



# New Globalism, New Urbanism: Gentrification as Global Urban Strategy

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This paper uses several events in New York in the late 1990s to launch two central arguments about the changing relationship between neoliberal urbanism and so-called globalization. First, much as the neoliberal state becomes a consummate agent of—rather than a regulator of—the market, the new revanchist urbanism that replaces liberal urban policy in cities of the advanced capitalist world increasingly expresses the impulses of capitalist production rather than social reproduction. As globalization bespeaks a rescaling of the global, the scale of the urban is recast. The true global cities may be the rapidly growing metropolitan economies of Asia, Latin America, and (to a lesser extent) Africa, as much as the command centers of Europe, North America and Japan. Second, the process of gentrification, which initially emerged as a sporadic, quaint, and local anomaly in the housing markets of some *command-center* cities, is now thoroughly generalized as an urban strategy that takes over from liberal urban policy. No longer isolated or restricted to Europe, North America, or Oceania, the impulse behind gentrification is now generalized; its incidence is global, and it is densely connected into the circuits of global capital and cultural circulation. What connects these two arguments is the shift from an urban scale defined according to the conditions of social reproduction to one in which the investment of productive capital holds definitive precedence.

Four sets of events in New York City at the end of the 1990s succinctly captured some of the central contours of the new neoliberal urbanism. The first concerns capital and the state. In the last days of 1998, New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani announced a huge “Christmas gift” to the city’s most elite capitalists. Responding to “threats” that the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) might relocate a mile across the Hudson River to New Jersey, Giuliani announced a \$900 million taxpayer subsidy, ostensibly to keep the stock exchange in the city. This was only the latest and largest in a series of “geobribes” paid by the city to global corporations. The subsidy includes \$400 million with which the city and state will build a new 650,000-square-foot Wall Street office for the NYSE. There was never any pretense that financial need was even an issue in this deal, since the subsidy came at a time when the

stock exchange was siphoning unprecedented amounts of surplus capital from economies around the globe. Rather, city and state officials referred to the deal as a “partnership.” There had, of course, been public-private partnerships previously, but this one was unprecedented in two ways. First—and most obvious—was the scale of the geobribe to private capital: topping \$1 billion by 2001, the scale of this subsidy was wholly without precedent. Second, and more importantly, the local state in this instance eschewed all pretense of regulation or steering of the private sector toward results it could not otherwise accomplish on its own. Instead, the subsidy was justified as an investment by the city and the state, as “good business practice.” That the threat was in all likelihood hollow and that the NYSE would never seriously have considered leaving the city only confirms the point: rather than modulating the track taken by private investment, the local state simply fitted into the grooves already established by market logics, becoming, in effect, a junior if highly active partner to global capital. The destruction of the World Trade Center raises the very real possibility that the new stock exchange will occupy that site.

The second set of events concerns the social reproduction of the labor force. Earlier in 1998, the New York City Department of Education announced that it faced a shortage of mathematics teachers and as a result was importing forty young teachers from Austria. Even more extraordinary, in a city with more than two million native Spanish speakers, a shortage of Spanish teachers was to be filled by importing teachers from Spain. Annual international recruitment of high school teachers is now routine. At about the same time, it was announced that the New York City Police Department would take over responsibility for security in the city schools from the School Board. Taken together, these events connote a deep crisis, not just in the city’s education system but in the wider system of social reproduction.

The third set of events speaks to a drastic heightening of social control. In 1997, the horrifying case of police brutality against Abner Louima, a Haitian immigrant, came to light. A year and a half later, unarmed Guinean immigrant Amadou Diallo was shot dead in a hail of forty-one police bullets in the vestibule of his apartment. Two of Louima’s attackers were eventually imprisoned, but—like the majority of cops who gunned down innocent New Yorkers in the late 1990s—Diallo’s killers were cleared of any criminal responsibility. The following year, in a move put on hold by Diallo’s killing, the NYPD was issued with infamous “dum-dum” bullets, which are designed to do maximum bodily harm. Meanwhile, it was revealed that between 1994 and 1997, the city of New York had paid a record \$96.8 million to settle burgeoning numbers of police-brutality lawsuits. Prior to the World Trade Center catastrophe, ordinary New Yorkers increasingly felt that their police force was out of control; even the president of the

notorious police union expressed the fear that the city's repressive policing strategies of the late 1990s were "a blueprint for a police state and tyranny" (Cooper 1998: B5; Cooper 1999). These events were the direct result of Giuliani's imposition of "zero-tolerance tactics," but they were equally part of a larger shift in urban policy, from the liberalism that dominated much of the twentieth century toward what has elsewhere been called "the revanchist city" (Smith 1996; Swyngedouw 1997).

