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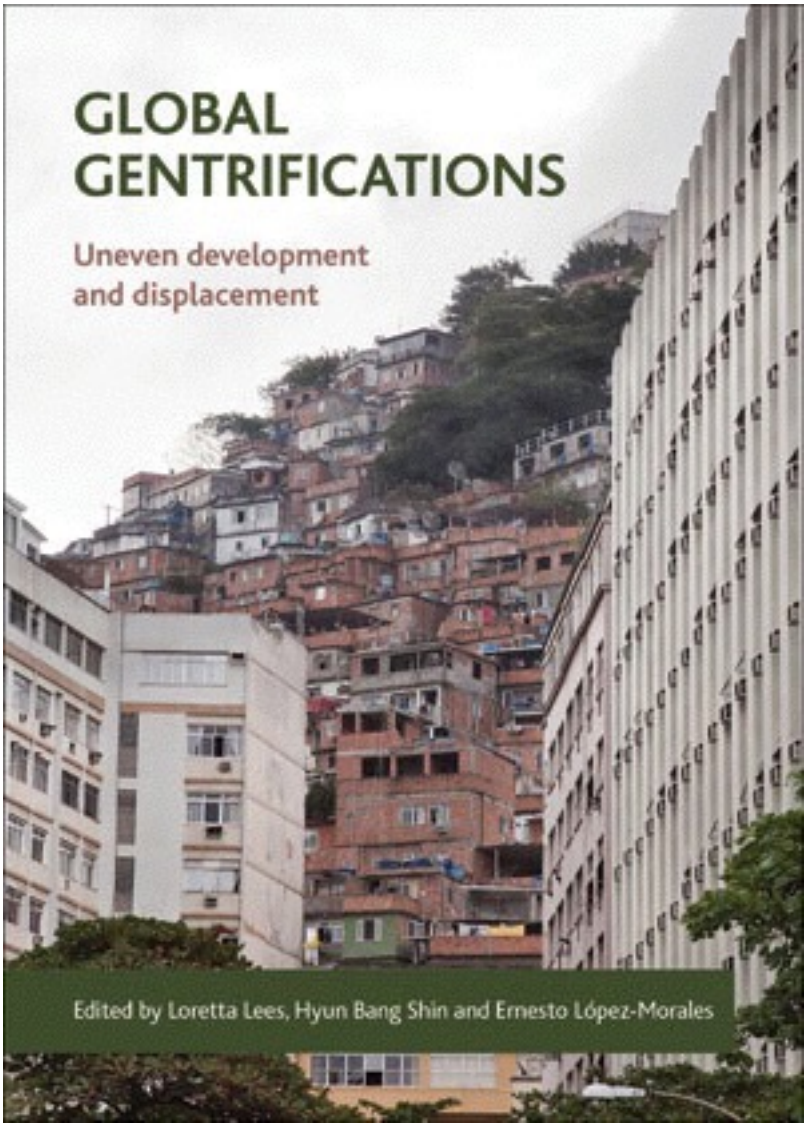
Chapter 22

Conclusion: global gentrifications

Loretta Lees, Hyun Bang Shin and Ernesto López-Morales



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This edited collection has been like a leap onto a moving train, not quite knowing where it might lead, and having only a vague sense of where it has been. It has been exciting and we have learnt a lot.What the different chapters offer is a wider and deeper view of 'gentrification' from around the globe than has been managed to date. However, here, the editors and contributors have done more than merely offer a large number of empirical accounts of the diverse forms of gentrification (and its interaction with other urban processes) around the world. In this conclusion, drawing on Ward (2010), we conceptualise and theorise back from the different empirical cases in this book to reveal what we have learned from looking at gentrification globally, and from comparing beyond the usual suspects.

The chapters in this edited collection show that a vast number of cities around the world, from Mumbai to Rio de Janeiro, from Santiago to Cape Town, from Buenos Aires to Taipei, are simultaneously experiencing intensive and uneven processes of capital-led restructuring with significant influxes of upper- and middle-income people and large doses of class-led displacement from deprived urban areas.The chapters show the uneven development of global gentrification connected to planetary urbanisations, and a significant number of these are in the vein of neo-Haussmannization (Merrifield, 2013a, 2013b) through processes of 'accumulation by dispossession' (Harvey, 2003). This exploitative process of value extraction from the built environment is a phenomenon that has been in place in the Global South for some time now but has often been overlooked by urban researchers, though work is emerging (see Shin, 2009, 2014; López-Morales, 2010, 2011; Goldman, 2011; Desai and Loftus, 2013). Globally, the process of value extraction has been accelerated, unevenly, by the faster pace of financial capital mobility invested in real estate circuits of capital, by rampantly entrepreneurial urban policies, by the lack of available land for the urban expansion that many cities are experiencing and by the increasing cost of peripheral (suburban) expansion and long-distance transportation (re-emphasising the importance of the notion of 'spatial capital' vis-a-vis gentrification; see Rerat and Lees, 2011). This intense intervention in the built environment and especially in residential and commercial

