GENTRIFICATIONS: A REVIEW OF RECENT BOOKS ON GENTRIFYING AMERICAN CITIES

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ABSTRACT: Since the 1960s, academic and journalistic literature on gentrification has proliferated as neighborhoods have experienced residential and commercial upgrading, along with higher property values, escalating rents, and social displacements. Through real-estate investment, renovation, and redevelopment of the building stock, assorted gentrifications have significantly altered the class, race, and ethnicity of such neighborhoods. Historically the phenomenon has waxed and waned along with economic cycles. Still, over time increasingly potent waves of gentrification have transformed cities of the United States, Europe, and elsewhere, including the global South. With the phenomenon's new worldwide reach and variability, some scholars now prefer to use "gentrifications" as plural. Given debates of comparative urbanism regarding gentrifications' diverse meanings and dynamics, this essay retains a national scale. We review seven books published between 2017 and 2019, including several written by geographers and others highly relevant to urban geography, to illustrate recent trends in the study of U.S. gentrifying cities. It is now an opportune juncture to assess the contributions of notable books over the last five years. The works under review raise questions about historical identity and authenticity, real-estate policy, racial displacement, gentrifier ethnography, gender and sexuality, generational conflict, and green gentrification. Such recent innovations suggest that the study of gentrification, nearly seven decades after the term first arose, remains an active research topic in urban geography.

Keywords: gentrification, displacement, urban geography, upgrading, revitalization

INTRODUCTION

When Ruth Glass (1964), a British planner, coined the term "gentrification" in the early 1960s, the upgrading of working-class neighborhoods by affluent households ("gentry") was still a novelty in London. From small-scale beginnings, gentrification has steadily expanded in fits and starts over the intervening decades to become commonplace internationally, fueled by government policy, real-estate dynamics, urban employment, and generational trends. New York City, San Francisco, Boston, and other expensive cities have even experienced "hyper-gentrification," described by Jeremiah Moss (2017, 39-40) as the "total retake of the city" for the "playgrounds of the nouveau riche, orchestrated by oligarchs in sky-high towers, the streets stripped of character, whitewashed and varnished until they look like Anywhere, USA. It's the displacement of the working class and the poor, people of color, artists and oddballs." Besides affecting many American and European cities, gentrifications now appear worldwide, including in the global South. No longer restricted mainly to Europe and North America, the gentrifying impulse has now become generalized; its incidence is global, connected to the circuits of global capital and cultural circulation. Still, subsequent scholarship has noted the multiple meanings of gentrification across borders and languages. Given global variations, Loretta Lees (2012) has suggested using the plural term "gentrifications" to highlight the distinctive dynamics around the world.

These trends have stimulated sprawling journalistic and academic literatures, which began with Glass's (1964) seminal piece, then expanded with the prolific work of Neil Smith (1979, 1987, 1996) and others during the late 20th century. Richard Schaffer and Smith (1986) were the first scholars to discern the impending gentrification of Harlem, long called the capital of Black America. Their article's title ended with a question mark — "The Gentrification of Harlem?" — that suggested how far-fetched the assertion seemed at the time. Still, their argument proved prescient: the district suffered through the economic recession of the late 1980s, but by the mid-1990s Harlem real-estate was hot. Rents and real-estate prices spiraled steadily upward to unprecedented levels. Meanwhile, Harlem's Black population fell from about 88 percent in 1990 to 70 percent in 2010, while growing White and Hispanic populations comprised the rest. Harlem also attracted affluent professional Black people, often not originally from the neighborhood or even New York City, as part of what Monique Taylor (2002) called an ideology of "racial

return and revival." Thus, residential turnover may involve both race and class in complex patterns of intersectionality (Godfrey 2016).

