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Beyond Anglo-American Gentrification Theory*

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Introduction

Has gentrification 'gone global? Has it diffused from its usual suspects (e.g., London and New York City) to other non-Anglo-American cities that are more peripheral to global capitalism? What is the meaning of gentrification as a “global urban strategy”, which is seen now as a relatively structuralist interpretation by the late Neil Smith (2002)? Does it mean gentrification as a neoliberal urban policy colonising cities outside the core of global capitalism? Or, does it mean that the dominant epistemological horizon has expanded to be more inclusive of non-Anglo-American cities that have seen (historic) endogenous urban processes akin to gentrification? And, what do scholars in the global North understand about gentrification processes taking place in emergent cities in the global South, some of which they may not even locate on their world map?

In this chapter, we discuss what it means to study gentrification beyond the Anglo-American domain, emphasising the possibility of gentrification mutating across time and space, in the same way any other social phenomena associated with the changing nature of capitalism goes through mutation. We also question here why academia should maintain the Anglo American cultural region as a necessary comparative framework to talk about gentrification elsewhere. Gentrification is now embedded in urbanisation processes that bring together politics, culture, society and ideology. Such urbanisation is uneven and place-specific, thus displaying multiple trajectories, hence there is a need to provincialise

(c.f. Chakrabarty, 2000; or Lees, 2012) gentrification as we know it (namely, the rise of gentrification in plural forms or in other words, *provincial* gentrifications). However, we argue this must be done without losing the most critical aspects of gentrification that need to be investigated, namely the class remaking of urban space. For us, gentrification is a reflection of broader political economic processes that result in the unequal and uneven production of urban(ising) space, entailing power struggles between haves and have-nots, be they disputes over the upgrading of small neighbourhoods or larger clashes related to social displacement experienced at the metropolitan or even regional scale.

In this chapter, we focus on four key issues. Firstly, we discuss the epistemology of comparative gentrification studies, explaining what it means to think of gentrification in pluralistic perspectives. In doing so, we remain conscious of how gentrification reflects the more fundamental shift in politics and economics through active circuits of (real estate) capital and policies, which are often dominated by national and transnational economic elites in spite of wide-spread dispossession of people across the Global South; thus we call for *planetary* thinking of gentrification (Lees et al., 2016). Secondly, related to the first point, we discuss the linguistics of gentrification, questioning the extent to which gentrification can be a useful conceptual tool to analyse urban processes in places where gentrification as an expression cannot be easily translated into local expressions. Thirdly, we ascertain the importance of scrutinising the role of the state and the workings of political elites, for they collectively play a pivotal role in (re-)imagining city-making and deciding how resources are to be allocated in terms of production and consumption. Fourthly, we further elaborate on the state question in gentrification research. The state in the global South has been of greater significance in gentrification processes because of the vulgar nature of capitalism lacking a historical compromise between dominant and subordinate classes. Finally, we conclude the chapter by thinking about what possibilities there are for seeing social conflicts through the lens of gentrification and how anti-gentrification struggles could be positioned in a broader scheme of societal transformation and defending the right to the city in a manner that is far more socially just than what the current stages of capitalism allow for.

An Epistemology of Comparative Gentrification Studies

Some urban researchers have been struggling to come to terms with regards to the suitability of a gentrification framework as a useful lens to analyse processes of urban

restructuring outside of the global North. Some still see gentrification (somehow unimaginatively) as associated only with specific spatio-temporal contexts, not susceptible to transfer to elsewhere outside the usual suspects. These sceptics have mechanically interpreted London and New York City as the only emblems of gentrification. This is an extreme perspective on gentrification, that treats it as a historic-cultural process associated primarily with inner-city London in the 1960s (e.g., Maloutas, 2012). Viewed this way, the process of gentrification is effectively fossilised, and disavowed of any applicability outside of a particular time and place/space: it is thus rendered lower than a 'mid-range concept.'

