicate that newbuilds contribute to indirect as well as to direct displacement, causing substantial harm to local communities. On the other hand, different indications have been found elsewhere, specifically that locals have mixed feelings about NBG, plus that they tend to stay put. Similar contradictions are well documented in the literature on traditional forms of gentrification, which is somewhat polarized on this issue — between critical and “less-than-critical” standpoints. Because displacement in the traditional sense is not easily demonstrated (newbuilds often appear on vacant plots, including brownfields), a case has been made for a phenomenological understanding of displacement that emphasizes how NBG dissolves place, the multitude of local assets and relations having ripened over the long term, and that form the basic structure of the local community (Davidson, 2008, 2010; Davidson & Lees, 2010; Stabrowski, 2014). Accordingly, areas infected by NBG become “colonized and unfamiliar” (Davidson, 2010, p. 540); the degree to which such feelings prevail is presumably related to the extent and nature of the social contacts and connections that evolve—or fail to evolve—between newbuild gentrifiers and the long-term residents of the neighborhood.

Slides 13-14

NBG outside of the major cities of the northwestern quadrant of the world map has only recently appeared on the agenda of gentrification scholarship, even though there is plenty of evidence that it has been around for quite some time and in forms that are not always reminiscent of the patterns identified within the main bastions of theory generation (Lemanski, 2014; López-Morales, 2015; Shin & Kim, 2016). In particular, the preponderance of large-scale slum clearance and urban regeneration programs—for example, in connection with mega-events (see Davis, 2011; Gaffney, 2016)—encouraged Lees to denounce the “visceral emergence of state-led gentrification in the Global South”

(Lees, 2012, p. 156). There is also a narrative of colonization by gentrification, whereby rent gaps nowadays emerge at the global (or “planetary”) level (Sigler & Wachsmuth, 2016; Slater, 2017) in response to tourist flows, transnational speculative real estate investment (money parking within real estate), or investment by diaspora communities in housing “back home” (Gentile, Salukvadze, & Gogishvili, 2015; Goodfellow, 2017). In most cases, the state is involved, even though the degree of its involvement may range from tacit complicity (Gentile et al., 2015) to full control over the process (Valiyev, 2013), and from softening (Hochstenbach, Musterd, & Teernstra, 2015; Rose, 2010) to “hardening” agents (Kovács, Wiessner, & Zischner, 2013). In sum, it may be said that NBG or NBGesque phenomena are an increasingly global trend with local specifics. At this point, it becomes imperative to note how NBG plays out in very different ways across different contexts. With the notable exception of an early study on Vancouver (Mills, 1988), the

Though gentrification has gone global, most influential theories of gentrification remain heavily reliant on classic cases, particularly New York, London, Amsterdam, and Berlin, prompting the critique that the concept’s hegemony, protected by Anglophone gatekeepers, silences alternative explanations of displacement, forcing the gentrification framework, disguised as “international” theory (Cartier, 2017), on situations where there already exist suitable alternative perspectives (Smart & Smart, 2017). Thus, when gentrification theories imported from the global northwest are put to test in the peripheries of urban theory, the evidence points toward the need for revisions, refinement, adaptation, contextualization, or even outright rejection, confirming what Lees (2012) noted some years ago; that is, that we should not read gentrification in the south (or anywhere else) as a re-creation of the patterns in the “supposed centre.” For example, Ghertner (2015) suggests that gentrification fails in much of the world due to the predominant worldwide absence of Western-style property and tenure rights.

Slide 15-16

This case consists of two neighborhoods in Kyiv that has experienced substantial growth in new residential construction during the past few years. The first neighborhood is Sotsgorod (“Socialist city”), and the second neighborhood is “Comfort Town” (CT), a gargantuan, colorful, but only mildly gated estate that has “landed” on an adjacent brownfield. Sotsgorod is a socially mixed Soviet-era neighborhood built from the late 1950s until the early 1970s on the less prestigious left bank of the Dnieper River; most of its residents (or their parents or grandparents) were allocated their apartments free of charge during the Soviet era (until 1991) and consider market-based housing allocation as inherently unjust. Sotsgorod has recently attracted a number of small, midsized, and, increasingly, large-scale newbuild developments. A characteristic feature of the Sotsgorod neighborhood is its proximity to extensive industrial areas, most of which are now brownfields that are or could be available for land recycling. Comfort Town is built on such a former brownfield, on the site of the demised “Vulkan” rubber regeneration factory, which produced shoe components (e.g., soles, heels) out of recycled rubber from old tires. With approximately 7,000 apartments (LUN, 2018), and thousands more planned for the future, Comfort Town is a masterplanned settlement that is still under construction. It was transformed into a gated community of sorts not long after the first residents—who were not aware of the forthcoming gating—started moving in.