The fourth event—and possibly the most intriguing—concerns the changing political role of city government. Angry at the abandon with which United Nations (UN) diplomats seemed to flaunt local parking laws, and blaming them for much of Manhattan's gridlock, Giuliani threatened to begin towing illegally parked cars with diplomatic plates. Now openly derided for his policies of petty and not so petty repression, "Benito" Giuliani (as even the *New York Times* nicknamed him) was just as angry at the US State Department for seemingly capitulating to this UN vehicular malfeasance. Maybe it has come to the point, Giuliani huffed, where New York City needs to have its own foreign policy.<sup>1</sup> The larger point is that amidst a restructuring of the relationship between capital and the state, a burgeoning crisis of social reproduction, and heightened waves of political repression, there is also a rescaling of urban practices, cultures, and functions in the context of changing global relations and a dramatically altered fate of the nation-state.

These four events hint at much about the neoliberal urbanism that has been slouching toward birth since the 1980s. By neoliberalism, I mean something quite specific. Eighteenth-century liberalism, from John Locke to Adam Smith, pivoted on two crucial assumptions: that the free and democratic exercise of individual self-interest led to the optimal collective social good; and that the market knows best: that is, private property is the foundation of this self-interest, and free market exchange is its ideal vehicle. Twentieth-century American liberalism, from Woodrow Wilson to Franklin Roosevelt to John F Kennedy—emphasizing social compensation for the excesses of market and private property—is not so much a misnomer, therefore—it by no means abrogated these axioms of liberalism—but it is an outlier insofar as, in a co-optive response to the challenge of socialism, it sought to regulate their sway. The neoliberalism that carries the twentieth into the twenty-first century therefore represents a significant return to the original axioms of liberalism, albeit one galvanized by an unprecedented mobilization not just of national state power but of state power organized and exercised at different geographical scales.

Accordingly, the connections between capital and the state, social reproduction and social control have been drastically altered. And this transformation, the outlines of which we are only beginning to see, is

being expressed most vividly through an altered geography of social relations—more concretely, through a rescaling of social processes and relations that creates new amalgams of scale replacing the old amalgams broadly associated with “community,” “urban,” “regional,” “national,” and “global.” I focus in this paper only on neoliberal urbanism and the relationship between global and urban. I do not in any way intend to infer that other scales are less relevant in the broad scheme of things, but I do want to pick up on what seems to be a special nexus that is being forged between global and urban change. In particular, I want to make two arguments that will seem at first to be quite separate. In the first place, I want to argue that in the context of a refashioned globalism, widely (if partially) expressed via the ideological discourses of “globalization,” we are also seeing a broad redefinition of the urban scale—in effect, a new urbanism—that refocuses the criteria of scale construction, in this case toward processes of production and toward the extraordinary urban growth in Asia, Latin America, and Africa. Second, focusing more on Europe and North America, I want to argue that the comparatively recent process of gentrification has been generalized as a central feature of this new urbanism. I therefore offer two threads of an argument suggesting how neoliberalism evolves new forms within the larger history of capitalist urbanization. In concluding, I hope to show that the two shifts explored here are actually interconnected.

### **New Urbanism**

In her skillfully synthetic accounts (1992, 1998, 2000), Saskia Sassen offers a benchmark argument about the importance of local place in the new globalism. Place, she insists, is central to the circulation of people and capital that constitute globalization, and a focus on urban places in a globalizing world brings with it a recognition of the rapidly declining significance of the national economy, while also insisting that globalization takes place through specific social and economic complexes rooted in specific places. This builds on a familiar picture of globalization, defined in terms of the economic shift from production to finance. Global cities emerged when, in the 1970s, the global financial system expanded dramatically and foreign direct investment was dominated, not by capital invested directly in productive functions, but rather by capital moving into and between capital markets. This, in turn, pollinated a broad expansion of ancillary producer services concentrated in command and control posts in the financial economy, and those new urban forms are marked by extreme bifurcations of wealth and poverty, dramatic realignments of class relations, and dependence on new streams of immigrant labor. This, of course, is the paradigmatic global city. The balance of economic power has shifted since the 1970s “from production places, such as Detroit and

Manchester, to centers of finance and highly specialized services” (Sassen 1992:325).

