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– 'GENTRIFICATION WITHOUT DISPLACEMENT' AND THE CONSEQUENT LOSS OF PLACE: The Effects of Class Transition on Low-income Residents of Secure Housing in Gentrifying Areas

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Abstract

The increasingly disputed concept of gentrification-induced displacement is combining with the argument that the poor benefit from social mix to produce a theoretical case for 'positive gentrification'. The notion that new middle-class residents not only attract more investment but bring opportunities for 'upward social mobility' to low-income people who manage to stay in gentrifying areas has become policy orthodoxy. While there are scholarly challenges to the extent of these benefits, the disadvantages of imposed social mix on low-income communities even where they are not physically displaced remain under-researched. This article helps to fill this gap by reporting on research into the experience of long-term low-income residents of gentrifying neighbourhoods who managed to stay put. The research explores notions of social mix, place and displacement among residents of secure community housing in Melbourne, Australia (the equivalent of small-scale social housing in Europe and North America) with the object of establishing whether the absence of physical displacement is sufficient to ameliorate gentrification's negative impacts. The findings demonstrate that transformations in shops and meeting places, and in the nature of local social structure and government interventions, cause a sense of loss of place even without physical displacement.

Introduction

In 2006 Tom Slater wrote an excellent and provocative article on 'The Eviction of Critical Perspectives in Gentrification Research' in which he observed the demise of displacement in the 1990s as a defining feature of gentrification and, with this, the reorientation of gentrification by some researchers as a positive process. Instead of concerning themselves with the inequities in gentrification's essential transition in class character, more researchers were focusing on the attitudes and lifestyles of the gentrifiers, and on the benefits they bring to formerly disinvested neighbourhoods and their low-income inhabitants. One of the reasons for this shift, Slater argued, is the 'pervasive influence of neoliberal urban policies of "social mix" in central city neighbourhoods' (2006: 737) which, like so many contemporary government agendas, encourages the collection of what Boden and Epstein call 'policy-based evidence' (2006: 226)—that is, evidence that justifies policies already in practice. A second reason is that physical displacement is indeed becoming less necessary to gentrification.

Gentrification-induced displacement is notoriously difficult to quantify (Atkinson, 2002; Shaw, 2005), and arguments have continued for decades over whether it has or has not occurred in particular instances. Vigdor (2002), Freeman (2005), Freeman and Braconi (2002; 2004) and Hamnett (2003) have argued variously that it does not occur, or not as much as thought, and that if it does it is not a bad thing, as those who are displaced go to less gentrified areas where they can find better housing for less rent. Slater (2006), Newman and Wyly (2006), Lees *et al.* (2008) and Davidson (2008) counter that exclusion of low-income households is essential to gentrification, and that it is inequitable and deeply disruptive.

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Gentrification has many expressions, but it is true that as Hackworth and Smith's (2001) 'third wave' extends into higher-risk areas, usually with state support, it adds to, as well as upgrades and replaces, existing building stock. Redevelopment of former industrial lands and docks and ports often requires no residential or commercial displacement, and increasing densities in public housing estates with the object of encouraging middle-class occupation may not displace existing tenants. In addition, the expansion of local non-profit housing associations in some British, European, North American and Australian cities over the past 20 years in particular enables some low-income people to remain in gentrifying neighbourhoods from which they otherwise almost certainly would have been evicted.

'Revitalization without displacement' (City of Vancouver, 2004) has become an ideal for those seeking urban policy that can 'ameliorate some of gentrification's negative impacts' (Freeman, 2008: 190). In an argument that gentrification may improve the living conditions of low-income residents, Freeman asks, 'How should we evaluate the experience of those who manage to stay in a gentrifying neighbourhood ...?' (*ibid*.: 187). Davidson (2009), who argues that the absence of relocation is not sufficient evidence for the absence of displacement, replies: by emphasizing the lived experience of space. In Davidson's frame, displacement starts from a relational and socially constructed definition of place rather than the simple equation of place with location. If a place changes, feelings of displacement can be experienced. This perspective has implications for advocates of 'positive-gentrification' policies that claim benefits for low-income residents.

As a result of the research focus correctly identified by Slater, there are relatively few studies of low-income inhabitants of gentrifying areas. This article helps to fill this gap by reporting on research into the experience of long-term residents of gentrifying neighbourhoods who have managed to stay put. Interviews were conducted with 22 low-income residents of community housing (the equivalent of small-scale not-for-profit social housing in Europe and North America) in two gentrifying neighbourhoods of Melbourne, Australia. The interviews explored notions of social mix, place and displacement, with the objective of establishing whether the absence of physical displacement is sufficient to ameliorate gentrification's negative impacts.

The two sections that follow expand on the debates around positive gentrification and sense of place, and then move on to outlining the case studies and the approach this research has taken.

'Positive gentrification'?

'Gentrification without displacement' is considered a policy solution to the extremes of disinvestment or exclusion—a benign process of 'positive gentrification' in which middle-class in-movers are not pushing low-income residents out of the neighbourhood but, through filling vacancies or increasing housing densities, are expanding the total population so that the proportion but not the absolute number of low-income residents declines. Not only is the concentration of poverty diluted, or 'rebalanced', as Andres Duany (2001) would have it, but the resulting social mix is supposed to bring added benefits by 'providing the tax base, rub-off work ethic, and political effectiveness of a middle class, and in the process improves the quality of life for all of a community's residents. It is the rising tide that lifts all boats' (Duany 2001: 37).

Urban policies of 'social mix' have been implicated in state-led redevelopment projects in the UK, Europe, North America and Australia for at least a decade now (Bridge *et al*., 2012), but the assumed benefits are not entirely taken for granted. Musterd and Andersson (2005) observe some level of disagreement:

> In several European and North American countries, lively political debates are currently developing that deal with the idea that individuals, especially the poor among them, will be significantly supported in their efforts to improve their life chances and to realize upward social mobility, if they would get the opportunity to live in a socially mixed environment (Musterd and Andersson, 2005: 761).