Some sceptics further argue that gentrification is a micro-economic process involving formal property rights and playing out in formal real estate markets only (e.g., Ghertner, 2015). Such a viewpoint reflects confusion in the midst of its attempt to intertwine reductionist theorisation of urban change with the rich Marxist interpretations of gentrification, and displays a tendency (1) to regard cities in the global South as qualitatively different and isolated from more general process of capitalist accumulation; (2) to treat slums and informal settlements as distinct urban spaces where logics of capital accumulation cannot penetrate; (3) to disregard how deeply market and non-market processes are entangled in the same way, how formal and informal processes are fused together in the global economy; (4) to understate how much the operation of speculation and landlordism can be prevalent in informal settlements. From this perspective, any effort to apply the gentrification lens to other geographical contexts outside of the UK (and possibly North America) is seen as the imposition of Anglo-American hegemony. But adhering to such a perspective would also make it difficult to understand that the commodification of decommmodified housing stocks has been a major thrust of gentrification in London too, as witnessed by the gentrification of council housing estates (Lees, 2014). It also ignores the many other comparable precedents in North America, as well as in Latin America and Asia from the 1970s (Janoschka et al., 2014). The variegated ways in which those occupying informal, non-market housing are dispossessed of their rights in many parts of the world are part and parcel of gentrification processes (see Lees et al., 2015).

Those who deny the application of 'gentrification' to non-Western cities should perhaps revisit the history of how the concept has evolved within the confines of the so-called global North. By the 1970s, gentrification as a term and concept was appropriated by critics on the other side of the Atlantic, discussed in the context of mainly New York City

but also other major cities in the eastern US, and indeed Canada. A number of young North American urban scholars saw gentrification as having resulted from two major forces inherent to capitalism: (1) the socio-cultural transformations in the aftermath of the 'baby boom' era; (2) the emerging importance of the real estate sector that took advantage of widening rent gaps. For more than two decades, gentrification debates battled back and forth over the 'post-industrial, new middle class' thesis and the 'rent gap exploitation' thesis over what had caused the rise of gentrification (see Lees, Slater and Wyly, 2008). Importantly, both hypotheses never questioned the stretching of the gentrification concept beyond the domain of inner-city London in the 1960s; they were more concerned about the North American particularities that gave rise to a particular form of mutated gentrification (Ley, 1980, Smith 1979; also see Slater, 2006, for a full account of this historical debate). In a similar vein, readers should not be surprised by the scale and nature of contemporary gentrification in London, where expensive, new-build, often high-rise redevelopment came to dominate (Davidson and Lees, 2010). This mutation has been supported by both New Labour and Tory policies of housing privatisation and individual responsibility, and has led to soaring housing prices, severe unaffordability issues, and unprecedented rates of displacement, not only of the most deprived segments of society but also of the relatively affluent middle classes.

The fossilisation of gentrification also makes it difficult for critics to understand how urban processes coined as gentrification (especially with its focus on real estate capital, the recomposition of class, displacement of original land users and space commodification) have become increasingly pronounced in Asian and Latin American cities. For decades, a large number of non-Anglo-American cities have undergone substantial socio-spatial changes due to intensive state-led and/or private-led investment (often built upon growth coalitions between endogenous political and business elites), which have resulted in upward and unequal social re-stratification of neighbourhoods, *favelas*, *gecekondus* and *lilong* (Lees et al., 2015; López-Morales, 2016a, forthcoming; Sánchez and Broudehoux, 2013). There is a whole new global context which is seeing the predominance of capital over publicly oriented policy decisions regarding the use of urban space as an asset for the sake of capital accumulation: this is, however, nothing more than the corollary of decades of advancement of a relatively ample and adaptive array of state discourses and policies that range from extreme free-market ideology or neoliberalism (Harvey, 2005) to market-oriented state developmentalism in the case of East Asia (Shin et al., 2016). Around the

world, gentrification – as an explicit or implicit, or even as a hidden discourse – has become a major justification and goal for urban redevelopment in economies that depend heavily on the circulation of capital for commodification and exploitation of already urban or urbanising space.

The Linguistics of Gentrification

Attempts to investigate and conceptualise gentrification in non-Anglo-American cities faces some familiar criticisms, eg. that gentrification is difficult to translate into other languages as the term is too UK-specific. But, does it really matter whether or not gentrification as a term exists in a particular locality? Comparative urban studies on gentrification have produced significant achievements, calling for a more generic definition of gentrification to be adopted (Clark, 2005) and asking researchers to pay attention to conjunctural factors that give rise to locally tuned process of gentrification or actually existing gentrification.