A welcome alternative to the blithe optimism of globalized utopias, Sassen’s account is astute about the shifting contents of some urban economies. However, it is vulnerable on both empirical grounds, which indicate a far more complicated set of relationships connecting global cities and a wider range of cities that can be grouped under the label, global cities (Taylor 1999), and on theoretical grounds. In the end, Sassen’s argument is a little vague about how places are, in fact, constructed. It does not go far enough. It is as if the global social economy comprises a plethora of containers—nation-states—within which float a number of smaller containers, the cities. Globalization brings about a dramatic change in the kinds of social and economic relations and activities carried on in these containers, a re-sorting of activities between different containers, and an increased porosity of the national containers, such that turbulence in the wider global sea increasingly buffets cities directly. However, with the exception of some national containers that may actually sink, the containers themselves remain rather rigidly intact in this vision, even as the relations between them are transformed. As Brenner (1998:11) puts it, Sassen’s account remains “surprisingly statecentric.” I want to argue here that in the context of a new globalism, we are experiencing the emergence of a new urbanism such that the containers themselves are being fundamentally recast. “The urban” is being redefined just as dramatically as the global; the old conceptual containers—our 1970s assumptions about what “the urban” is or was—no longer hold water. The new concatenation of urban functions and activities vis-à-vis the national and the global changes not only the make-up of the city but the very definition of what constitutes—literally—the urban scale.

Cities have historically performed multiple functions ranging from the military and religious to the political and commercial, the symbolic and the cultural, depending on the history and geography of their construction and transformation. The scale of the urban is similarly expressive of particular social geographies and histories. With the development and expansion of industrial capitalism, burgeoning cities increasingly express the powerful impulse toward the centralization of capital, while the *scale* of the urban is increasingly defined in terms of the geographical limits to daily labor migration. That is, as soon as the *social* division of labor between production and reproduction become simultaneously a spatial division, and whatever other functions the city performs and activities it embodies, the social and territorial organization of the social reproduction of labor—the provision and maintenance of a working-class population—comes to play a pivotal role in the determination of the urban scale. More than anything else, the scale of the modern city is thereby calibrated by something quite

mundane: the contradictory determinations of the geographical limits of the daily commute of workers between home and work (Smith 1990:136–137).

The Keynesian city of advanced capitalism, in which the state underwrote wide swaths of social reproduction, from housing to welfare to transportation infrastructure, represented the zenith of this definitive relationship between urban scale and social reproduction. This is a consistent theme that has run through the work of European and American urban theorists since the 1960s, from urban revolution (Lefebvre 1971) to urban crisis (Harvey 1973) and Castells' (1977) explicit definition of the urban in terms of collective consumption, and has been an enduring concern of feminist urban theory (Hansen and Pratt 1995; Katz 2001; Rose 1981). Equally a center of capital accumulation, the Keynesian city was in many respects the combined hiring hall and welfare hall for each national capital. Indeed the so-called urban crisis of the late 1960s and 1970s was widely interpreted as a crisis of social reproduction, having to do with the dysfunctionality of racism, class exploitation, and patriarchy and the contradictions between an urban form elicited according to criteria of accumulation and one that had to be justified in terms of the efficiency of social reproduction.

Let us now step back and look at the question of “globalization,” because if we are talking about global cities presumably their definition is implicated in the processes thereof. What exactly is globalizing at the beginning of the twenty-first century? What is new about the present? Certainly it is not commodity capital that is globalizing: Adam Smith and Karl Marx both recognized a “world market.” Nor, by the same token, can it be financial capital that is globalizing. Contemporary levels of global financial interchange are only now beginning to reach again the levels of the period between the 1890s and World War I. The Bretton Woods institutions established after 1944, especially the International Monetary Fund, were intended to re-stimulate and regulate global financial flows interrupted by depression and war. Viewed in this historical light, the global expansion of stock and currency markets and broad financial deregulation since the 1980s may be more a response to globalization than its cause. The globalization of cultural images in the era of computers and unprecedented migration is also very powerful, but it is difficult to sustain a claim for the novelty of cultural globalization given the extent of pre-existing cultural cross-fertilization. Long before the 1980s, all “national” cultures were more or less hybrid. This leaves us with production capital, and I think a good case can be made that to the extent that globalization heralds anything new, the new globalism can be traced back to the increasingly global—or at least international—scale of economic production. As late as the 1970s, most consumer commodities were produced in one national economy either for consumption