There is little doubt that the middle classes, by virtue of their higher economic, social and cultural capital, support higher-quality shops and services in their neighbourhood, successfully lobby for landscape and infrastructure upgrades and attract public investment to the area (Schoon, 2001; Wood, 2003; Freeman, 2008). The improvements they bring to the physical environment through increased rate revenues alone are well-established (Shaw, 2005). The positive effects of introduced social mix on low-income residents are contested, however, with Arthurson (2004; 2012), Randolph and Wood (2004), Uitermark *et al.* (2007), Lees (2008), Musterd *et al.* (2011) and Manley *et al.* (2012), only a few of many who argue that evidence of such benefits is thin. The supposed improvement in education and job prospects for the poor is especially controversial (see Manley *et al.*, 2012), as is the question of 'upward social mobility' and what this actually means. There is also a question of whether social *mixing*—presumably an important criterion for the 'rub-off' benefits from one class to another—even occurs, as opposed to a form of 'tectonic' social relations as one group slides past the other with little or no interaction (Butler with Robson, 2003).

These debates revolve mainly around whether and to what extent the purported benefits to low-income people exist. To the extent that they consider that social-mix policies may actually harm individuals and communities, they generally return to the issue of physical displacement, on the reasonable premise that the tectonic drift is all one way (out) for low-income residents (see especially Allen, 2008, on the disruption to cohesive communities of such policies). But are the effects of gentrification and imposed 'social mix' on those individuals and communities who manage to 'stay put' (Hartman, 1984; Newman and Wyly, 2006) entirely positive or, at worst, only neutral? On this question, Davidson (2008; 2009) makes an important contribution. Following Slater (2006) and Marcuse (1985), he explores a number of other ways in which displacement, and sense of loss of place, is experienced.

Slater recalls Marcuse's (1985) concept of 'exclusionary displacement' in his discussion of Freeman and Braconi's equivocation (2002) that 'only indirectly, by gradually shrinking the pool of low-rent housing, does the reurbanisation of the middle class appear to harm the interests of the poor' (Freeman and Braconi, cited in Slater, 2006: 749). Marcuse long ago defined exclusionary displacement as the process in which households are unable to access properties because they have become gentrified:

> When one household vacates a unit voluntarily and that unit is then gentrified … so that another similar household is prevented from moving in, the number of units available to the second household in that housing market is reduced. The second household, therefore, is excluded from living where it would otherwise have lived (Marcuse, 1985: 206).

That is, the mere fact of middle-class presence in a gentrifying neighbourhood is sufficient to cause direct exclusion of low-income households through the loss of affordable housing stock and the ongoing reduction of housing options. Several other displacement pressures emerge in Marcuse's work:

> When a family sees the neighbourhood around it changing dramatically, when their friends are leaving the neighbourhood, when the stores they patronize are

> liquidating and new stores for other clientele are taking their places, and when changes in public facilities, in transportation patterns, and in support services all clearly are making the neighbourhood less and less liveable, then the pressure of displacement already is severe (Marcuse, 1985: 207).

Davidson (2008) develops this analysis with a schema of displacement pressures. The schema includes direct displacement (eviction by end-of-lease, rent increase or force), indirect displacement (exclusionary displacement, i.e. exclusion), neighbourhood resource displacement (via changing neighbourhood services and an increasing 'out-of-placeness' of existing residents) and community displacement (through changes in place identity and neighbourhood governance). He situates these kinds of displacement in a discussion of Cartesian understandings of space, in which 'the loss of place (or lived space ...) has been mistakenly equated to a loss of (abstract) space' (Davidson, 2009: 222). Drawing on Lefebvre (1991), Davidson argues that this understanding:

> leaves us with a number of problematic implicit assumptions, including the notion that spatial relocation equals (a sense of) displacement and that the absence of spatial relocation equates to the non-occurrence of displacement. Put simply, displacement understood purely as spatial dislocation tells us very little about why it matters. We miss the very space/place tensions … that make space a social product (Davidson, 2009: 223).

It is this schema that forms the basis of this research enquiry. With the exceptions of Davidson (2009) and Fraser (2004), there is little work that sets out to understand the impact of gentrification on the attitudes and lives of low-income individuals who remain in gentrifying areas. By looking into their everyday interactions and social practices, this research seeks to establish whether neighbourhood-resource and/or community displacement is experienced by those residents, and the extent to which this matters.

Assessing 'sense of place'

This article focuses on the neighbourhood elements identified by Davidson (2008) as being most vulnerable to processes of class transition: shops and meeting places, and social structures and local governance. Shops and meeting places are neighbourhood resources that enable people to feel a sense of place or, conversely, out-of-placeness. The nature of local social structures and governance are also important to sense of community. Changes in one's position in the neighbourhood structure—one's 'place identity'—and in government interventions, initiated by different groups with different interests, can contribute to a sense of loss of stability and control, and similarly constitute a type of displacement.

A number of studies of displacement in the 1960s and 1970s revealed the impact of the loss of familiar surroundings to be of unforeseen and unexpected depth, described by Fried as 'grieving for a lost home' (1963: 151). Marris (1974) commented on the resemblance of emotions expressed by displaced residents to feelings of grief, concluding that grief is (in part) a process that follows changes that affect daily life in such a profound way that they demand reformulation of responses to everyday situations. In Fullilove's words (2004: 14) these are changes that destroy 'the working model of the world that had existed in the individual's head'. Both Fried and Marris observed a stronger articulation of place attachment among working-class than middle-class residents, and anticipated more severe impacts from displacement. They argued that for those who have uncertain or low economic status and therefore fewer reasons and resources to travel and develop social ties outside the neighbourhood, place of

residence becomes an important nexus around which identification and belonging are formulated.

This early work demonstrated that the impact of relocation is not easily offset by material benefits. Although relocation from neighbourhoods being demolished in 'slum-clearance' programmes usually did result in better housing, the subjects grieved for the loss of meaningful, 'lived' places of everyday social practices (Fried, 1963). Fullilove (2004) argues that the positive or negative aspects of these places are not as essential to the sense of attachment as knowledge of the local actors and customs. Subsequent work on place attachment shows that it is the particular interactions and experiences in a location that create the sense of attachment, and that these experiences yield expectations for the interactions and events that can take place there in the future (Milligan, 1998). The understanding that future interactions are facilitated or discouraged by the memory of a place as much as by the other people there at any time (Gustafson, 2001) casts place as a personally constructed as well as relational concept. In this sense, loss of place does not require physical displacement but can occur as individuals experience its transformation.