Once we rescue gentrification from its confinement to the place specificities of 1960s London, and build upon the achievements of 20-30 years of comparative gentrification studies, we can broadly define gentrification as "the commodification of space accompanying land use changes in such a way that it produces indirect/direct/symbolic displacement of existing users and owners by more affluent groups" (Shin et al., 2016: 458; see also the categories proposed by Janoschka et al., 2014). This is in line with Clark's (2005) call not to equate Ruth Glass's particularistic coining of the concept with its origin, calling instead for a more theoretically productive and intellectually inspiring "generic gentrification" (Clark, 2015) that can be applied as both an analytical tool and empowering political goal for the local grassroots to defeat, impede or regulate. The key to this perspective is the realisation that generality and particularity are not mutually exclusive and can co-exist in theoretical and political realms. Similar awareness can be considered as one of the major tenets of comparative studies on gentrification; building on the late Doreen Massey who once argued that "interdependence [of all places] and uniqueness [of individual places] can be understood as two sides of the same coin, in which two fundamental geographical concepts - uneven development and the identity of place - can be held in tension with each other and can each contribute to the explanation of the other" (1993: 64 cited in Lees et al, 2016: 6)). It is perfectly possible to generalise gentrification as a process of land use change that results in the unequal appropriation of

rents and causes the displacement of existing land users, while at the same time emphasising the particular trajectories of how this process is shaped by the workings of the place-specific political, economic and social relations that co-exist in space.

At this point, it is useful to revisit the recent argument made by Ley and Teo (2014), who discuss how in Hong Kong the absence of linguistic expressions of gentrification does not preclude the ontological presence of gentrification as an actually existing urban process. Although the argument might seem a little obvious, we concur with them that it is possible to think of the ontological presence of gentrification in a given society, even though there is no word such as gentrification being circulated in public or academic discourse. A comparative perspective on gentrification can suggest that gentrification as an urban process is often known by more localised forms of expressions such as *blanqueamiento* in Mexico (López-Morales, 2016a) and ‘urban redevelopment’ in Seoul (Shin and Kim, 2016). It may also be translated into an expression that is more useful for local populations, while retaining the core principle of gentrification in the translated version. For example, in South Korea, reflecting the growing popularity of gentrification,¹ the National Institute of Korean Language, a government agency that works to translate foreign expressions into standard Korean, has suggested in May 2016 that in Korean, gentrification should be translated as *dungji naemolim*, literally meaning eviction/displacement from one’s nest/home.² while discussions about gentrification were largely confined to academic discourse, from 2015 it began to receive significant attention in the media and public discourse.

Latin American experiences inform us that theorising gentrification should be “sensitive enough to recognize that gentrification also means urban inequalities and segregation accentuated by the state responding to large-scale private interests” (López-Morales, 2016a: 571). In Chile, for example, well before the term gentrification started to be used in the analysis of the unequal production of urban space in a highly neoliberalised housing market (López-Morales, 2008), ample discussions took place to critically understand the effects of private-led residential redevelopment in the country’s major cities (Sabatini et al., 2001). The importance of exploiting the potential to appropriate rents from land development has been historically so pronounced (as part of an institutional design by the

¹ According to Lee (2016), there were less than ten reports of ‘gentrification’ made by the media annually between 2004 and 2011, but the frequency of media reports referring to gentrification exploded, with 45 mentions in 2014, and 813 in 2015.

² The announcement can be accessed here: <http://news.korean.go.kr/index.jsp?control=page&part=view&idx=10332> (last accessed on 13 June 2017).

state since the early 19th century aimed at increasing property tenure among the lowest fractions of society) that there has been frequent conflict between the private exploitation of the commercial value of land and the ‘right to stay put’ of those living on that land (Wyly et al., 2010), or in simpler terms, between developers and petty land-owners who are usually the ones facing unsurmountable barriers (eg. soaring housing prices and lack of financial loans) in finding replacement accommodation within redevelopment areas or nearby after selling their land (López-Morales, 2016b). Following Clark (2005: 258), “any process of change fitting this description is, to my [our] understanding, gentrification.”