Both co-authors of this essay initially became fascinated with gentrification through personal experience and observation. Brian Godfrey's early publications focused on several "neighborhoods in transition" in San Francisco (Godfrey 1984, 1985, 1988), particularly with regard to ethnic and socioeconomic changes. While confirming the "rent gap" proposed by Smith (1987), Godfrey argued that local factors and cultural politics affected the precise locations, timings, and dynamics of gentrifications. He built on these ideas in subsequent works (Godfrey 2004, 2016), which examined the roles of community organizing, public art, and political resistance in the largely Latinx Mission District. He has argued that a defensive sense of Latinx territoriality has arisen — a *barrio* under siege. Although the Hispanic community largely resisted pressures of displacement for several decades, beginning in the 1970s, as San Francisco fell into the orbit of the Bay Area's "Silicon Valley" and Information Technology (IT) sectors, starting in the 1990s, the city's housing prices rose to astronomical levels. Ironically, the Mission's reputation as a Latinx *barrio,* proclaimed in colorful murals and ethnic businesses, has added to the district's allure, and contributed to gentrification (Godfrey 2016). Whether community-planning processes can prevent the continued displacement of Latinx and other low-and moderate-income residents of San Francisco's Mission District now seems increasingly unlikely.

Figure 1. ''The Ramiez family is still present,'' a billboard designed by the San Francisco Print Collective to announce the People's Plan to control gentrification of the Mission District. Photograph by B. Godfrey.

Similarly, Cullen Riley-Duffy witnessed dramatic changes in his native Brooklyn, where a growth alliance of real-estate interests, speculative investments, building density rezonings, and public policies gentrified much of the borough. Just as racially motivated redlining of the 1930s intensified segregation and poverty for growing communities of color, recent gentrifications have similarly displaced many longtime residents and businesses along race and class lines. Former industrial neighborhoods like the Gowanus Canal, Brooklyn Navy Yard, and the Sunset Park waterfront have seen redevelopment by luxury highrise housing and commercial mega-projects. Riley-Duffy's geography senior thesis examined how the arrival of the Whole Foods Market and luxury apartments encouraged green gentrification near the long-polluted Gowanus Canal, now a Superfund site. This case study shows how land-use changes redeveloped undervalued property for private financial gain, thereby promoting racial and class-based inequality in the distribution of upscale housing, public services, green spaces, and food access (Riley-Duffy, 2019).

After the 2008-2009 recession, gentrification and its discontents reached a fevered pitch in the second decade of the new century. New waves of political activism and engaged journalism energized debates on the subject. Academic publications have proposed novel interpretations of cities' historical identity and authenticity, real-estate policy, racial displacement, gentrifier ethnography, gender and sexuality, generational conflicts over housing, and green gentrification. Recently commentators have even suggested that the Covid-19 pandemic and associated economic stress in 2020-2021 would intensify the problems of gentrification. For example, journalist Tracy Jan (2020) has argued that in Los Angeles, "business owners, community leaders and economists predict that months of shutdowns will hasten the gentrification that has encroached on Black, Asian and Latino communities in South L.A. (formerly known as South Central), Chinatown and Boyle Heights since the Great Recession." While it would be premature to speculate at this point, suffice it to say that the pre-pandemic surge in public interest in gentrification provided an opportunity to evaluate the evolving research on that subject. In this essay, we review the contributions of seven notable recent books — all published between 2017 and 2019 — with regard to their innovative studies of gentrifying cities of America.

VANISHING CITY: THE LOSS OF HISTORIC IDENTITY

In *Vanishing New York: How a Great City Lost its Soul,* Jeremiah Moss (2017) elaborates on his popular blog to create an evocative cultural history of a city at risk of losing its historic identity. Arriving in New York from the hinterlands in 1993, Moss (the literary pseudonym of Griffin Hansbury) credits the city with helping him become himself: among other things, transitioning from female to male. To him, authentic New York is socially diverse, economically affordable, distinctively multicultural, and full of transgressive creativity. Moss traces this diversity from the past, due to the immigrations from abroad and domestic in-migrations from gender, sexual, artistic, and other identities. At the turn of the twenty-first century, Moss discerned an increasing loss of the city's familiar coffee shops, bars and clubs, ethnic stores, avant-garde theater, and migration from the South and other regions. He also emphasizes the nontraditional communities that have infused the city with other local business and cultural venues, which corporate chains and upscale shops increasingly replaced.