All places change, of course. The key is the scale of change and the availability of alternatives. For low-income people who have fewer choices and less capacity to travel in order to shop and socialize, wholesale class transition with some residential exceptions (to which there may be few alternatives) can have significant impact. Low-income households tend not to have the wherewithal to voluntarily up and relocate to an area more in keeping with their tastes. If the sources of the familiar—shops, services, meeting places, other people in the neighbourhood, the nature of local social order and governance—become unfamiliar, low-income people may lose their sense of place without the capacity to find a new one. This loss of place can be as distressing as physical relocation. Physical or psychological disability, lack of access to private transport, reliance on the hours of operation of public transport—none of which are uncommon to very low-income people—can exacerbate social isolation in ways better resourced people may find hard to comprehend.

Changes in neighbourhood resources can be seen as constructive elements of 'positive gentrification' if the range of products in shops and availability of social services increases (Freeman and Braconi, 2002). Marcuse (1985) argues, however, that the range catering to the low-income population diminishes as middle-class residents move in, and Davidson (2008) describes the effect of neighbourhood resource displacement as follows:

> local shops and services change and meeting-places disappear. The places by which people once defined their neighbourhood become spaces with which they no longer associate (Davidson, 2008: 2392).

Social-mix policy orthodoxies also assume a reduction in crime and disorder, and an increase in collective feelings of safety through changes in social structure effected by deconcentrating poverty and introducing successful role models who are less prone to disorder (Wilson, 1987; Vigdor, 2002). The changing social structure can affect the former population's ability to 'read' situations and residents. Knowledge of a place enables expectations and assessments of people and situations to trust and distrust (Sztompka, 1999), and confers a certain place-based identity of subject and other. Blokland (2009) argues that the level of familiarity—of the place and others to the subject, and of the subject and place to the others—affects feelings of safety in a neighbourhood profoundly. Familiarity with place creates a 'streetwise' safety (Anderson, 1990), which can be undermined by a lack of information to evaluate a situation or person (described by Sztompka as mistrust). While the evidence for

decreasing crime rates as a consequence of gentrification is at any rate not very substantial (Galster and Zobel, 1998), these analyses suggest that crime statistics have little to say about perceptions of safety in a place.

Davidson's emphasis on local governance introduces the role of perceived 'ownership' in attachment to place, and the role of economic, social, cultural and political power in determining what a neighbourhood looks like. Different groups engage available resources to appropriate spaces and adapt them as they can to their tastes and demands (Harvey, 1990). The gentrifying middle classes are clearly better equipped than the earlier populations of gentrifying areas (Butler with Robson, 2003), supported by their higher incomes and the fact that their tastes and values are promoted in more politically successful circles. Local-government interventions in the interest of middle-class residents, with regard to management of public order (Mitchell, 1995), maintenance of streetscapes (Betancur, 2002) and support for certain types of shops and services, follow but also anticipate and attract the middle classes into gentrifying neighbourhoods.

Deep changes in social structure (a transition from knowing others and being 'known' in a place, to becoming unknowing and 'unknown') as well as changes in the nature of government intervention (from the familiar, which may be not much at all, to interventions on behalf of and in favour of quite different interests) can amount to a kind of community displacement. While these relations undoubtedly play out in different ways in different contexts—and, of course, even within one place individuals may experience them differently—multiple fine-grained case studies can be expected to reveal patterns, and to alert urban policy makers to any potential pitfalls of imposed social mix and state-supported gentrification 'without displacement'.

With a view to contributing to the small body of work on the lives of long-term low-income residents in gentrifying neighbourhoods, this article draws on interviews that explore notions of sense of place through these residents' daily experiences of shops and meeting places, social structures and local governance. The objective of the inquiry is to establish whether loss of place occurs even when people remain in the same physical space, and to put to the test the notion that security in housing tenure is sufficient to alleviate the pressure of displacement.

Case-study areas and approach

The areas of study were two gentrifying neighbourhoods in Melbourne, Australia: central St Kilda and south-west Fitzroy. St Kilda and Fitzroy are both inner suburbs of Melbourne (see Figure 1). Fitzroy was relatively early to gentrify, in the 1970s, and the process was uneven, with pockets in the south-west of the suburb in particular still in transition (Shaw, 2009). St Kilda gentrified later for a range of complex reasons (Upton, 2001; Shaw, 2005) but when the transformation did arrive in the mid-1990s it was more comprehensive. The neighbourhoods of central St Kilda and south-west Fitzroy have postwar histories characterized by profoundly deteriorated building stock, active street drug trades, prostitution and homelessness. Prior to these periods of extreme disinvestment, St Kilda was treated as a seaside playground for the rest of the city, whereas Fitzroy was a more traditional working-class, industrial area.

Gentrification has transformed parts of both suburbs into some of the most expensive real estate in Melbourne, with attendant increases in conspicuous middle-class consumption. Each of the case-study areas has a main street—Fitzroy Street in central St Kilda, and Gertrude Street in south-west Fitzroy—which is now largely devoted to bars and restaurants and on-street dining. However, the class remakes are not complete in either neighbourhood, and remnants of the disinvested eras are still visible in both. Both suburbs have more recent histories (in the past 30 years) of left-wing socially progressive local governments and embedded, politicized communities (Shaw, 2005;