landscapes is something that previous urban and political theories in Latin America and Asia have little explained, but it is our conclusion that a properly understood and hermeneutically adapted gentrification studies, in conjunction with a well-founded critique of political economy (eg Henri Lefebvre,David Harvey and Neil Smith),can effectively explain and predict it. The phenomenon of gentrification is global to an extent that urban spaces around the world are increasingly subject to global and domestic capital (re)investment to be transformed into new uses that cater to the needs of wealthier inhabitants. Indeed, it has become an important process in the growing inequality of cities and societies worldwide.

The chapters in this book however show that statements about gentrification arriving in the Global South and East need to be rethought, and that there is no simple trajectory.We find that there are multiple gentrifications in a pluralistic sense rather than 'Gentrification' with a capital 'G'.The trajectories are affected by the ascendancy of neoliberal policy ideas, especially revanchist behaviours on public space aimed at propping up or instigating gentrification (as seen in the chapters on Athens, Madrid, Puebla,Taipei and Karachi). Such multiplicities require gentrification researchers to undertake fresh debate on the control and privatisation of public space in relation to gentrification and in the context of: a) places that do not follow theWestern democratic conception of a democratic public space (in some places, there is no direct translation for the Western notion of 'public space') based on the Greek agora and the democratic public sphere; b) places where a welfare state has been absent or poorly developed; and c) places where dwellings and land are subject to commodification (eg in post-socialist economies) and intense speculation. The transnational mobility of gentrification or its endogenous emergence is complex: first, the process is not always North to South (as shown in the capital and design ideas moving from Dubai to Karachi); second, the process sometimes emerges in an endogenous way as part of city-making in times of condensed urbanisation and late industrialisation (as seen in the chapters on Seoul and Taipei; see also Shin, 2009); and, third, sometimes policymakers are not involved in the expansion of gentrification, for other drivers or agents creating gentrification are the learnings and desires due to the global mobility of people – eg Israelis living in

gentrified areas of cities like London and NewYork City taking ideas about gentrification with them to Israel. Here, the gentrifiers' desires are not politically anti-suburban (eg as seen in Caulfield, 1989), but rather desires for sameness, the sameness of the now internationally recognisable, Western gentrified inner-city neighbourhood. Furthermore, fourth, the global circulation of corporate capital seeking out profit has become increasingly important, for example, money from the Middle East (Dubai) funding gentrification in Karachi, Pakistan. Last, but not least, we have learnt that the contradictions in the indigenous logics of accumulation and urban politics play a pivotal role in producing, slowing down and resisting gentrification (as the chapter on Cairo demonstrates).

As Eric Clark (2005) once suggested, gentrification is not confined to the inner city, but can be suburban and rural too, as the chapters on Egypt and Israel show. As Martin Phillips (2004) urged some time ago now, 'other geographies of gentrification' need to be brought into the mainstream literature on gentrification. Phillips's plea now has new urgency not just in light of the expansion of gentrification spatially,but also due to recent proclamations about the expansion (or the 'explosion and implosion') of urbanisation processes that go beyond city boundaries (see, eg, Keil, 2013; Brenner, 2014).The gentrification process itself has become much more suburban and multi-centric (rather than focused on the inner city as a singular centrality). The conventional Western distinctions between inner city and suburb make less sense globally, and, indeed, are more complex in the Global South (but also the Global North) these days. In many ways, scholars from the South have come to pay more attention to the close relation between gentrification and peripheral suburbanisation, though the question about where the poor go after being displaced from central areas is still relatively under-researched. Governments and businesses are increasingly mobilising their power and resources to intervene in the real estate sector for extracting exchange value, and there seem to be no geographical restrictions (at least in principle,though there is an emergent urban social mobilisation to fight speculation) on the target areas of such intervention. Gated communities on city peripheries can be examples of gentrification in the same vein as those in city centres. Indeed, the dialectical play between these two in cities

like Buenos Aires, Cairo and Abu Dhabi need further investigation.The chapters in this book have underlined for us that we are at a point in time when the extension of urbanism has meant that (Anglo-American and beyond) processes and categories like suburbanisation, gentrification, urban regeneration and informal urbanism are increasingly blurred.