In 2007, Moss began a blog on "Jeremiah's Vanishing New York," subtitled "A.K.A. The Book of Lamentations: A Bitterly Nostalgic Look at a City in the Process of Going Extinct." Then Moss posted nearly 3,000 heritage sites lost to ravages of hyper-gentrification, which he subsequently chronicled in the book. Moss could better explain the city's "soul" in terms of social construction, as Sharon Zukin (2012) explains in her work on "authenticity" as a sense of origins prized in cities undergoing rapid social change. A healthy urban center balances its connections with historical beginnings and contemporary innovations, whereas one with excessive gentrification fetishizes the past and suffers from conflict in the present. While Moss might elaborate on the role of "authenticity" in gentrification, he effectively links hyper-gentrification to works by noted scholars and writers: Neil Smith on the neoliberal political economy; Sarah Schulman (2012) on the memory loss associated with "gentrification of the mind"; Rebecca Solnit (2001) on the cultural impoverishment of gentrified cities; and Zukin (2010) on the displacement caused by business improvement districts (BIDs). The strength of *Vanishing New York* lies in its passionate outcry about a city's imperiled social diversity, an array of lost local traditions, and a fierce resistance to contemporary homogenization of urban life.

GENTRIFICATION AND THE REAL ESTATE STATE

As opposed to Moss's impassioned account of lost social diversity and cultural heritage, Samuel Stein (2019) critiques the neoliberal policies by which planning departments have promoted urban revitalization. In the aptly titled *Capital City: Gentrification and the Real Estate State,* Stein views gentrification mainly as a result of policies favoring real-estate profiteering. He stresses the rise of a "real estate state" to prioritize private profit over public interest, stemming from a partnership among state and local leaders, urban planners, and private real-estate developers. Focusing on the quintessential case of hyper-gentrified New York, Stein interprets the real-estate sector as an increasingly powerful political force through campaign contributions, rezoning to permit higher building densities, and preference for luxury highrise redevelopment. He recounts the saga of the Trump family over three generations to illustrate the evolving relationship of urban planning to real estate: from an aspiring immigrant grandfather (Friedrich); to an ambitious builder father (Fred); and most recently to a tycoon son (Donald) obsessed with luxury

high rises. Through it all, real estate overpowered industry to dominate city politics. Even mayors with markedly different social agendas — such as moderately conservative Michael Bloomberg and liberal Bill de Blasio — charged planners "to raise property values, promote development and encourage gentrification" (Stein 2019, 81).

Given this political-economic reordering, according to Stein, high-end residential redevelopment has become the favored solution for virtually any city problem. As a result, urban planning has betrayed the profession's ideals of public service by submitting to the allure of capital investment in real estate, which has become a safe haven for the luxury redevelopment of New York, as in London, Paris, San Francisco, and other global centers of property speculation. Even with Stein's sharp insights into the local political interactions of the "real estate state," the book would benefit from elaboration on the sector's linkages with global financial capital, a synergy now evident in the city skyline's ever taller highrise buildings. While his general explanation of the land-use change in terms of property values makes sense, analysis of capital's "circuit switching" (a la David Harvey) among industry, real estate, stocks and bonds, and other sectors would be instructive. Somewhat surprisingly, the reader also would benefit from more housing data to come away with a better sense of how badly skewed the city's housing market has become due to widely unaffordable pricing. Despite such areas for possible elaboration, *Capital City's* insights on the governmental promotion of gentrification make the book an insightful reinterpretation of urban inequality.