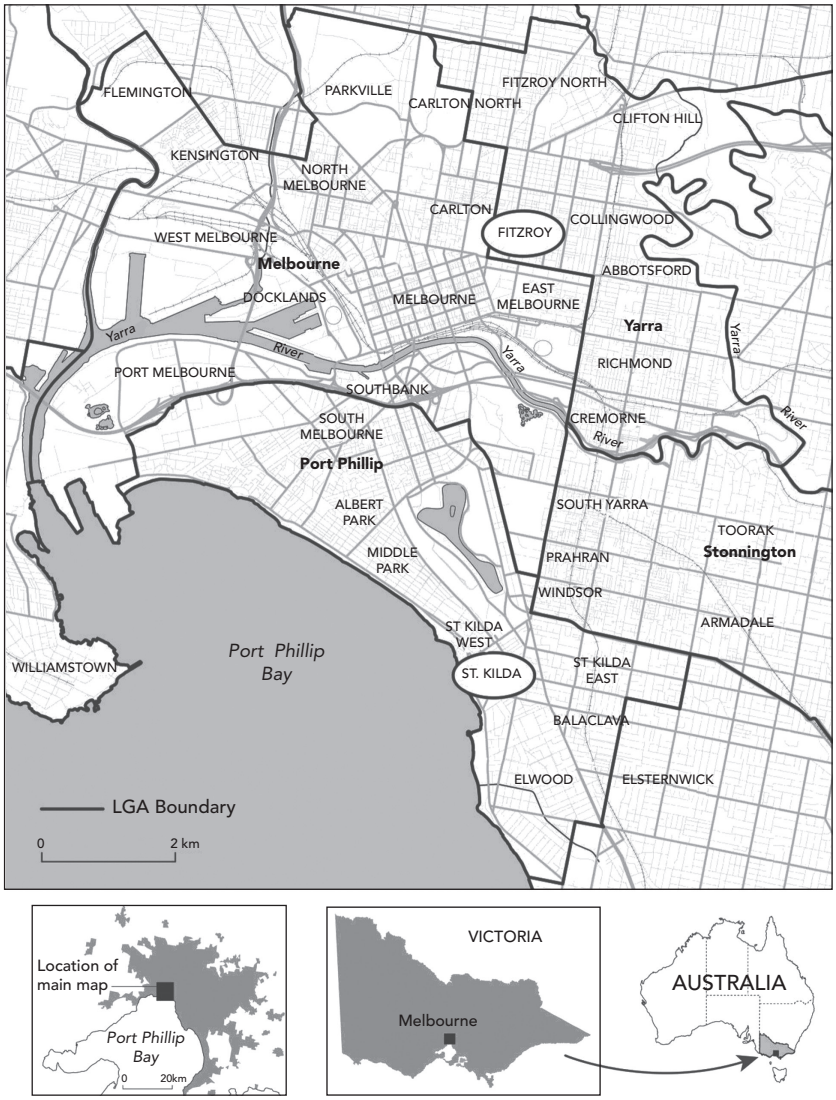

FIGURE 1 The inner metropolitan region of Melbourne (map drawn by Chandra Jayasuriya for the Melbourne School of Land and Environment)

2009). Both have a relatively high number of services for the homeless and for people with drug and alcohol problems, as well as two of the largest local community-housing programmes in Melbourne, developed partly in response to evident physical displacement from these areas in the 1970s and 1980s. In St Kilda the Port Phillip Housing Association, the establishment of which was enabled by the local government, and the state-supported Rooming House Issues Group, provide an important source of community housing and rooming-house accommodation. In Fitzroy, the Yarra Community Housing Group and the church-based Brotherhood of St Laurence are the largest providers of community and aged-care housing. Most of their housing stock is concentrated in the study neighbourhoods. In addition to the obvious gentrifica-

tion in both suburbs, there is a continuing sense in central St Kilda and south-west Fitzroy of persistent and cared-for populations of elderly low-income and more marginalized groups.

Interviews were conducted with 22 long-term low-income residents of secure community housing in these two neighbourhoods. Some have lived in their community-housing unit for many years, others are relatively new to community housing, having been given a place when more recently displaced from private rental accommodation. All are long-term residents of the area. They were contacted through the community-housing providers and invited to participate in the study. Those who responded to the invitation were asked to take photographs to illustrate the places and people they associated with the neighbourhood they moved into, and the places and people they associated with that neighbourhood now. The photographs were used as prompts in a second, in-depth interview, which explored the changes in the area and how the interviewees experienced these.

The approach to the interviews and data analysis is deeply qualitative: we are interested in residents' experiences and how they talk about them. Some are clearly nostalgic. It is not our role to assess how appropriate that nostalgia is nor how objectively verifiable the changes are that they mention. We sought the interviewees' experiences of gentrification; if these are tinged with regret and nostalgia, that is their perception. What follows is a faithful reproduction of the tenor of comments received, contextualized and analysed as necessary, but with the intent of allowing these voices to speak for themselves as much as possible.

Central St Kilda

Shops and meeting places

Shop closures were by far the strongest theme in interviews with St Kilda residents, revealing a substantial impact on low-income people's sense of place. Consistent with international trends, independent shops selling daily products had been slowly declining due to competition with supermarkets. Gentrification escalated this process when retail rents began to rise. Interviewees confirmed the hypothesized dissociation from the transformed neighbourhood, describing the new shops and services in little detail, often by generic type. This interviewee points out both the loss of options and his disconnection from the new retail landscape by describing the current offer of shops as follows:

> *John*: Coffee shops, boutiques, silly present shops, present-for-birthday shops, to be bought at the last minute, expensive clothes shops that I don't go to, restaurants that I can't afford to go to.

The businesses that proclaim gentrification (Bridge and Dowling, 2001) and notionally improve the neighbourhood (Freeman, 2008) clearly deviate from the earlier population's taste and spending power. Interview after interview confirmed that they have less access to affordable products than before the onset of gentrification. In a material sense, the changes are relatively easy to adapt to, as the supermarket remains. However, in the context of meaningful, lived place (Fried, 1963) the neighbourhood is a place that low-income residents feel less attached to:

> *Jan*: I would just like to have some shops like your fruit shops, your butcher. But I can't even see that happening, 'cause if it does happen it'll be an expensive, flashy butcher shop with all the prime cuts and it'll be a big, flashy fruit shop with, you know, the best, firmest, juiciest strawberries or something. So all I could sort of see is St Kilda progressing more for middle-class, wealthy people.