Maloutas (2012) has argued that the idea of urban regeneration as gentrification may not be adequate to travel around the world.He is concerned that gentrification scholars are projecting onto different forms of urban regeneration the features of gentrification's dominant conceptualisation. However, the chapters in this book show that although the 'actually existing' gentrifications in the Global South do not necessarily resemble those previously found in the Global North, it is obvious that they are embedded in contexts that are largely characterised by the state-led class restructuring of urban space intertwined with speculative land/housing markets and a growing lack of affordable housing and spaces for social reproduction. In fact, it is evident from the chapters that urban regeneration and urban renewal globally have become major facilitators of gentrification. Merrifield (2013a, p 52) has recently used the (Global North) term 'neo-Haussmannization' to describe this, arguing that neo-Haussmannization is now a global urban strategy that has peripheralised millions of people everywhere. In many places, especially in East Asia, as the chapters on Taipei and Seoul in this book testify to, this has some real resonance. Of course, this does not mean that we should automatically assume that any form of urban regeneration or urban renewal everywhere is a case of gentrification,only a poor scholar would do that,but it does seem more often to be the case.It is as if governments and policymakers around the world are hoodwinked by policies that ultimately produce gentrification and can see no alternative, a hoodwinking that is even more problematic when situated in the current context of social and economic crisis for many nations around the world. Different forms of urban renewal also result in different types of policy interventions, as well as the mobilisation of factions of capital. While urban renewal projects involving the large-scale, wholesale clearance and reconstruction of neighbourhoods require large businesses (eg the construction firms affiliated with large conglomerates in Seoul or Abu Dhabi), the urban conservation of historic neighbourhoods often involves smaller capital that aims to exploit the niche market

left unturned by large businesses (see, eg, Shin, 2010).A deeper comparison of these two different types of gentrification in, for example, Chile – large-scale new-build (see López-Morales, 2010, 2011) and small-scale commercial and niched (see the chapter on Santiago in this book) – is much needed.There has not been enough research into the impact of scale on capital mobilisation and displacement.

So, what makes a case of urban regeneration a process of gentrification? We claim that it is 'social cleansing' – the class-related conflicts often channelled as processes of class-led displacement (Roderos [2013] makes a similar case for Manila in the Phillipines). Maloutas (2012) has argued that the label 'gentrification' is ideological and political, and that its use projects onto other forms and processes 'the features of gentrification's dominant conceptualization as a process fuelled by neoliberal policies' (Maloutas, 2012, p 42). We do not have a problem with this, and would underline the political significance of the term itself for not just the Global North (see Davidson and Lees, 2005; Lees et al, 2008), but also the Global South. As Shin (2009) argues, gentrification policies show the strong arm of the developmental state, with its national goals of increased housing production and rising homeownership, albeit at the cost of social redistribution. Indeed, accumulation through property development has been a significant goal of many developmental states. As attested to by Lees's (2014a, 2014b) work on council tenants being socially cleansed from inner London by gentrification, what Hyra (2008) has called the 'new urban renewal' in the US, tenants need to know when urban regeneration *is* gentrification and that it is not a good thing! Then they can fight it for what it is, not what it is pretending to be. However, even urban renewal must be understood in ways different from how it has been conceived in the Global North, and scale is again important, for in the neoliberalised South, urban renewal can be entrepreneurial and piecemeal speculative redevelopment or it can be more large-scale, entwined with land-grabbing and large capital.

There are also epistemological (even generational) hurdles that need to be overcome to critically understand class-led urban change in an increasingly urbanised world. Early in

2013, one of the editors of this book was confronted by an infamous development geographer towards the end of his long career who vehemently rejected that 'slum gentrification' existed. This is an example of how part of the already-established academia reacts when new evidence contradicts established urban categorisations that nonetheless prove to be of little use in explaining current processes of displacement-led urban change. The fact is that there has only been occasional and limited discussion about displacement and redevelopment-led exclusion in Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. Moreover, depoliticised urban research has tended to characterise contemporary academic practices in these regions due to various political constraints and market logics that place academics in increasingly precarious and vulnerable positions. Critical researchers in the South often have to ameliorate their perspectives so that they can apply for research funding, as states at various scales adopt 'gentrification as a housing policy' and therefore have 'little self-interest in collecting the kind of data that documents the level of displacement and the fate of displacees, data that would be tantamount to exposing the failure of these policies' (García-Herrera et al, 2007, p 280).