there or for export to a different national market. By the 1990s, that model was obsolete, definitive sites of production for specific commodities became increasingly difficult to identify, and the old language of economic geography no longer made sense. In autos, electronics, garments, computers, biomedical, and many other industrial sectors ranging from high tech to low, production is now organized across national boundaries to such a degree that questions of national “import” and “export” are supplanted by questions of global trade internal to the production process. The idea of “national capital” makes little sense today, because most global trade across national boundaries is now intrafirm: it takes place *within* the production networks of single corporations.

There is little doubt that in strictly economic terms, the power of most states organized at the national scale is eroding. This in no way invokes a “zero-sum” conception of scale (Brenner 1998; MacLeod 2001), nor is it a simplistic argument that the nation-state is withering away. In the first place, the political and cultural power of national-scale power is not necessarily eroding at all and may be hardening in many places. Second, the erosion of economic power at the national scale is highly uneven and not necessarily universal, with the US or Chinese state enjoying a quite different fate from Malaysia or Zimbabwe. For example, Mészáros (2001) has argued that the ambition of the US state seems to be its transformation into a global state, and the conduct of the brutal “war on terrorism”—in reality a war for global hegemony (Smith forthcoming)—seems to confirm this analysis. Yet the sources of increased economic porosity at the national scale are undeniable: communications and financial deregulation have expanded the geographical mobility of capital; unprecedented labor migrations have distanced local economies from automatic dependency on home grown labor; national and local states (including city governments) have responded by offering carrots to capital while applying the stick to labor and dismantling previous supports for social reproduction; and finally, class and race-based struggles have broadly receded, giving local and national governments increased leeway to abandon that sector of the population surplus by both the restructuring of the economy and the gutting of social services. The mass incarceration of working-class and minority populations, especially in the US, is the national analogue of the emerging revanchist city. Comparatively low levels of struggle were crucial in the virtual nonresponse by government to the Los Angeles uprisings after 1992, which stand in dramatic contrast to the ameliorative—if paternalistic—response after the uprisings of the 1960s.

Two mutually reinforcing shifts have consequently restructured the functions and active roles of cities. In the first place, systems of production previously territorialized at the (subnational) regional scale

were increasingly cut loose from their definitive national context, resulting not just in the waves of deindustrialization in the 1970s and 1980s but in wholesale regional restructuring and destructuring as part of a reworking of established scale hierarchies. As a result, production systems have been downscaled. The territorialization of production increasingly centers on extended metropolitan centers, rather than on larger regions: the metropolitan scale again comes to dominate the regional scale, rather than the other way round. In place of the American Northeast or Midwest, the English Midlands, and the German Ruhr, for example—classic geographical fruits of modern industrial capitalism—we have São Paulo and Bangkok, Mexico City and Shanghai, Mumbai and Seoul. Whereas the traditional industrial regions were the backbone of national capitals in the nineteenth and much of the twentieth centuries, these new, huge urban economies are increasingly the platforms of *global* production. This rescaling of production toward the metropolitan scale is an expression of global change; at the same time, it lies at the heart of a new urbanism.

The corollary is also taking place, as national states have increasingly moved away from the liberal urban policies that dominated the central decades of the twentieth century in the advanced capitalist economies. In the US, President Ford's refusal to bail out New York City amidst a deep fiscal crisis (immortalized in the famous *Daily News* headline: "Ford to City: Drop Dead"), followed by the failure of President Carter's attempted urban plan in 1978, gave the first intimation of a national economy increasingly delinked from and independent of its cities. The wholesale demise of liberal urban policy followed in fits and starts, working toward Clinton's cynical slashing of the social welfare system in 1996. If the effects are often more muted and take myriad forms, the trajectory of change is similar in most of the wealthiest economies, although Italy—the transfer of some national state power to the European Union notwithstanding—may be an exception.