The consequences of the class remake are even more tangible in the hospitality sector. Places to be seen dining and drinking thrive in gentrifying areas (Bridge and Dowling, 2001; Zukin, 2010), and St Kilda is no exception. Despite the huge increase in restaurants, cafés and bars, long-term residents reflected on the fewer places to go out to adding to the loss of social contact they already felt from the relocation of friends and acquaintances. Most of the places that disappeared or had been renovated were those that 'made you feel comfortable' (Jan), 'like our lounge room outside the house, for everybody' (Nicky), places where 'you could sit and think and talk' (Neil), places 'for the average bloke' (Mick).

> *Patricia*: It was a bit dark and dirty. And comfortable, you know. It was in the days when people … didn't have to dress up to go. You know, nobody dressed up to go, they just went there for a drink and say hello to their neighbours.

Low-income residents are inclined to feel out of place now because of the prices, the different style (too formal) and the high-end service that discourages lingering without ordering more food or drinks. Some feel that the new venues actively exclude them by strict door policies that allow only target groups within a particular age group and class:

> *Sheldon*: They never let people like us into their bars. They know that we don't have the money to spend there and we're not dressed well enough or something … but if we walked up to the door with a pommie accent … and they'd know you were backpackers, they'd let you in because they think you got a lot of money to spend. So it's a bit discriminatory in that respect. Whether or not you fit the dress code depends on whether or not you've got money to spend, sort of thing.

Two social venues do remain for low-income residents of St Kilda, in addition to a number of council and church-based drop-in centres and meals programmes for the most marginal (those living on the street or in private rooming houses). The St Kilda bowling club and the Returned Servicemen's League (RSL) club are non-profit social centres for now ageing populations: the bowling club, one of a dwindling string through suburban and rural Australia, is located on public land and managed by a committee of elderly bowlers; the RSL, whose hundreds of clubs are locally run, has its base mainly in second-world-war veterans. As both places are effectively out of the property market they offer low-cost food and drinks and are secure for as long as their management committees persist and their central landowners deem appropriate. In recent decades both clubs' memberships have been boosted by people seeking affordable alternatives to gentrified pubs.

The bowling club was threatened with closure in the 1990s when the state government proposed selling the land for redevelopment. The sale was abandoned after intense community opposition, which included low-income residents and some members of the new middle class, but had at its core those 'marginal gentrifiers' (Rose, 1996) who had moved into the area in the 1970s and 1980s and had also managed to stay. Many were still economically marginal, living in increasingly expensive and insecure private rental housing, and they too relied on low-cost social spaces, which they cohabited with longer-term lower-income residents. Shaw (2009) observes a common interest in such alliances, which is occasionally mobilized to retain low-cost facilities and limit further gentrification. In the absence of the rent increases that have afflicted non-profit and commercial tenants alike on private land, the bowling club and the RSL club have maintained a place for low-income residents of various persuasions in St Kilda who have somehow remained in place.

However, such resistance to gentrification in Melbourne is rare. Despite a widely held antipathy towards the in-movers and their trappings, there is a sense that the class remake is an inevitable consequence of market dynamics:

> *Patricia*: They're not about to cater for poor, little old grannies on a pension, they're there to make money. … Running a tourist area can't be just for people who want a cup of coffee and a pizza.

Even though there were many more businesses catering to and supported by low-income people in St Kilda before its gentrification, some interviewees accept that higher spending power is required to sustain businesses these days. Their sense of out-of-placeness translates into a loss of sense of entitlement. As the neighbourhood becomes more desirable to affluent residents and visitors, some long-term residents question whether they have a right to places to consume and interact in at all. They have started to see their neighbourhood as a tourist area in which they are the guests.

– Social structure and local government

Proponents of social mixing assume that gentrified neighbourhoods become safer (Vigdor, 2002). In some respects this is true for gentrified St Kilda. In the 1960s and 1970s St Kilda was notorious for its drug scene, street sex workers and homeless population. Many narratives of what St Kilda 'used to be like' revolve around the highly visible confrontations between members of this underworld and its associated misery, nuisance, crime and violence. In the absence of effective police control, long-term residents developed coping strategies in the form of networks through which they looked after one another:

> *Libbie*: So you, everyone that lived here would ring and say 'don't go out tonight' … there's something going on at the streets. So basically we had a feel for the area and we always felt safe here.

There was definite distrust of marginalized groups (Sztompka, 1999; Blokland, 2009). At the same time, many of those deemed to be drug addicts, sex workers and homeless people had a regular street presence and gained local residents' trust. By greeting them or having a chat, residents came to know their names. Some considered them 'public characters' who, through mutual familiarity, contributed to the identity, stability, order and, ultimately, safety of the place.

> *Nicky*: It was a really friendly place. It had problems, it had drug problems, it had all those things that St Kilda is known for. But I could walk down the street at any time of the day or night on my own and feel safe. Any time, because I knew that someone was not far off that I knew, you know. And that everybody knew each other and that it was all good.

> *Martina*: We had a homeless guy sleeping there in the car park for several months … so I'd keep an eye on him just to make sure he was ok and, that's what you can do.

Several interviewees expressed concerns about the protection of those who are usually considered a threat to safety. By attributing vulnerability and fear to the most marginalized and seeing them as potential victims, concern replaced feelings of fear. Such attitudes gave a sense of tolerance and a streetwise mentality to long-term residents (Anderson, 1990). Many interviewees observed a contrasting desire for

homogeneity among new middle-class residents with what an interviewee, Richard, described as their 'very suburban, middle-class standards and values'. The unwillingness of middle-class in-movers to adopt the courtesy of greeting local 'characters' was an important issue for many interviewees:

> *Nicky*: We'd say 'hello' to the women at any time of the night. 'How are you going? You're safe, it's all good?' 'Yeah.' 'Any problems? No?' Chitchat on, walking down the street.