The use of 'slum' terminology helps researchers understand the relationship between class-led displacement and informality, but it is necessary to refrain from overgeneralisation as we do not want the term 'slum' to become the label for everything related to high levels of urban informality outside of the Global North. In fact, a much deeper understanding of the causes, effects and characteristics of urban change in 'slums' is urgently needed. Significantly, low-income settlements known as 'slums' or 'favelas' in some parts of the globe are often more resilient to gentrification due to their fragmented land and tenures, as well as social stigma and segregation (as the chapter on Rio de Janeiro discusses). However, many others are demolished as part of infrastructure provision (eg motorways) or urban beautification (eg public parks and amenities). In addition, significantly, slum/
barrio/favela gentrification has become a significant feature of gentrification in the Global South since the 1990s, as 'slums' have become increasingly subject to urban policies that aim to demolish them to make way for real estate projects for higher-income groups (see the chapters on Lisbon and Lagos, where slum gentrification is seen as modernisation). Of

course, gentrification in the Global North has a long history of locating in inner-city slums – let us not forget that the Lower East Side in New York City was a slum, as was Islington in London – but many of the slums now gentrifying in the Global South are much larger in size and population and the racial- and class-based politics are quite different (as the chapter on India discusses).

In this book, there are discussions of slum gentrification in Brazil, Portugal, Nigeria, South Africa, India and so on (the gentrification of low-income quarters in Southern Buenos Aires can, in many ways, be seen as slum gentrification too). A key tactic in 'slum gentrification' is that despite their potential to be upgraded and remain as stable neighbourhoods, low-income dilapidated settlements are often socially constructed and stigmatised as slums by the local state to justify their demolition (as the chapter on Lisbon shows well). Low-income, informal settlements often occupy strategic locations in cities, and, as such, they become potentially profitable sites for capital investment, thus attracting selective intervention by the state and capital. As the chapter on Brazil shows, the new culture of favela chic in Rio de Janeiro, which, to some degree, protects slums from demolition, still nevertheless leads to gentrification, in similar vein to the pioneer gentrifications in the inner-city slum areas of Western cities in the 1960s and 1970s. The use of geographical knowledge by the state and businesses, as discussed by Christophers (2010), has some useful implications in this regard. The stigmatisation and social construction of low-income settlements as slums takes place not only in the Global South, but also in the Global North (as Lees [2014a] shows in the case of the Aylesbury Estate, the largest public housing estate in Europe) and Chicago (on Cabrini Green, see Lees et al, 2008; see also Hyra, 2008).What all this demands is not only that the gentrification literature needs to engage properly with the slum literature, as Lemanski (2014) has tried to do in the context of 'downward raiding' on slums in South Africa, but that there also needs to be better engagement between the slum literatures in the Global North and the Global South – an endeavour that partly responds to Ananya Roy's (2009) call for 'new geographies of imagination and epistemology'. In addition, slum gentrification is taking place not only within inner cities,

but also on city fringes and on the slum peripheries of cities in the Global South, and even the Global North.Slum gentrification and rapid peripheral urbanisation are common development features not just in the economically 'emerging' societies of Asia and some parts of Africa, but in cities in the Global North too, and this is creating new kinds of effects and different results.

One feature of gentrification in the Global South that quickly became apparent in the production of this book is the expropriation of public land and housing for gentrification. Like in the Global North (as seen in mixed communities policies, see Bridge et al, 2011), this includes public housing being offered up by the state for gentrification (as seen in Taipei), and also military land (as seen in Karachi) and military housing (as seen in Lagos) being offered up for gentrification. The forceful acquisition of non-market properties and their release for capital (re)investment indicates that dispossession acts as an important precondition for subsequent gentrification.This tallies with the argument made by Macleod and Johnstone (2012, p 1) that accumulation by dispossession 'licenses state-orchestrated gentrification' in post-industrial cities in the UK. López-Morales (2010, 2011) has also called this 'gentrification by ground rent dispossession', in relation to the class-monopoly accumulation of land value in Santiago's inner area. These discussions suggest that we need to pay attention to other urban processes and theories at work, which can complement gentrification theories. Indeed, this is one of the questions that this book raises, and it is also the point strongly emphasised by some of the contributors in this volume (see Doshi on India and Ren on China). Building on this perspective further, gentrification often works in tandem with other urban processes and state projects in the Global South in
particular, involving the production of particular state spaces and the establishment of state legitimacy. This is another area of research that requires further attention from urban researchers in both the Global North and the Global South, and we expect further theorisation to emerge from both areas in the near future.