The point here is not that the national state is necessarily weakened or that the territoriality of political and economic power is somehow less potent. This argument—that global power today resides in a network of economic connections rather than in any particular place—is embodied in the influential treatment of *Empire* by Hardt and Negri (2000), but it is flawed by a certain necromancy with finance capital and a blindness to the contradictions of power that comes with the necessary fixing of economic activities and political control in space. Certainly, specific functions and activities previously organized at the national scale are being dispersed to other scales up and down the scale hierarchy. At the same time, however, national states are reframing themselves as purer, territorially rooted economic actors in and of the market, rather than external compliments to it. Social and economic

restructuring is simultaneously the restructuring of spatial scale, insofar as the fixation of scales crystallizes the contours of social power—who is empowered and who contained, who wins and who loses—into remade physical landscapes (Brenner 1998; Smith and Dennis 1987; Swyngedouw 1996, 1997).

As various contributions to this volume suggest, neoliberal urbanism is an integral part of this wider rescaling of functions, activities, and relations. It comes with a considerable emphasis on the nexus of production and finance capital at the expense of questions of social reproduction. It is not that the organization of social reproduction no longer modulates the definition of the urban scale but rather that its power in doing so is significantly depleted. Public debates over suburban sprawl in Europe and especially the US, intense campaigns in Europe promoting urban “regeneration,” and the emerging environmental justice movements all suggest not only that the crisis of social reproduction is thoroughly territorialized but, conversely, that the production of urban space has also come to embody that crisis. A connection exists between the production of the urban scale and the efficient expansion of value, and a “mis-scaled” urbanism can seriously interfere with the accumulation of capital. The crisis of daily commuting lies at the center of this crisis. I once surmised (Smith 1990:137) that where the geographical expansion of cities outstripped their ability to get people from home to work and back again, the result was not just urban chaos but a “fragmentation and disequilibrium in the universalization of abstract labour” that went to the heart of economic cohesion. While this contradiction between geographical form and economic process no doubt endures, the evidence from cities in many parts of Asia, Africa, and Latin America presents a rather different picture. The daily commute into São Paulo, for example, can begin for many at 3:30 a.m. and take in excess of four hours in each direction. In Harare, Zimbabwe, the average commuting time from black townships on the urban periphery is also four hours each way, leading to a workday in which workers are absent from home for sixteen hours and sleeping most of the rest. The economic cost of commuting for these same workers has also expanded dramatically, in part as a result of the privatization of transportation at the behest of the World Bank: commutes that consumed roughly 8% of weekly incomes in the early 1980s required between 22% and 45% by the mid 1990s (Ramsamy 2001:375–377).

Why is this happening? Many well-meaning planners indict the lack of suitable infrastructure, and that is undeniably an issue. However, if we step back one level of abstraction, there is a fundamental geographical contradiction between the dramatically increased land values that accompany the centralization of capital in the core of these metropolises and the marginal, exurban locations where workers are

forced to live due to the pitiful wages on which that capital centralization is built. Yet, extraordinarily, chaotic and arduous commutes have not yet led to an economic breakdown; the impulses of economic production—and, especially, the need to have workers turn up at the workplace—have taken precedence over any constraints emanating from the conditions of social reproduction. The rigors of almost unbearable commuting have not yet compromised economic production. Instead, they have elicited a “desperate resilience” and been absorbed amidst the wider social breakdown that Katz (forthcoming) calls “disintegrating developments.”

Thus, the leading edge in the combined restructuring of urban scale and function does not lie in the old cities of advanced capitalism, where the disintegration of traditional production-based regions and the increasing dislocation of social reproduction at the urban scale is certainly painful, unlikely to pass unopposed, but also partial. Rather, it lies in the large and rapidly expanding metropolises of Asia, Latin America, and parts of Africa, where the Keynesian welfare state was never significantly installed, the definitive link between the city and social reproduction was never paramount, and the fetter of old forms, structures, and landscapes is much less strong. These metropolitan economies are becoming the production hearths of a new globalism. Unlike the suburbanization of the postwar years in North America and Europe, Oceania, and Japan, the dramatic urban expansion of the early twenty-first century will be unambiguously led by the expansion of social production rather than reproduction. In this respect, at least, Lefebvre’s announcement of an urban revolution redefining the city and urban struggles in terms of social reproduction—or indeed Castells’ definition of the urban in terms of collective consumption—will fade into historical memory. If “capitalism shifted gears” with the advent of Keynesianism “from a ‘supply-side’ to a ‘demand-side’ urbanization,” as Harvey (1985:202, 209) once observed, twenty-first-century urbanism potentially reverses this shift.