Formal management of marginalized groups is a condition for and consequence of gentrification (Mitchell, 1995; Wyly and Hammel, 2005). Recent local government-mediated renovations of public space, through removing benches and discouraging certain gathering places, complement a stronger police presence to 'clean the streets' of problem characters. As interventions in the drug and sex trades improve St Kilda's reputation, newcomers to the area include not only gentrifying in-movers but visitors from other suburbs and tourists who again see St Kilda as Melbourne's playground. This introduces new problems, as these are mainly strangers who are 'yahooing and throwing empty beer bottles into the garden and peeing underneath my letterbox' (John), or 'drinking a lot and making a lot of noise' (Sarah). Such 'gaiety and people being abysmal' (Jan) is more accepted by local government and police as part of an entertainment area (Chatterton and Hollands, 2002), than the nuisance caused by the troubled characters who used to roam the streets. However, for many long-time residents this breaches social order in a much more difficult way than the loitering of the local disaffected. It impedes assessment of people and situations, creating feelings of mistrust (Sztompka, 1999). One interviewee complained about the drinking in public, which bothered him more now that mostly visitors rather than the local characters were doing so:

> *Neil*: They're stupid and everything, but … they're part of the furniture, you know … And they are locals, I suppose you do instinctively somehow look after your—your locals. … But inter-locals, blow-ins coming in and—they could be a bit of a problem, you would say—drink in public and disrespect the feel, you know.

At a certain point, local-government and police interventions are motivated not so much by concerns for safety but by judgements of who should be allowed in public spaces (Mitchell, 1995). This evokes issues of political representation. Many interviews featured accounts of the removal of a public toilet block on a small triangle of land that was used as a gathering place by a group of Aboriginal people. As the number of upmarket restaurants in proximity to the triangle increased, so did complaints from the proprietors. The council eventually removed the toilet block in order to move the Aborigines along. Some residents were dismayed at their disappearance as familiar faces in the neighbourhood, and also at the destruction of a mural that had been painted on the wall:

> *Jan*: They actually painted the toilets in Aborigine designs, it looked fantastic. I really enjoyed these, I used to love going past them on the tram and looking at the paintings. And the council, in their wisdom, decided to remove them. … But they actually had some *real* Aborigine art in Fitzroy Street.

The decision was particularly questionable in light of the council's open encouragement of informal and street art, with designated places and protection of famous pieces of graffiti, for example. It seems that certain forms of 'grittiness' are

FIGURE 2 Homelessness monument, St Kilda (photo by Iris Hagemans, 2011)

accepted and promoted (in the right place) and indeed used to represent St Kilda, and others are not. The simultaneous celebration and displacement of the 'rough side' of St Kilda is visible in a monument to the homeless placed in a park in 2010. The monument is a wood carving representing a person and a dog sleeping rough—a common sight in the main streets of St Kilda a couple of decades ago.

The monument can be used as a bench, but the uneven seat makes it uncomfortable for lying down (see Figure 2). The symbolism of placing a homeless person-proof bench as a monument to the homeless has been observed by someone who wrote on it:

> So this is what we get, well thank you very much, ya can't even sleep on it.

The nature of the local social structure and governance maintains a high degree of order with a veneer of grit, but left our respondents wondering whether this advanced tolerance or displacement.

South-west Fitzroy

– Shops and meeting places

Like St Kilda, local shops for daily products in south-west Fitzroy have been replaced by boutiques with famously cool reputations that are only enhanced by their gritty location. In price and style, they cater to a younger and more affluent crowd. In addition to limiting the shopping options of low-income residents, the changes created a retail landscape they have trouble understanding.

FIGURE 3 The Builders Arms Hotel, Fitzroy (photo by Kate Shaw, 2012)

> *Ron*: I can't see how they're making money, there's only about two or three dresses in the shop. … I don't think I could afford to buy a pair of jeans in there, I don't think I would *find* a pair of jeans in there.

A few low-cost grocery stores remain, however, and the closest supermarket—while something of a walk—meets most shopping needs. The supermarket's managers, interestingly, make a point of ensuring that staff are alert and open to the needs of very low-income residents, and the foyer and street front are a meeting place for marginalized and old people and buskers. The role of the private security guards seems more to keep the peace than to move them on. The ever more prominent hospitality sector, however, is one in which long-term residents feel less at home. The proliferating coffee shops in the main street are not the type of place they visit, being 'not the coffee-drinking people anyway' (Ann). Style differences in cafés, bars and restaurants are reinforced by their significantly younger clientele. Long-term low-income residents are increasingly under-represented in these meeting places:

> *Leigh*: We went down there for dinner one night. And I think we were the oldest ones there, you know. And all these pubs are the same now. I don't think you'd see a 40-year-old in this one here.

Fitzroy's many old pubs and clubs have been comprehensively transformed, such that the earlier population is profoundly out of place there. While a number of venues maintain that everyone is welcome—such as the newly renovated Builders

Arms Hotel (see Figure 3)—the look and feel ensure that this is not quite true. The most marginalized people in Fitzroy drink on the street, and low-income residents drink at home. There is no RSL or bowling club in this part of the neighbourhood, although there are a few social venues, as in St Kilda, run by charitable and council-based organizations, which provide free or very low-cost meals to those on lowest incomes. In the absence of alternatives, these venues, also outside the property market, have become important centres for social life.

> *Worker from St Mary's House of Welcome*: Well, we serve 5,000 meals a month and that increases every year, they can't afford to eat along here. They haven't got the money for 20 dollars main meal and a beer for 8 dollars.

Many of the interviewees mentioned the role of these venues. They attract a diverse crowd, catering to the most marginalized and to securely housed low-income residents, along with other locals who, like the St Kilda bowling club stalwarts, would be best described as marginal gentrifiers dropping in to help, have a chat and a cup of tea. The continuing presence of meeting places such as these reduces the impact of the class transition to the extent that some old-timers are barely aware of it:

> *Bernie*: Everybody says: 'Oh, you're from Fitzroy, you're this and you're that', but you're not. You know, there's good people here, the same as in Toorak [a very wealthy suburb across the river] … You know, the people put you down, if you're from Fitzroy, Collingwood, Carlton [traditionally working-class districts], they put you down.

Notwithstanding the evident gentrification of many parts of the neighbourhood, Fitzroy's long-term low-income residents seem less vulnerable to neighbourhood resource displacement than their St Kilda counterparts, largely because of the persistence of a range of facilities close to their housing that continue to cater to their needs.