KILLING THE CITY: SOCIAL AND RACIAL DISPLACEMENTS

In *How to Kill a City: Gentrification, Inequality, And The Fight For The Neighborhood,* Peter Moskowitz (2017) traces gentrifications not only in New York City and San Francisco but also in New Orleans and Detroit. The latter two incipient cases do not yet reach a level of hyper-gentrification, but similar tendencies become evident. A journalist by training, Moskowitz integrates urban theory into his interpretation, particularly the work of Neil Smith. Regarding gentrification as rooted in social inequality and racism, he argues that government policies have encouraged corporations, banks, and real-estate firms to profit from poor people's displacement. After Hurricane Katrina displaced thousands of Black residents, for example, the redevelopment of New Orleans attracted relatively affluent and predominantly White newcomers. Similarly, in his coverage of Detroit, Moskowitz illuminates how the city gave property to large financial groups like Quicken Loans to avert bankruptcy. His point is that gentrification occurs not just when well-to-do White people move back into cities for ethnic food and low prices; instead, these are ongoing symptoms of urban change. Moskowitz's chapters on New Orleans and Detroit do this most effectively, as he blends personal histories and political geographies to explain gentrification in those cities.

One strength of *How to Kill a City,* especially for the geographer, is the incorporation of spatial perspectives on gentrification: remember the proverbial key to real estate — location, location, location! Moskowitz begins every chapter with a different map of the city under study. In Detroit, for example, he explains how most of the redevelopment has occurred in the inner 7.2 miles around the city center; as one ventures farther out, foreclosed homes and vacant lots become common. Similarly, when he writes about New York City, the author takes the reader on a trip eastward from Greenwich Village, through the Lower East Side and across the river to Williamsburg, walking through three neighborhoods that hyper-gentrification has completely transformed. This geographic method helps us understand where spatial processes are occurring and proceeding, much like Smith's famous iso-line map of the historical waves of gentrification in the Lower East Side.

Throughout the book, Moskowitz compares gentrification to colonialism. When in-movers settle in places like Bywater NOLA and Brooklyn NYC, they often talk about these neighborhoods being "discovered" or "pioneered." One redevelopment group in Detroit even calls itself "The Conquistadors." Besides the questionable word choice, this phenomenon reveals the sentiments of gentrifiers toward the "natives." Like Smith's (1992) view of gentfying frontiers as "Wild West," Moskowitz finds that outsiders often perceive gentrifying neighborhoods in colonial terms. His conclusion stresses the need for protected public lands, government policy for affordable housing, and a "right for the city" in which people participate in decision-making. Still, when Moskowitz points to actions he has taken himself, they seem small in comparison. He mentions greeting his neighbors, starting petitions, recycling materials, and helping subway riders with their groceries (2017, 217). His book stresses the systemic causes (institutional racism, the rent gap) and serious effects (displacement) of gentrification. Yet, his practical solutions read more like a desire to inspire optimism in his readers than to inspire significant change — greetings, recycling, helpfulness. Overall, though, Moskowitz offers comparative insights on four cities now undergoing tremendous6 change.

COMPASSION FOR THE GENTRIFIER

Gentrifier, a scholarly work by sociologists John Joe Schlichtman, Jason Patch, and Marc Lamont Hill (2017), approaches gentrification through an innovative methodology of "auto-ethnography." This self-analytical approach proves refreshing in academic and political circles, which often widely and hypocritically condemn gentrification without admitting to their own self-interests. Situating themselves objectively as gentrifiers, the authors refer to their personal experiences, fears, and hopes as "middle-class people who moved into divested neighborhoods in a period during which a critical mass of other middle-class people did the same…" (2017, 4). Favoring residence in central-city neighborhoods, while fully conscious of the paradoxes involved for progressively inclined intellectuals, the authors recount how even well-intentioned in-movers affect their carefully chosen neighborhoods. Combining autobiography, psychological rumination, and scholarly insight, the commentators reflect on the pros and cons of gentrification. This tendency toward ambivalent reflection can feel emotionally invasive at points, rather like a long group therapy session! It can also become difficult for the reader to differentiate the three authors' detailed personal journeys. Still, since the authors are in touch with their own ambivalence, their personalized analysis ultimately proves effective in revealing the multi-faceted, complex, and variable phenomena of gentrification. Perhaps the book could even be retitled: "Compassion for the Gentrifier."