The state-designed nexus between gentrification and displacement

One of the major characteristics of contemporary capitalism and gentrification is the scaling up of real estate projects. Increasingly it is an entire district or a neighbourhood that becomes subject to the intervention of real estate capital, resulting in wholesale clearance and reconstruction. Real estate capital has grown large in scale, hence the domination of big real estate corporations that have access to state institutions and finance, while smaller firms operate to pick up niche properties in the shadow of scaled-up projects. More importantly, however, scaling up of real estate projects calls for a dedicated role for local and central states to clear barriers and obstacles, to facilitate the displacement of oppositional voices, creating *tabula rasa* conditions for real estate investment and the production of ideological discourses (Shin, 2016; Slater, 2014). To help facilitate private sector investment, governments assemble a range of preferential and subsidising policies. Joined-up efforts by governments, government-affiliated agencies, developers and the media often produce stigmatisation of neighbourhoods to be subject to ‘revitalisation,’ as if such areas and residents therein have lost their vitality and fallen into eternal disrepute or the so-called ‘territorial stigma’ (see Shin, 2016; Lees 2014; Wacquant, Slater and Pereira 2014). Reinvestment and hence gentrification emerges as an alternative to real or perceived persistent decay and dilapidation, a mythical presumption that forces people to believe that there is no other alternative. In similar vein to Defilippis (2004) and Lees (2014), Slater (2014) calls this a ‘false choice urbanism,’ and says there is an urgent need to “blast open this tenacious and constrictive dualism of ‘prosperity (gentrification) or ‘blight’ (disinvestment)” and reveal the intrinsic relationship between the two in a more fundamental process of uneven capitalist urbanisation.

The scaling up of real estate projects leads to the rise of mega-gentrification and mega-displacement, which is enabled by the dispossession of people's rights through the workings of a growth alliance between the (central and/or local) state and (real estate) capital. Obviously the nature of this alliance may differ across geographies. Very often, in the global South, governments and developers are fused together through ownership shares or the close ties between developers and ruling families or political figures as in Abu Dhabi and Lebanon. The close nexus between large businesses and political elites in South Korea is another example of this politico-economic fusion (Shin and Kim, 2016), and so is the 'state capitalism' that has emerged in mainland China. In Latin America, a more recent example includes the scandal of Adebrecht, the Brazilian construction group that is currently under investigation in several Latin American countries for possible cases of bribery in campaigns and the private accounts of top politicians including national Presidents (The Guardian, 2017).³ Where there is a strong alliance between the state and real estate capital, it becomes increasingly difficult to challenge real estate development and resulting displacement.

As for mega-displacement and gentrification in post-colonial states, ethnic-religious tensions often become the sources of retribution against the marginalised, resulting in mega-displacement to set redevelopment and gentrification in motion. In Mumbai, for instance, the 1995 Maharashtra state elections led to the formulation of the state government's Slum Rehabilitation Scheme (SRS) that was to carry out large-scale slum clearance in order to clear ways for real estate and infrastructure construction in globalising Mumbai (Doshi 2013). Eligibility for the resettlement of slum dwellers was based on paper-based evidences of residence in Mumbai prior to the cut-off date of the scheme. The SRS was to enable the involvement of real estate developers in redeveloping slums by introducing "transferable development rights," which allowed developers to produce higher density market rate housing on cleared slums or elsewhere in the suburbs, on condition that developers also provided compensation units for eligible slum dwellers, although off-site resettlement was more popular among those affected. The Vision Mumbai redevelopment programme to transform Mumbai into the "next Shanghai" resulted in "Mumbai's 'tsunami'" of mass clearance and eviction, demolishing about 45,000~90,000 informal structures and rendering 300,000~350,000 people homeless (see Doshi 2013;

³ Odebrecht is one of the key operators in the Porto Maravilha mega redevelopment in the (until a few years ago) derelict Zona Portuária (Sánchez and Broudehoux, 2013).

Ramesh 2005). Affected were those ‘illegal’ settlements which emerged after 1995. Xenophobic campaigns by the local political party aggravated the conditions of evictees further, as “most Vision Mumbai evictees were ethnically North Indian or Muslim” (Doshi 2013: 858).