– Social structure and local government

The local narrative around the social structure in south-west Fitzroy is partly defined by broad community and council support for the marginalized—the homeless, the drug- and alcohol-affected, and the dwindling dispossessed urban Aboriginal population. Although some interviewees commented on the displacement of Aboriginal people from Fitzroy in particular, most describe their neighbourhood as a place with a still large presence of people on the street and its share of 'public characters'. As in St Kilda, some have come to know the local marginalized people and feel safer for the familiarity:

> *Ann*: To me it's a very safe place to live. If you don't mind stepping over bodies of people spaced out on heroin. You just don't take notice of it or 'oh, excuse me', as they have come up the stairs to shoot up … it doesn't bother me.

Unlike in St Kilda, gentrification in south-west Fitzroy is not characterized by an increasing aversion of late gentrifiers, businesses in particular, to the marginalized population. While there is a regular police presence, the local government strongly supports the drug and alcohol services as well as the local community-housing programme in the area, which recently added 50 units to Gertrude Street with very little opposition. Indeed, the commitment to a place in Fitzroy for marginalized people appears to suit local commercial interests. One of the most expensive restaurants in Melbourne is located across the road from a drug and alcohol centre with a busy

needle exchange. Not only do the contrasting lifestyles not bring complaints from the proprietor, but on several occasions the upmarket restaurant has mobilized its affluent clientele to raise funds to support homeless people (see www.streetsmartaustralia.org). The places of conspicuous consumption in Fitzroy, although way too costly for low-income residents even if they wished to patronize them, are welcomed by those residents to a much larger extent than in St Kilda. Curiously, they are seen by many of our interviewees as supporting the neighbourhood's diversity rather than undermining it:

> *Ron*: That is totally yuppie, but I don't mind that because David Beckham was there, Orlando Bloom was there … and if they want to spend their money in Fitzroy, in Gertrude Street, who am I to stop them? … As I said, the rich people are coming in and they're spending their money, which is welcome, it's going to help the poor. Because their taxes and everything will get in and then the government will have money to build houses for the poor.

Analysis

The gentrification of central St Kilda and south-west Fitzroy has resulted in the loss of most shops and meeting places that catered to low-income people in both neighbourhoods. The range of daily goods and services for long-term low-income residents who have managed to stay has been significantly reduced. Responses from interviewees to the evident class transition—expressed mostly in terms of the conspicuous proliferation of high-end boutiques, cafés and restaurants—confirm the dissociation from the changing neighbourhood observed by Marcuse (1985) and Davidson (2008). Clearly a level of neighbourhood resource displacement is being experienced here, to the extent that some residents question their right to continue to be there. However, the impact of the sense of loss is considerably mitigated in material terms by the persistence of only a few places within walking distance from the clusters of community housing to do daily shopping and meet others. In both places local supermarkets (owned by large national companies that, through their substantial economies of scale, maintain a degree of affordability) provide a reliable source of daily goods and an informal and safe meeting place. A few low-cost grocery stores that so far have also managed to stay in south-west Fitzroy add to the options for residents in that neighbourhood.

The loss of low-cost social venues has deeper implications, with many interviewees feeling actively excluded from the fashionably remade pubs and nightspots in particular. As it is venues such as these in which the most sustained and meaningful social interactions often occur, and which yield memories and expectations of past and future interactions, it is these that generate the strongest attachments. The loss or transformation of places to sit and talk, or have a think without being alone, is shown in the interviews to be quite affecting. Again, this is mitigated by a very limited range of affordable alternatives—the non-profit, locally managed bowling club and RSL club in St Kilda, and the council and church-based social centres in Fitzroy.

The interviews indicate starkly that deconcentration of poverty leads to deconcentration of the familiar. This is hardly surprising—in fact, for the strongest advocates of social-mix policies this is the point—and yet its effect on feelings of safety is rarely the subject of project evaluations, which prefer to focus on changes in crime rate. Familiarity with and in a place and its other inhabitants—knowing and being known—enables a sense of place identity, and is shown here to be essential to individual and collective feelings of safety. The loss of familiarity with place and people was a strong theme in interviews; government and police interventions redefined the parameters within which residents perceived and made sense of

their neighbourhood, changing the way the social structure is negotiated. That the expression of this in St Kilda is at the level of inconvenience rather than related to any sense of threat, and in Fitzroy is even more benign, can be attributed directly to the ongoing presence of community facilities and meeting places that temper the scale and impact of change in both neighbourhoods. These support services and low-cost social venues are crucial to alleviating the feeling of community displacement that would be experienced in their absence. Local governance plays an important role in the continuity thereof.

Government interventions in St Kilda and Fitzroy are shown in this research to be most influential. While the nature of local governance in general can encourage a sense of belonging or community displacement for the incumbent population according to the interests in which it operates, it also affects this sense of belonging directly through the decision to provide and support, or not, services for low-income people. The council for St Kilda is seen as ambivalent, at best, intervening at least as much in favour of new middle-class residents and businesses through its ongoing programme of sanitizing and commodifying difference, while simultaneously funding programmes for the most marginalized. Local governance in the case-study neighbourhood in Fitzroy is more explicitly in the interests of low-income residents, and this shows in the extent to which some interviewees sense no kind of displacement at all. Council approaches to establishing and continuing community-housing and support services, and their influence on styles of policing, have a direct impact on the extent of community displacement.

Local governments can also affect the level of neighbourhood resource displacement. The role of large supermarket chains and the residual presence of low-cost shops in these communities is instructive. In most jurisdictions, planning and urban-design policies regarding lot size and site consolidation determine the presence of large commercial businesses. It is not uncommon in gentrifying neighbourhoods for early and new middle-class gentrifiers to oppose large chains and supermarkets (Caulfield, 1994; Ley, 1996) in favour of small, independent boutique stores. The latter are likely to be more expensive no matter what the product, especially if they themselves are able to remain in place in a gentrifying area, as their prices inevitably reflect the rents. Local regulatory frameworks therefore play a key role in shaping which segments of a population are provided for. Larger supermarkets are usually cheaper, and as they become smaller and more boutique-style their quality and prices increase. Precise offerings and price levels are politically difficult for governments to control in neoliberal times; nevertheless, conditions for relative affordability can be created by allowing strategically located, consolidated sites for specified commercial uses.