The authors' personal reflections and theoretical analyses ultimately create a powerful tool to engage readers, open minds, and drive home elements of social difference that might otherwise be lost. As Schlichtman, Patch, and Hill analyze the changes in their own gentrifying neighborhoods, they reveal tensions of race and class, crime and violence, children and schools, neighbors and community, and other local issues. In the process, the reader begins to understand how an abstract concept like gentrification translates into a series of complex interactions, perceptions, and consequences for participants. Combining deductive and inductive approaches, the authors also create a series of analytical figures to examine the diverse aspects of gentrifying places. These diagrams help to unpack abstract concepts and illustrate their complex interactions. The "analytical multi-tool," for example, illustrates different neighborhood qualities, including monetary, aesthetic, spatial, amenity, community, authenticity, and flexibility variables. Subsequent figures chart "scales and processes," "displacement," and "gentrifier types." Although not always easy reading, this scholarly work effectively promotes a project to "move away from shared, self-defeating caricatures of 'gentrifiers' and 'native' residents and, in doing so, become more equipped to seek common ground, navigate more ethical personal choices, negotiate sound policy decisions, and choose nurturing engagements in civic life" (2017, 203).

CONSIDERING GENDER AND SEXUALITY

In her book *Gender and Gentrification*, geographer Winifred Curran (2018) argues that scholars and journalists generally ignore the gendering of urban space implicit in urban revitalization programs and their displacements. As a politically engaged scholar, Curran admits to being "far less concerned with how we define or quantify it than I am with contesting gentrification, preventing and ameliorating its negative consequences." Academic and policy-oriented commentators may take issue with her on this point, since many maintain that remedies must arise from empirical evidence. Still, this is not a book focused on specific empirical cases, but on theoretical and political approaches to resisting gentrification.

Curran stresses the intersectionalities of gender with class, race, age, sexuality, and other identities. Affluent professional women, for example, have benefitted from and contributed to central city upgrading, although they comprise a relatively small group of gentrifiers. Apartment design has not catered to lower income women, who often face the classic "double burden" of wage labor and household responsibilities. Early feminist visions of gentrification as a strategy to promote women's equality have failed, she contends. Even the increasing presence of women in high-end professional jobs has done little to challenge patriarchy, given continuing gendered divisions of labor, employment barriers, and persistent wage gaps. A "glass ceiling" still exists at the top. Along with affordable housing and gendered labor, social reproduction raises a series of problems — the rising costs of parenting, the gentrification of schools, safety, and community organizing. Household labor remains undervalued, gendered, and often racialized, with wealthy women relying on low wage female labor. Care work has long been underpaid, despite its growing importance

in aging societies. Despite movements to share parenting, it remains largely gendered. Currant argues, "Gentrification has both reshaped and reinforced this gendering of social reproduction in ways that make care work expensive, isolating, intensive, and precarious" (p. 64).

Although "gayborhoods" have long served as symbols of gentrification, the literature has focused mainly on affluent, white, gay male communities. In fact, many of these famous neighborhoods — such as New York's West Village and Chelsea, San Francisco's Castro, and L.A.'s West Hollywood — have become so expensively mainstreamed as to lose many if not most queer residents and gay businesses. Young LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Queer) people now despair of living in such historic gay meccas: as Randy Shaw argues below, they are a "generation priced out" (2018). Given increasingly diverse LGBTQ communities, Curran suggests that "gentrification is not queer" (p. 78). Indeed, given differences in wealth, status, age, gender, race, and national origins, queer energy increasingly arises in such new places as Jackson Heights in New York City's Queens An emerging literature now argues that the most vibrant creative work now comes from queer immigrant communities.