This restructuring of scale and the cautious re-empowerment of the urban scale—Giuliani’s ambition for a five-borough foreign policy—represents just one thread of neoliberal urbanism. It dovetails with the more culturally attuned assessment of political geographer Peter Taylor (1995:58), who argues that “[C]ities are replacing states in the construction of social identities.” Cities like São Paulo and Shanghai, Lagos and Bombay, are likely to challenge the more traditional urban centers, not just in size and density of economic activity—they have already done that—but primarily as leading incubators in the global economy, progenitors of new urban form, process, and identity. No one seriously argues that the twenty-first century will see a return to a world of city-states—but it *will* see a recapture of urban political prerogative vis-à-vis regions and nation-states.

Finally, the redefinition of the scale of the urban in terms of social production rather than reproduction in no way diminishes the importance of social reproduction in the pursuit of urban life. Quite the opposite: struggles over social reproduction take on a heightened significance precisely because of the dismantling of state responsibilities. However, state abstention in this area is matched by heightened state activism in terms of social control. The transformation of New York into a “revanchist city” is not an isolated event, and the emergence of more authoritarian state forms and practices is not difficult to comprehend in the context of the rescaling of global and local geographies. According to Swyngedouw (1997:138), the substitution of market discipline for that of a hollowed-out welfare state deliberately excludes significant parts of the population, and the fear of social resistance provokes heightened state authoritarianism. At the same time, the new urban work force increasingly comprises marginal and part-time workers who are not entirely integrated into shrinking systems of state economic discipline, as well as immigrants whose cultural and political networks—part of the means of social reproduction—also provide alternative norms of social practice, alternative possibilities of resistance.

In summary, my point here is not to argue that cities like New York, London, and Tokyo lack power in the global hierarchy of urban places and high finance. The concentration of financial and other command functions in these centers is undeniable. Rather, I am trying to put that power in context and, by questioning the common assumption that the power of financial capital is necessarily paramount, to question the criteria according to which cities come to be dubbed “global.” If there is any truth to the argument that so-called globalization results in the first place from the globalization of production, then our assessment of what constitutes a global city should presumably reflect that claim.

### **Urban Regeneration: Gentrification as Global Urban Strategy**

Let me now shift scales and focus toward the process of gentrification. If one dimension of neoliberal urbanism in the twenty-first century is an uneven inclusion of Asian and Latin American urban experiences, especially at the forefront of a new urbanism, a second dimension concerns what might be called the generalization of gentrification as a global urban strategy. At first glance these surely seem like two quite different arguments, the one about luxury housing in the centers of global power, the other about new models of urbanism from the integrating peripheries. They certainly express contrasting experiences of a new urbanism, but that is precisely the point. Neoliberal urbanism encompasses a wide range of social, economic, and geographical

shifts, and the point of these contrasting arguments is to push the issue of how varied the experience of neoliberal urbanism is and how these contrasting worlds fit together.

Most scholars' vision of gentrification remains closely tied to the process as it was defined in the 1960s by sociologist Ruth Glass. Here is her founding 1964 statement (Glass 1964:xviii), which revealed gentrification as a discrete process:

One by one, many of the working-class quarters of London have been invaded by the middle classes—upper and lower. Shabby, modest mews and cottages—two rooms up and two down—have been taken over, when their leases have expired, and have become elegant, expensive residences. Larger Victorian houses, downgraded in an earlier or recent period—which were used as lodging houses or were otherwise in multiple occupation—have been upgraded once again ... Once this process of “gentrification” starts in a district it goes on rapidly until all or most of the original working-class occupiers are displaced and the whole social character of the district is changed.

Almost poetically, Glass captured the novelty of this new process whereby a new urban “gentry” transformed working-class quarters. Consider now an updated statement thirty-five years later, again from London. The following is an excerpt from the 1999 decree for “Urban Renaissance” (DETR 1999) released by a special Urban Task Force appointed by the UK Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR):

The Urban Task Force will identify causes of urban decline ... and practical solutions to bring people back into our cities, towns, and urban neighborhoods. It will establish a new vision for urban regeneration ... [Over the next twenty-five years] 60% of new dwellings should be built on previously developed land ... [W]e have lost control of our towns and cities, allowing them to become spoilt by poor design, economic dispersal, and social polarisation. The beginning of the 21st century is a moment of change [offering] the opportunity for an urban renaissance.