The persistence of small grocers in south-west Fitzroy is the result of long-term business owner-occupiers or private rental arrangements that are yet to take advantage of the huge rent gap, which itself is an indication and consequence of the neighbourhood's curiously incomplete gentrification (Shaw, 2009). Either way, they are unlikely to persist very much longer. What are the options when they go? Again, government attempts to micro-manage markets are beset with difficulties. In the past few decades policies for the public provision of services that the market is considered capable of providing have been in global retreat. Yet the evident failure of the market to provide for low-income people is producing a counter-trend, with local councils and non-profit organizations in particular increasing their role in the direct provision of social housing and community spaces. Contemporary urban design frameworks emphasize mixed uses and active street frontages (City of Melbourne, 2006) and it is now common to turn the ground level of new housing developments and conversions over to retail. Some community-housing providers in Melbourne retain ownership of these spaces. Usually they seek high-end retail uses, with the objective of generating

returns or subsidizing the uses above, but an appreciation of neighbourhood resource displacement could shift this approach. A lease to a low-cost food co-op is well within politically feasible boundaries.

The role of the RSL and bowling clubs in St Kilda, and the Brotherhood of St Laurence and other church and council-supported social centres in Fitzroy, is immeasurable in terms of alleviating the impact of gentrification on low-income old-timers in those neighbourhoods. The key to their persistence is, evidently, the model of property ownership. Local governments in Australia are traditionally quite large landholders, as are the churches and the RSL. The RSL in particular is in a precarious situation owing to its ageing and declining national membership, and is beginning to sell its assets. There are many kinds of community sports and cultural clubs with buildings on public land. The opportunities for state and local government and not-for-profit agencies to use their own holdings, acquire those being sold, and assist or partner with community organizations to maintain facilities for low-income people, are many and obvious.

This research shows that secure housing is not sufficient to alleviate the pressure of displacement on low-income residents of gentrifying areas. Although these residents remain in place, the class remake produces a sense of loss of place: of entitlement to be there and be catered for and, through the reduction in the presence of familiar faces and introduction of many new ones, a loss of place identity. Changes in local governance, in turn, appear to produce a sense of loss of control and stability. Neighbourhood resource and community displacement are real, and Marcuse (1985), Davidson (2008) and the place-attachment theorists argue that their impact can be similar to that of physical displacement, producing the feelings of grief associated with any major loss. This clearly does matter, in economic, social and human terms.

There is practical value in the evidence that the continuity, even on a small scale, of key neighbourhood resources and sense of community can prevent these feelings of grief—that as long as there are some places to go to fill basic needs for goods, services and social interaction, and as long as there is a measure of familiarity and safety, the lived experience of low-income people who manage to stay in a gentrifying neighbourhood is relatively benign. If 'gentrification without displacement' is to have any meaning as a policy objective, as much attention must be paid to neighbourhood resources and the conditions for community as to security in housing tenure. Retention and provision of affordable shops and meeting places, maintenance of the familiar in place and community, and government interventions in the interests of low-income residents may not ameliorate the sense of out-of-placeness as a neighbourhood gentrifies, but can significantly reduce its toll.

Conclusion

This article explores notions of social mix, place and displacement among low-income residents of secure community housing in gentrifying neighbourhoods, with the object of establishing whether the absence of physical displacement is sufficient to ameliorate the negative impacts of gentrification. It finds unequivocally that it is not: that to temper these impacts, attention must also be given to local shops and meeting places, and the nature of local social structures and governance. The two case studies show that there are clear disadvantages from urban policies and market-driven strategies that impose social mix by bringing middle-class housing and attendant commercial activities into areas occupied by low-income communities.

This is not to say that there are no benefits from social mix—at the very least, the increased council-rate revenues from the gentrification of the case-study neighbourhoods are helping to fund secure housing and limited services for low-income residents. Indeed, these neighbourhoods in particular could be considered as conducive as any to 'positive gentrification', with their histories of left-leaning local governments

and progressive gentrifiers. Yet the research provides little support for the purported benefits of social mix for the poor beyond the absence of physical displacement. None of the interviewees volunteered comments on the improvements to their lives from the street and landscaping works and infrastructure upgrades. Notions of a 'rub-off work ethic' and 'upward social mobility' plainly have little relevance to these respondents. The political effectiveness of the middle class is seen to be activated almost solely in the interests of the middle class, although economically marginal gentrifiers in both neighbourhoods, more aligned with other low-income residents than the new middle class, play a valuable mobilizing and socializing role.

The phrase 'policy-based evidence' alludes to evidence that supports policies already in effect for reasons other than those sustained by the 'evidence'. On the basis of this research neoliberal urban policies of social mix can be theorized as existing less for the benefit of low-income people than for their contributions to the local tax base and real-estate development in general—as the 'centrepiece of the city's productive economy' (Smith, 2002: 443). More empirical work and independent scholarly evaluations of this question should settle the matter decisively. The preoccupation of much research in the past two decades with the attitudes and lifestyles of 'classic' gentrifiers, however, as Slater observes, has thrown little light on the merits or effects of the driving policies, and has reached the limits of its usefulness.

This article suggests that the benefit presumed to accrue to low-income people who are able to remain in gentrifying neighbourhoods is supposition at best. While there is little if any rigorous evaluation showing evidence of these benefits, a mounting body of critical research questions the foundations of this thinking. We add to that work by examining the effects of gentrification on low-income residents who have managed to stay put by virtue of being provided with secure housing. The research shows that security in housing is not sufficient to alleviate the displacement that comes from the sense of loss of place that Marcuse (1985) and Davidson (2008) anticipate so precisely. Public and non-profit-sector interventions to maintain neighbourhood resources and the conditions for a sense of community among low-income incumbents can certainly reduce the feelings of grief associated with displacement, but advocates for 'gentrification without displacement' would do well to absorb that a sense of out-of-placeness is inextricably entwined with the transformation wrought by gentrification's class remake.

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