Overall, by advocating a greater role for gender in studying gentrification, Curran does not demote the importance of race, class, or other social differences in the city. This book suggests a more nuanced, inclusive view of gentrification. Her main target is the contemporary trend toward more inequitable, privatized, and market-oriented cities. While not an empirically focused or theoretically definitive work, *Gender and Gentrification* reflects on the historical literature and points to new ways of approaching "urban regeneration." Provocative and challenging, this book suggests new avenues for investigation, advocacy, and community organizing.

GENERATIONAL STRUGGLES OVER AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Another notable work has been Randy Shaw's (2018) *Generation Priced Out: Who Gets to Live in the New Urban America,* which discerns generational issues in debates over affordable housing. Inspired by the deadly Ghost Ship fire in Oakland, which killed 36 people when a warehouse converted into a collective artists' residence went up in flames in 2016, this book blames the Bay Area's astronomical rents and house prices. For Shaw, the tragedy shows how an inequitable housing market has priced a generation out of the housing market. Shaw begins his book with a chapter on social displacement in the "new San Francisco," which has become the "poster child of urban unaffordability." Despite being "the nation's most progressive big city," San Francisco has witnessed significant declines in the Black, Latinx, gay, artistic, activist, and working-class populations. Local businesses now often have trouble finding employees at minimum wages. Workers in construction and cleaning services now commute long distances, often from the Central Valley, to labor in the City by the Bay.

Shaw ties the gentrification of San Francisco to a thriving technology industry, the demolition of low-income housing units in urban renewal, and the increasing desire of young professionals to live in the city center rather than the suburbs. He also refers to the "rent gap" as the reason the gentrification is profitable for developers in the first place; the difference between what tenants currently pay and what tenants would be paying if they were richer urbanites is multiple times the original rent. In addition to the economic causes, Shaw also describes how upgrading has won social and political approval. Pro-business mayors like Dianne Feinstein and Michael Bloomberg (and more subtly Bill de Blasio) have framed gentrification as a sign of progress since the redevelopment of small houses and storefronts make way for large, modern, attractive structures. Such perspectives also portray anti-gentrification protestors as enemies of progress. Beyond San Francisco, Shaw also writes with knowledge and insight about housing in Oakland, Los Angeles, Denver, Austin, and New York City.

While less theoretical than *Gentrifier* or *Capital City, Generation Priced Out* delves most deeply into the policy issues facing housing activists in the gentrified cities of America, particularly concerning generational inequalities. Shaw proposes upzoning as one possible solution, which would allow low-density neighborhoods to build taller structures with apartments and condominiums instead of single-family homes. Since Dianne Feinstein, as mayor, forbade upzoning in residential areas to win the support of middle-class voters, San Francisco and many other cities across the country have run out of housing for their growing populations. Upzoning single-family residential seems like the obvious solution, but not yet gentrified districts it can do more harm than good. The upzoning of Boyle Heights, Los Angeles made the district more attractive to prospective developers and thus more at risk of gentrification. Upzoning in already gentrified neighborhoods can relieve the supply shortage and lead to more housing options for the middle class, assuming strong legislation to mandate affordable housing and adequate tenant

protections. The generational aspects are also pertinent in this regard, as younger populations now often face more difficult housing markets than did their elders.

Although some housing activists may object to market-based solutions, Shaw is pragmatic in this sense. Many cities are facing shortages of affordable housing that might be alleviated, at least in part, by increasing the supply. He argues that Denver and Seattle have benefitted from policies to encourage affordable housing construction, although critics point to problems of transit-oriented development and enormous commutes to work resulting from sprawl. Housing affordability also depends on public policy and political pressure, of course, and Shaw concludes the book with ten comprehensive steps "to preserve cities' economic and racial diversity," the tenth of which is a call to arms for his readers to "organize, educate, and be political."