In promoting mega-gentrification, project financing becomes important, as an individual developer (or even a consortium of developers) will often find it difficult to finance the entire project on its own. In this regard, the origin of capital becomes key to understanding the nature of the state-capital relationship, as well as the state-society relationship. National savings schemes such as the Central Provident Fund in Singapore or the National Housing Fund in South Korea have had a strong role to play in facilitating real estate construction in these countries, while foreign direct investment tends to be highlighted in recent years with regard to the rise of mega urban projects (Shatkin, 2008). Surplus from a country or region often gets channelled into other regions in a geographical switching of capital (see Percival and Waley, 2012 on Korean investment in Cambodian new town construction, and Kutz and Lenhardt, 2016 on inward investment in Morocco). Sovereign wealth funds, as well as savings of middle- or upper-class families in Asia (e.g., Singapore and China) have emerged as major investors in cities of the global North, suggesting that the circulation of real estate capital has become quite complex and involves multiple directions between the global North and the global South and within each region.

While financialisation plays a key role in the rise of (speculative) real estate projects (see Moreno, 2014), how local governments make use of their planning powers to increase the financial viability of real estate projects is pivotal for urban development in the global South in particular, where endogenous investors and major political elites work together with transnational investors. An exemplary case can be found in Mexico, which involves a public-private corporation called PROCDMX that cooperates with global financial players for the purpose of transforming entire districts in central Mexico City into transport corridors and hubs for luxury real estate investment. In this scheme, the Mexican state has privatised urban lands in core locations as public contributions to the public-private partnership, but at the same time guarantees the private sector’s real estate operation by issuing 40-year-long contracts so that the private sector can extract rents from zoned urban space. Researchers and neighbourhood activists together wonder nowadays whether this carefully designed, sanitised new space of exception would be able to host/enlist any

type of dissent, social deviation, grassroots cultural expressions or undesired actors (Gaytán, 2016).

In many ways, the example of Mexico's PROCDMX chimes with the case of Buenos Aires's Puerto Madero mega-project, initiated in the late 1980s and since then having deeply transformed the city's old and derelict port area, Puerto Madero. It all started in 1989 when the city government transferred public land to the *ad hoc*, newly created Corporación Antiguo Puerto Madero (hereafter CAPM). The redevelopment of Puerto Madero was carried out under a prevailing neoliberal planning philosophy that widely failed to keep their initial promises of social mixing and public infrastructure provision: the result was a concentration of high-rise luxury condominiums and elite-oriented commercial land use that prevented social mixing. For instance, the highly segregated and enclosed Rodrigo Bueno shanty town located nearby lost access to the newly created 'ecological park' that was supposed to be open for public use according to the law that allowed the Puerto Madero operation (see Cuenya and Corral 2011; Garay et al., 2013). There, experts from Barcelona provided ideas and good-practice strategies for the CAPM operation (see Lees et al., 2016). Critics complain that although Puerto Madero has produced a new landscape pertinent to the world-city status of Buenos Aires, the area is separate from the rest of the city socially and economically, that the masses have been excluded from the project, and that the privatisation of public resources such as public lands resulted in private investors' appropriation of enormous returns on their investment with comparatively minuscule collection of tax revenues (Garay et al., 2013).

The State Question

The above discussions about the state-designed nexus between gentrification and dispossession compels us to examine the state question. In Western Europe, there is a legacy of social democratic welfare statism, which has been an outcome of the post-war reconstruction and consensus between labour and capital. In this context, gentrification has a limited role to play if we assume the interventionist role of the state to provide collective consumption including housing welfare. The social democratic orientation of the state, and its legacy in the contemporary neoliberal world, would also create certain barriers to the full exploitation of real estate commodities. The disintegration of the post-war consensus and welfare statism, has therefore, served to accelerate gentrification processes in Anglo-American cities. The demise of Western Keynesian welfare statism has

been accompanied a state rhetoric that argues that gentrification is an inevitable outcome or the only means to revitalise post-industrial urban spaces constrained by a lack of public funding. Lang (1982: 1) goes as far as to claim that “gentrification comprises one of the few urban success stories that is not dependent on a massive infusion of government moneys.”