There are evidently different types of state-led gentrification worldwide that warrant further investigation and some new typologies, for example, 'modernising gentrification', 'authoritarian gentrification' and so on. To date, the extant gentrification literature has been largely dominated by discussions of residential gentrification, but 'other' gentrifications, for example, commercial, retail and tourist gentrifications,which have had less presence in the gentrification literature to date, have become increasingly important processes in many cities worldwide operating under various types of political regimes. Indeed, in some Latin American cities like Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires and Santiago de Chile, and European cities like Madrid, these gentrification processes are sometimes more important than residential gentrification in certain neighbourhoods. A discussion of tourist gentrification must engage with the recent discussions of 'slum tourism' (see the special issue of *Tourism Geographies*, 2012), as the chapter on Rio de Janeiro testifies to. Very little has been written on'tourist gentrification'(Gotham,2005) in either the Global North or Global South, and it is time for gentrification studies to talk to tourism studies and heritage studies, and vice versa. Finally, the as-yet-under-studied relationship between residential and employment issues with respect to gentrification deserves our attention (see the cases of Cairo or Santiago de Chile). Indeed, the chapter on Seoul shows not only that businesses were displaced in the process of gentrification, but also that the economic 'trickle-down' promised from gentrification did not happen, echoing findings emerging about economic trickle-down theory in the West.

The gentrification stories collated in this book urge us to underline Slater's (2006, 2009) plea for more research on displacement. The displacements are different in type (residential, commercial, retail, public space, community, racist, classist), scale (some are small-scale, some are mega-displacements), operation (the ins and outs of how people are actually displaced legally and physically) and impact (on home/residence, employment [past job and any future job], small businesses and intergenerational cohabitation [extended families living near to each other]). As Ley and Teo (2014) point out, in the Global South, eviction and demolition is perhaps more naturalised as an inevitable part of life, and eviction for publicly initiated urban renewal opens up opportunities for negotiations that can lead to

improved public housing accommodation in cities like Hong Kong (even if,in reality,this is for a few,not the many).As such,when conflict arises, it is usually about the scale of the (monetary and/or in-kind) compensation package rather than the eviction itself. However, it needs to be noted that the politics of displacement accompany both consensus (as seen in the rise of a particular 'culture of property' in Ley and Teo's discussion of Hong Kong) *and* the use of force and coercion, especially in the context of urbanisation by authoritarian non-democratic states.These complexities are important and can have an impact on attempts to resist gentrification.

Resistance to gentrification seems to have been both significant (eg Istanbul, Karachi, Seoul) and possibly even more successful in the Global South (eg Karachi, Seoul). The 'Right to the City' idea that emerged in the West and has travelled to Asia, South Africa and Latin America may not, however, serve post-colonial cities (eg like Mumbai) well, where the promise of development/modernisation holds sway and identity politics are significant. Some may even argue that the 'Right to the City' is a white, middle-class, Western European idea (see the chapter on India). Even housing activists working on the social cleansing of London's council estates have issues with it, seeing it as a trendy, bourgeois project (see Lees, 2014a, 2014b), though some social movements in Latin America use it along with the term 'gentrification' for their claims (López-Morales, 2013). Nevertheless,if we conceptualise gentrification as defined by capital reinvestment in the built environment accompanying the displacement of existing users, be they inhabitants or workers (see also Clark, 2005), the main tenets of the 'Right to the City', which emphasise the taking back of the power to produce space from the state and capital, may still hold. How these tenets are going to be realised and the 'Right to the City' put into practice in urban strategies remains subject to various interpretations and disputes. Resistance needs to be contextualised in each locality, critically understanding the temporal and spatial dimensions of urban problematics and historicising the ways in which rights claims have been exercised (for discussions on China's experience, see Shin, 2013, 2014).

This book shows a number of different examples of impeded gentrification – as caused by war and civil unrest (Damascus and Cairo) or public protest (Seoul and Karachi).The economic crisis may have stalled gentrification in some cities around the world, but it has also triggered gentrification in, for example, Athens or Madrid,where the arrival of so-called *buitre* (vulture) speculative foreign funds is helping to accumulate devalued properties and causing the transformation of once lower-income residential neighbourhoods into commercial areas, like the post-crisis scenario did in areas of NewYork City in the 1970s and 1980s. In fact, we think that the scope of Ley and Dobson's (2008) discussion of 'gentrification limited', that is, of the contexts of impeded gentrification, needs to be expanded with further research.The experiences of economic crisis in many Asian cities in the 1990s and 2000s also indicate that speculative real estate markets quickly followed economic crisis, prompting a further round of commercial real estate projects that resulted in gentrification (see, eg, the chapters on Seoul and Taipei; see also Lützeler, 2008; Shin, 2009; Ley and Teo, 2014). Finding out much more about what limits, stalls and even stops gentrification, but also how crises push it forward, is important in the global fight against it.

