Urban Geography

My research borrows from urban geography's interest in redevelopment, gentrification, and cybercities. I define 'redevelopment' here as the processes that bring services and infrastructure back to a city following a disaster (Birch and Wachter 2006). It involves the inflow of resources from other locations – these resources could include building materials, medical services, or increased quality or capacity for spatial data infrastructures. It also involves, to borrow from Fraser (1988), *need interpretation*, or the determination of where needs exist and the ways in which those needs can be addressed. As these processes entail the inflow and circulation of resources, as well as the uneven prioritization of needs (evading the issue of legitimization, for now), we can understand redevelopment as working according to a logic similar to gentrification. Here I'm borrowing from Fainstein *et al* (1983), who productively blur the boundary between gentrification and urban redevelopment by pointing to dynamics shared by both, including the material and discursive "reconstruction" of places and their highly uneven nature. Space, however, is always a "condition of possibility" (D. Harvey 2009) for urban redevelopment, as the dialectics between places, people, and capital always occur *somewhere* for particular reasons worth investigating (D. Harvey 1973). Furthermore, redevelopment can be conceptualized as occurring across several scales, reflecting the notion that the global sits in relation to, and is comprised through, the local (Massey 2007).

Urban redevelopment requires preliminary planning and decision-making practices in which particular urban spaces are singled out for resource distribution. Redevelopment commences through these institutional frameworks, and is based on metrics of need such as 'blight' and 'damage'. However, as Fraser (1988) makes clear, the politics behind *needs claims* are fraught with politics at several levels. First, needs are not straightforward but subject to interpretation. Second, those interpretations are strongly influenced by the person interpreting needs. Third, expressing needs and interpreting needs are

subject to available public discourses. Fourth, the interpretation of needs occurs by particular actors embedded within social relations, privileging some need-interpretations over others. Finally, Fraser deftly notes that needs are often depoliticized by being relegated to the 'domestic' economic sphere, meaning that the needs are discursively placed outside the 'political', and hence not addressable through restructuring of the political economy. The questions raised, then, are in regard to the ways in which particular groups' needs become implicated in redevelopment. Whose needs are satisfied, by whom, and using what discourses?

Scholars writing about gentrification have shown that this process tends to privilege the more powerful and well-represented populations. Gentrification has been shown to lead to increasingly exclusionary urban spaces through the privatization of public space, and that the inflow of capital to particular neighborhoods marginalizes and in some cases relocates populations previously living there (Davis 1992; Pulido 2000). This can encourage legislative measures intended to protect newcomers to a neighborhood, compromising the legitimacy of long-term residents' access to these urban spaces (Smith 1996). The effects of gentrification and urban redevelopment are experienced differently across different identities; in most cases, people of color (and other minorities) bear the brunt of the negative changes that occur with gentrification, including increased residency costs, misrepresentations by the public, and cultural displacement (Cahill 2007).

Redevelopment is an inherently spatial process, as capital materializes and manifests in the built environment *in particular places* (D. Harvey 1973; R. Weber 2002). This dynamic may be intensified in disaster relief contexts when there may be a stronger impetus to attract capital for rebuilding efforts. Decisions must be made regarding the *places* requiring the most attention, *where* to establish temporary housing, and the frameworks through which redevelopment will commence (establishing public versus private ownership of infrastructure, long-term versus short-term effort strategizing, etc.).

Moreover we can look at the contexts from which aid comes, to observe another spatial logic: are redevelopment efforts spearheaded by the global North *for* the global South? What institutions, public or private, are redeveloping, and what implications does this have on the strategies and outcomes?

Increasingly geographers are beginning to note that technologies influence these flows of capital in the city (S. Graham 2005; M. Graham 2010). Technology factors into redevelopment and gentrification in three ways: by constituting an economy itself, and by providing geographic locations of needs. First, much attention has focused on building technology infrastructures. Due to the often very high cost of technology infrastructure, some places are 'plugged in' before others. In most cases these are wealthy urban spaces of the global North (Zook 2005), but in other cases cities are planned to be centers of technology from their beginning (Bunnell 2004). Second, technology is increasingly informing capital investment and resource distribution (Uprichard, Burrows, and S. Parker 2009). In the case of redevelopment, the geoweb has enabled the production of huge amounts of data that redevelopment actors may use to inform their response strategies (Zook, M. Graham, Shelton, and Gorman 2010). The geoweb can be used to bring spaces of the global South into market relations (Goeckermann 2011), or to address various kinds of urban problems (International Institute for Environment and Development 2009). My dissertation research focuses mainly on the latter, exploring the *specific* ways the geoweb influences redevelopment processes.