The rhetoric of an incompetent state is frequently put forward in the global South, where corrupt, ineffective or rent-seeking state officials are thought to have failed to provide basic urban services and functions. This is an incompetence that can be very functional for capitalist goals. In the context of a neglectful state that displays impotence in terms of bringing change and maintaining the urban core, private capital initiatives are often regarded as a viable alternative. For instance, Elshahed (2015) is sympathetic to the involvement of real estate capital, especially in a developer’s (Al-Ismailia for Real Estate Investments) attempt to reuse and therefore salvage Egypt’s modernist heritage building - Cinema Radio - without gentrification impacting on other current users in the vicinity (Elshahed 2015, p.137). However, the ability of the private sector, formal or informal, to deliver key urban services needs to be viewed with care, especially with regard to their intervention in land and housing markets.

Contrary to incompetent state rhetoric, East Asian developmental statism is on the other end of the spectrum of understanding in terms of how the state has led the way to provide business-friendly environments as part of nation-building and maintaining state legitimacy (Castells, 1992; Haila, 2016; Woo-Cumings, 1999). And, it is in this context that the rise of gentrification in East Asia is to be thought of. The lack of a mature civil society in East Asia is often pointed out as a reason for the brutal oppression of protesters against eviction by the state. This had been the case in South Korea, for example, in the early 1980s when there was an all-out attack on tenant protesters against a new redevelopment programme that resulted in large-scale new-build gentrification of dilapidated sub-standard neighbourhoods in Seoul (see Ha, 2001; Kim, 1999). China’s urban redevelopment histories are also full of the violent use of state power to prevent local residents from hindering redevelopment progress (Shao, 2013). It is also necessary to remember that in the historical context of urbanization, under the developmental state, the notion of private urbanism may simply be a myth that disguises the underlying and historic intervention of the developmental state in urban development. For example, Shin (2017) examines the case of smart city construction in Songdo, South Korea, and reveals that despite a more recent surge of smart city and private urbanism rhetoric associated

with the Songdo City project, the characteristics of developmental state-led urbanisation turned out to be persistent. These include the long-term commitment of the (local) state to realise the construction of a brand new town, the developmental vision repackaged as green growth, and smart city promotion to adjust to the changes of the reigning urbanism. Moreover, profiteering from real estate projects, a key characteristic of speculative Korean urbanisation, turned out to be the fundamental motive of both domestic and transnational developers, despite the dominant discourses of smart urban growth (see also Shin, Park and Sonn, forthcoming).

On the other hand, a longer trajectory of neoliberalisation in Latin America provides a picture that can be contrasted with East Asian states. However, this is not a story of top-down neoliberal imposition but a story of endogenous political and economic interests engaging with global players, on their own terms and conditions. Redeveloping slums (read *slum gentrification*) has involved the workings of the state that often spearhead the changes. The story of Puerto Madero in Buenos Aires, aforementioned, is also one which saw the involvement of the state to eradicate shanty towns and displace local residents. So far, for at least two decades, the southern part of Buenos Aires (La Boca, the Barracas and Parque Patricios neighbourhoods, among others) which previously the state paid no attention to leaving slum dwellers in what became their neighbourhoods (see Rodriguez and Di Virgilio, 2016), has increasingly witnessed the expansion of rent-seeking, culturally hip gentrification waves that are transforming the whole central city (Herzer et al., 2015). It is also illuminating to note that such attacks on shanty towns have historic precedents in the city. An unexplored case of state-led gentrification already occurred in 1977 during the eradication of a shanty town in the Bajo Belgrano district: an important reason for this state action was that the main stadium for the 1978 Football World Cup was located next to this *villa miseria*. Subsequently, in the 1990s and 2000s, the land was gradually redeveloped to accommodate luxury condominiums. In this case, mega-event driven displacement and state-led, neoliberal new-build gentrification, seem historically connected. The recent experiences of mega-scale redevelopment in Rio de Janeiro, e.g., the ongoing redevelopment of Zona Portuária or Porto Maravilha also demonstrate the rise of state-led gentrification through the sanitisation and commodification of urban space, combined with transforming public space into exclusive consumption space for urban elites (Queiroz Ribeiro and dos Santos Junior, 2007; Sánchez and Broudehoux, 2013).