One of our goals, and a very difficult one at that, was the post-colonial challenge of 'decentering the reference points for international scholarship' (Robinson, 2006, p 169); to that end, some genuinely alternative starting points can be excavated from these chapters.We could, for example, compare processes between cities through unlikely comparisons, for example, focusing on war zones or military lands.An important thematic across the chapters is that in the context of different forms of political order or state (authoritarian, informalised, corrupt, centralised, etc) and different dynamics of land use or property development, the processes of urban change require different kinds of rubrics of interpretation than found in current analyses of gentrification, but also, in some cases, the same rubrics of interpretation already found in the gentrification literature.There is some indication that an exploration of the early 20th-century experiences of displacement and urban social change across many former colonies and other 'developing' contexts might reveal much longer and more situated histories to urban processes there, in contrast to the

idea of the globalisation of gentrification from its Western origins. Unfortunately, researchers like Maloutas (2012), in their search for context-dependent attachment, disempower global debate and weaken the comparative and explanatory possibilities that gentrification theory offers, especially in times where fast-expanding neoliberal policy prescriptions and financial capital are reproducing similar trends of displacement and exclusion in a wide array of different cities across the world.

At the end of the day, gentrification around the globe is an essentially simple concept and few would disagree with Clark's (2005, p 258) definition:

> Gentrification is a process involving a change in the population of land-users such that the new users are of a higher socio-economic status than the previous users, together with an associated change in the process, not least because the more powerful the new users are, the more marked will be the concomitant change in the built environment. It does not matter where, it does not matter when. Any process of change fitting this description is, to my understanding, Gentrification.

Furthermore, as Henri Lefebvre (2003) and David Harvey (1978) argued at different times, post-industrial cities in the West saw the retreat of industrial production and the switching of capital into the secondary circuit of the built environment (especially the real estate sector), with the resulting speculation breeding gentrification. Such a rise of the real estate sector has also become the main feature of urbanisation in the Global South and the Global East, and it fits our understanding of gentrification. Given that the rise of the secondary circuit of the built environment and the real estate sector is geographically uneven, it is important to understand the geographically and historically uneven ways in which various agents of capital investment, as well as the functions of a range of state apparatuses and hegemonic ideologies,have contributed to both the safeguarding and reproduction of (often speculative) investment in the built environment.

By way of conclusion, we agree with Atkinson (2003, p 2347) that 'the problem of gentrification is less its conceptualization and more about the need for a project which will begin to address the systematic inequalities of urban society upon which gentrification thrives'.This should be the research agenda now,and gentrification scholars should be at the forefront of pushing for more just urban policies and programmes worldwide.They should also help inform anti-gentrification movements with global evidence while reflecting on their own local realities. At the same time as we distance ourselves from specificities and particularities in the descending process of abstraction to come to a consensus on a core definition of gentrification, we need to ascend to the reality of the cases in this book to contextualise the rise of gentrification (almost always in tandem with other urban processes) in particular places and make our anti-gentrification strategies attuned to local specificities. In fact, we have used what we have learned by editing this book to inform a new book on Global gentrifications and comparative urbanisms (Lees et al, forthcoming), where we have the space to expand on the lessons outlined the built environment through a reinvestment in fixed capital. The greater the difference in socio-economic status, the more noticeable here. While we do not claim that gentrification is the only process that requires our attention, the intensifying struggles over who is in control of our everyday space certainly highlight that gentrification is one of the key battlegrounds in the contemporary world. As the late Neil Smith (1996, pp 185–6) argued:

> I do not think it makes sense to dissolve all these experiences into radically different empirical phenomena. It seems to me that it is of primary importance to retain a certain scalar tension between, on the one hand, the individuality of gentrification in specific cities, neighbourhoods, even blocks, and on the other hand a general set of conditions and causes (not every one of which may always and necessarily be present) which have led to the appearance of gentrification across several continents, at approximately the same time.The power of a more general theoretical stance is augmented by the suppleness that comes from a sensitivity to the details of local experience – and vice versa.

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