This language of urban renaissance is not new, of course, but it takes on far greater significance here. The scale of ambitions for urban rebuilding has expanded dramatically. Whereas state-sponsored post-war urban renewal in Western cities helped to encourage scattered private-market gentrification, that gentrification and the intensified privatization of inner-city land and housing markets since the 1980s has, in turn, provided the platform on which large-scale multifaceted urban regeneration plans, far outstripping 1960s urban renewal, are established. The current language of urban regeneration, particularly

in Europe, is not one-dimensional, but it bespeaks, among other things, a generalization of gentrification in the urban landscape.

Consider some key differences in the visions presented by Glass and the DETR. Whereas, for Glass, 1960s gentrification was a marginal oddity in the Islington housing market—a quaint urban sport of the hipper professional classes unafraid to rub shoulders with the unwashed masses—by the end of the twentieth century it had become a central goal of British urban policy. Whereas the key actors in Glass's story were assumed to be middle- and upper-middle-class immigrants to a neighborhood, the agents of urban regeneration thirty-five years later are governmental, corporate, or corporate-governmental partnerships. A seemingly serendipitous, unplanned process that popped up in the postwar housing market is now, at one extreme, ambitiously and scrupulously planned. That which was utterly haphazard is increasingly systematized. In scale and diversity, the process of gentrification has evolved rapidly, to the point where the narrowly residential rehabilitation projects that were so paradigmatic of the process in the 1960s and 1970s now seem quaint, not just in the urban landscape but in the urban-theory literature.

Most importantly, perhaps, a highly local reality, first identified in a few major advanced capitalist cities such as London, New York, Paris, and Sydney, is now virtually global. Its evolution has been both vertical and lateral. On the one hand, gentrification as a process has rapidly descended the urban hierarchy; it is evident not only in the largest cities but in more unlikely centers such as the previously industrial cities of Cleveland or Glasgow, smaller cities like Malmö or Grenada, and even small market towns such as Lancaster, Pennsylvania or České Krumlov in the Czech Republic. At the same time, the process has diffused geographically as well, with reports of gentrification from Tokyo to Tenerife (Garcia 2001), São Paulo to Puebla, Mexico (Jones and Varley 1999), Cape Town (Garside 1993) to the Caribbean (Thomas 1991), Shanghai to Seoul. In some kind of irony, even Hobart, the capital of Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania), where dispossessed British peasants turned poachers and rebels were exiled in the nineteenth century and where, in turn, the local people were annihilated, is also undergoing gentrification.

Of course, these experiences of gentrification are highly varied and unevenly distributed, much more diverse than were early European or North American instances of gentrification. They spring from quite assorted local economies and cultural ensembles and connect in many complicated ways to wider national and global political economies. The important point here is the rapidity of the evolution of an initially marginal urban process first identified in the 1960s and its ongoing transformation into a significant dimension of contemporary urbanism. Whether in its quaint form, represented by Glass's mews, or in its

socially organized form in the twenty-first century, gentrification portends a displacement of working-class residents from urban centers. Indeed, the class nature of the process, transparent in Glass's version of gentrification, is assiduously hidden in the verbiage of the British Labour government. That symptomatic silence says as much about the city's changing social and cultural geography, twinned with a changing economic geography, as do its more visible and voluble signs.

In the context of North America and Europe, it is possible to identify three waves of gentrification (Hackworth 2000). The first wave, beginning in the 1950s, can be thought of as sporadic gentrification, much as Glass observed it. A second wave followed in the 1970s and 1980s as gentrification became increasingly entwined with wider processes of urban and economic restructuring. Hackworth (2000) labels this the "anchoring phase" of gentrification. A third wave emerges in the 1990s; we might think of this as gentrification generalized. Of course, this evolution of gentrification has occurred in markedly different ways in different cities and neighborhoods and according to different temporal rhythms. In Mexico City, for example, the process is nowhere as highly capitalized or widespread as in New York, remaining confined to the city's central district, in addition to Coyoacán, and the demarcation of three identifiable waves of gentrification has little if any empirical validity there. In Seoul or São Paulo, the process is geographically isolated and in its infancy. In the Caribbean, the increasing connections between gentrification and global capital generally filter through the tourist industry, giving it its own distinct flavor. By the same token, the transformation of mile after mile of old wharf and warehouse properties along both banks of the Thames suggests that gentrification in London is more expansive than in most North American cities. Insofar as it is an expression of larger social, economic, and political relations, gentrification in any particular city will express the particularities of the place in the making of its urban space.