THE GREEN GROWTH MACHINE

In *Green Gentrification: Urban Sustainability and the Struggle for Environmental Justice,* Kenneth Gould and Tammy Lewis take a sociological perspective on the inequities of urban greening initiatives. Carried out by public and private partnerships between real estate developers and local politicians, these sustainability programs lead to "a maldistribution of environmental goods and environmental bads in the urban context" (2017, 152). The co-authors define green gentrification as the process of "greening initiatives followed by gentrification," which can include environmental cleanups like Brownfield and Superfund programs, transit-oriented development, increased green space, recycling programs, and energy efficiency projects, to name a few. The authors suggest that these types of urban sustainability projects both perpetuate preexisting and create new social inequalities. Neighborhoods and spaces that once were undesirable because of environmental woes become luxury high-rises with waterfront views and green amenities for the uber-rich. Former residents are replaced by newcomers and forced to relocate to neighborhoods that disproportionately house environmental burdens.

Gould and Lewis examine five case studies of green gentrification in Brooklyn. The first example, Prospect Park, might be referred to as a "hyper-green gentrification," as a predominantly White and affluent neighborhood became even more so by park beautification efforts. The Brooklyn Bridge Park and the Gowanus Canal show how environmental amenities encouraged the development of luxury real estate and upscale business in former industrial sites with waterfront views. The final two cases involve two very different communities — Sunset Park and Williamsburg — activists in both ensured that social equity would remain a part of the greening processes. The co-authors argue that Brooklyn, as a globally known brand name, now leads the way in urban sustainability efforts and models what they call the "green growth machine." The practice of neoliberal, public-private partnerships that turn green space into valuable real-estate is the archetype of urban environmentalism worldwide.

Green Gentrification focuses on racial, socioeconomic, and environmental justice. While sociological, the book resembles the geographical perspectives adopted by Stein and Moskowitz, and even includes abundant maps and charts based on geographical information systems (GIS). Yet, Gould and Lewis are more concerned with how green gentrification reflects global environmental and socioeconomic trends: "In global cities, the green growth machine increases urban inequality by distributing environmental amenities upward in the stratification system and environmental bads downward." They also point to the intersections of urban environmentalism, real-estate speculation, and institutional racism. To counter these trends, the authors call for a more "bottom-up urban sustainability" in which communities have the power to shape their own neighborhoods, rather than leaving the decision-making to officials and real-estate developers. Their argument would be strengthened by elaboration on "greenwashing" techniques and on the environmental efficacy of green initiatives. Still, *Green Gentrification* is an important addition to the gentrification literature, as urban greening initiatives continue to perpetuate urban inequalities around the world.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the seven books under review ask readers to reconsider the complex histories, multiple causes, and broad implications of gentrification in U.S. cities. Together the works cover not only the well-known cases of New York and San Francisco but also less studied examples of Austin, Denver, Detroit, Los Angeles, New Orleans, Oakland,

Figure 2. The northern part of the Gowanus Canal shows, at top from left to right, the Gowanus and Wyckoff Houses, a city pumping station, Superfund equipment, and the Brooklyn skyline. Photograph by CM Riley-Duffy.

and Seattle. While the latter group of cities may not yet reach the same exclusionary levels of hyper- gentrification, studies show that problems of displacement have become increasingly common. The recent works point to a governmental emphasis on luxury real-estate investment; community conflicts over social services and displacement; unaffordable housing for residents of affected cities; significant differences of race, class, gender, and sexuality; and

Figure 3. The Gowanus Canal beside the 365 Bond luxury apartment highrise, developed by the Lightstone Group, along with cranes of the Superfund cleanup. Photograph by CM Riley-Duffy.

environmentalism as increasingly an important cause of gentrification in "sustainable cities." The authors differ in their policy recommendations, just as their basic theoretical perspectives vary. Still, they all illuminate how contemporary gentrification results largely from decades of policy decisions by city governments. Once widely

considered a trendy but not enduring problem, gentrifications promise to remain lively topics for scholarly and journalistic investigation in coming years. As long as our society follows a trajectory of increasing socioeconomic inequality, urban geography will likely continue to wrestle with gentrification and its discontents.

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