Conclusion

As the real estate economy has become an increasingly dominant arena of capital accumulation, and as city-making has become an increasing part of the political ambition of governing elites, dilapidated and/or undesirable urban spaces have become subject to eradication and further commodification. Gentrification in this regard is a reflection of the state's political, ideological and economic project (Shin, forthcoming). This is the story of many countries in the global South, which are increasingly integrated into the global circuits of capital and people, and as such experiencing the rise of new gentrifications or localised embryonic forms. In this chapter, we have argued that gentrification narrowly understood in a fossilised way (e.g., gentrification equated with its classic form in 1960s London) is not a useful barometer through which to evaluate the experiences of other urban processes, either inside or outside of the usual suspects in gentrification studies. What comparative gentrification studies in recent years have taught us is the importance of de-centring the production of knowledge, incorporating emergent contextual discussions from elsewhere (and as it seems, literally from everywhere), and adhering to relational perspectives in order to understand how gentrification interacts with other locally available processes and discourses (see also Bernt, 2016; Lees et al. 2016; López-Morales, 2016a; Shin et al., 2016; Shin, forthcoming). The de-centring of gentrification studies requires researchers to pay more careful attention to the historicity of urbanisation and urban contestation. It also requires researchers to accept that gentrification may look completely different in places and societies we researchers do not yet know about or do not understand enough about as of now.

We conclude this chapter with a brief reflection on the construction of political alternatives in the fight against planetary gentrification. While this chapter has largely emphasised the workings of the state and capital in the global South, it is also premature to simply assume that governments, developers and other state apparatuses are the only agents of mega-gentrification. With the growing affluence and expansion of middle classes in a number of global Southern countries that have seen the generation of wealth by their own industrialisation and urban-based accumulation or the transfer of surplus capital from elsewhere (e.g., King, 2008; Koo, 1991; Lett, 1998; Tomba, 2004), it is equally important to understand how the actions of the state-capital nexus have gained hegemony in their respective territories, and secured consent among a faction of residents, especially the

property-owning middle classes who are attracted to securing gains from real estate investment. Such attention to state-society relations is particularly important, as the urban questions in the global South are hard to detach from broader questions that emerge out of political mobilisations, which occasionally erupt to question state legitimacy. Where the support of the middle classes leans towards is significant in terms of how the state sustains its power vis-à-vis wider social movements. The resulting complexities provide both challenges and opportunities for anti-gentrification struggles in the global South, which in turn can never be dissociated from those struggles that play out in the global North.

The experience of Latin American urban struggles can be illuminating in this regard. Historically, Latin America is full of revolutionary moments in its history, starting with the independence wars in the early 19th century, followed by the Mexican and Cuban revolutions in the 20th century. Not only national political movements but also urban-based social uprising and revolutionary insurrection have also been prevalent (see Castells, 1985). Latin America is currently seeing complex multi-scalar repertoires of social action, which are unfolding in extremely diverse urban contexts, ranging from Santiago to Buenos Aires to Mexico City, from disputes in micro-neighbourhoods to metropolitan-level conflicts. At a general level, urban social movements in Latin America show certain regularities such as class ‘recomposition’ on the one hand, exhibiting a growing cross-class consciousness of inequality which has emerged through spatial/local struggles against what Harvey (2010: 181) calls speculative “landed developer interests” in cities. On the other hand, such urban social movements display a seemingly contradictory, but much more variegated and in many ways ‘creative,’ repertoire of protest performances, where claims are made for space, centrality and housing as social rights, yet somewhat detached from the language and histories of class struggle. These include the successful struggle in Mexico City to fend off the operation of private-public urban renewal agency as a neoliberal government apparatus, which has sought to carry out aggressive urban redevelopment and social cleansing (López-Morales, forthcoming), and the creative appropriation of neoliberal urban renewal policies in Buenos Aires to secure housing loans for supporting cooperative-style housing management and producing hundreds of low-cost, good quality social housing units all over the southern part of the city (Rodríguez and Di Virgilio, 2016; see also Cociña and López-Morales, forthcoming, López-Morales, 2016c). Anti-gentrification agendas increasingly occupy a central position, contributing to the formation of political alternatives and serving as a nexus between everyday struggles over

lived space and larger social movement agendas. While we endeavour to locate gentrification in the global South by not privileging the experience of Anglo-American cities, thinking of anti-gentrification strategies calls for the need to localise anti-gentrification fights while bearing in mind the possibility of the generalisability of such fights for cross-regional alliances. Thus, we consider planetary use of the concept of gentrification as becoming more than normative.

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