Slide 17-18

NBG in Kyiv shares some commonalities with comparable processes across Europe: It has a striking visible impact on the areas influenced by it and, numerically speaking, it alters the social class structure of the population enumeration districts touched by it. There are, however, several important differences that help shed light on the variegated nature of this globalizing process. Kyiv’s largest newbuild compound is an island of prosperity in a sea of decay, but it is also an island within an archipelago of indifference, marked by hard rocky cliffs and rugged shorelines. Our study reveals a striking lack of contact and understanding between the residents of CT—the newbuild gentrifiers—and their socialist city neighbors. CT appears to have little more effect on its surroundings than the purely visual one: (it has its own stores, cafés, and parking facilities, but the high pricing of its on-site private schools means that many of its younger residents are consumers of Sotsgorod’s educational facilities. Other than that, it appears to live and function as a somewhat porous suburban

fenced estate, rather than as a typical newbuild development of the kind described in the burgeoning literature within the field. In this sense, it is similar to the Docklands's newbuilds discussed by Butler (2007), if only at a superficial level: the residents of CT experience greater physical distance to their workplaces but lesser social distance to their neighbors than do the newbuild gentrifiers of the Docklands. Even so, CT residents lead a segregated and sealed-off existence on Kyiv's "East Side," in a settlement that can be characterized, to recycle Atkinson's (2006) metaphor, as a colorful "padded bunker," a bunker whose striking yet simple aesthetics engage with an idealized Europe defined, in part, by the obsolescence of its (Soviet/socialist) surroundings. Indeed, the Little Europe product packaging that we observed echoes Davidson's (2007, 2008) observation that social distinction is tailored by the architects, developers, and planners, rather than being the result of demand-side forces. Of course, the Euro-narrative is neither unique nor novel but rather refers to a powerful discourse that reaches back to the early years of independence, when Soviet apartments were "Euro-renovated" by those who were able to afford the investment. As a result, in contemporary Ukraine, European is for local developers what global means for those based in London or New York; it is a concept that lies at the core of their quest to produce a special brand of social distinction that unrepentantly others the existing urban fabric, and its residents, as Soviet laggards. Put differently, newbuild gentrification in Kyiv may well lead to islands of prosperity in a sea of decay, but these islands are being discursively framed as islands of civilization in a sea of delay, as colorful beacons of Europeanness towering out of the dark anachronism of the Soviet city. Despite seemingly moderate social differences, social mixing does not appear to be taking place, nor does anyone appear to be expecting or even wanting it to take place. And in this there lies a certain paradox, because in a context where social mixing and low levels of residential segregation have been the rule for decades, there seems to be little response when the arrival of a pseudo-gated mastodont upsets this balance.

Comfort Town is nothing more than a huge condominium—large enough to sustain a couple of its own cafés and a striking number of beauty parlors and pharmacies. For many of Sotsgorod's residents, CT may be less of a novelty (beyond the color palette used) and more of a *déjà vu* than what one might be led to think. Thus, though the residents of CT and Sotsgorod may hold strong opinions about one another—class stereotypes, basically—they also appear to be indifferent to each other's presence. This indifference is not easily placed within the extant literature on the social consequences of gentrification at the neighborhood level. What appears to matter the most is the extent to which CT's newbuild gentrifiers and their Sotsgorodite neighbors live completely segregated lives. Comforttowners seem to avoid Sotsgorod at any cost (except when they have no choice), while simultaneously hoping that none of its residents enter the compound, but the latter do not seem to be bothered by this, because they appear to expect and accept this behavior as normal. Moreover, there appears to be no price shadowing or gentrification spillover effect on the surroundings whatsoever, although it would be difficult to spot such an effect amidst a rollercoaster housing market such as that of Kyiv. As a result, many of the assumed negative effects of NBG on the living conditions in Sotsgorod are simply absent: because of the predominance of owner occupation, direct displacement does not occur, and indirect displacement does not even emerge as a phenomenological condition of gradual gentrification-induced place-unmaking. And why is this so? One possibility is that, despite everything, the Sotsgorod residents have experienced more dramatic changes in their neighborhood in the past as a result of the marketization of retailing, which slashed their purchasing power and transformed their streets into an unrestrained consumerist spectacle to the benefit of the few. More important, any discomfort associated with the appearance of Comfort Town fades when compared with the dramatic drop in quality of life and purchasing power experienced by the vast majority since the early 1990s. This leads to the suggestion that the social and community consequences of newbuild gentrification are highly contextual and "compete" for the interest of those influenced by the process.

Based on:

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