And yet, to differing degrees, gentrification had evolved by the 1990s into a crucial urban strategy for city governments in consort with private capital in cities around the world. Liberal urban policy, which in Europe dated back in some places to the end of the nineteenth century and in North America to the transition from the Progressive Era to Roosevelt's New Deal, was systematically defeated beginning with the political economic crises of the 1970s and the conservative national administrations that followed in the 1980s. From Reagan to Thatcher and, later, Kohl, the provisions of that liberal urban policy were systematically disempowered or dismantled at the national scale, and public policy constraints on gentrification were replaced by subsidized private-market transformation of the urban built environment. This transformation was intensified by the coterie of neoliberal leaders that followed—Clinton, Blair, Schröder—and the new phase

of gentrification therefore dovetails with a larger class conquest, not only of national power but of urban policy. By the end of the twentieth century, gentrification fueled by a concerted and systematic partnership of public planning with public and private capital had moved into the vacuum left by the end of liberal urban policy. Elsewhere, where cities were not governed by liberal urban policy during much of the twentieth century, the trajectory of change has been different, yet the embrace of a broadly conceived gentrification of old centers as a competitive urban strategy in the global market leads in a similar direction. In this respect, at least, turn-of-the-century neoliberalism hints at a thread of convergence between urban experiences in the larger cities of what used to be called the First and Third Worlds.

The generalization of gentrification has various dimensions. These can be understood in terms of five interrelated characteristics: the transformed role of the state, penetration by global finance, changing levels of political opposition, geographical dispersal, and the sectoral generalization of gentrification. Let us examine each of these in turn. First, between the second and third waves of gentrification, the role of the state has changed dramatically (Hackworth and Smith 2001). In the 1990s, the relative withdrawal of the national state from subsidies to gentrification that had occurred in the 1980s was reversed with the intensification of partnerships between private capital and the local state, resulting in larger, more expensive, and more symbolic developments, from Barcelona's waterfront to Berlin's Potsdamer Platz. Urban policy no longer aspires to guide or regulate the direction of economic growth so much as to fit itself to the grooves already established by the market in search of the highest returns, either directly or in terms of tax receipts.

The new role played by global capital is also definitive of the generalization of gentrification. From London's Canary Wharf to Battery Park City—developed by the same Canadian-based firm—it is easy to point to the new influx of global capital into large megadevelopments in urban centers (Fainstein 1994). Just as remarkable, however, is the extent to which global capital has percolated into much more modest, neighborhood developments. Emblematic in this regard is a new sixty-one-unit condominium building in New York's Lower East Side, two miles from Wall Street, where every apartment is wired with the latest high-speed Internet connections. This is a small development by global city standards, but it was built by nonunion immigrant labor (a stunning development in New York in the 1990s), the developer is Israeli, and the major source of financing comes from the European American Bank (Smith and DiFilippis 1999). The reach of global capital down to the local neighborhood scale is equally a hallmark of the latest phase of gentrification.

Third, there is the question of opposition to gentrification. From Amsterdam to Sydney, Berlin to Vancouver, San Francisco to Paris, gentrification's second wave was matched by the rise of myriad homeless, squatting, housing, and other antigentrification movements and organizations that were often loosely linked around overlapping issues. These rarely came together as citywide movements, but they did challenge gentrification sufficiently that, in each case, they were targeted by city politicians and police forces. Apart from anything else, the heightened levels of repression aimed at antigentrification movements in the 1980s and 1990s testified to the increasing centrality of real-estate development in the new urban economy. Cities' political regimens were changing in unison with their economic profile, and the dismantling of liberal urban policy provided as much a political opportunity as an economic one for new regimes of urban power. The emergence of the revanchist city (Smith 1996) was not just a New York phenomenon: it can be seen in the antisquatter campaigns in Amsterdam in the 1980s, attacks by Parisian police on homeless (largely immigrant) encampments, and the importation of New York's zero-tolerance techniques by police forces around the world. In São Paulo, highly repressive tactics applied to the city's street people are rationalized in terms of the "scientific" doctrine of "zero tolerance" emanating from New York. In all of these cases, the new revanchism was explicitly justified in terms of making the city safe for gentrification. The new authoritarianism both quashes opposition and makes the streets safe for gentrification.

The fourth characteristic of this latest phase is the outward diffusion of gentrification from the urban center. This is far from a smooth or regular process, but as gentrification near the center results in higher land and housing prices, even for old, untransformed properties, districts further out become caught up in the momentum of gentrification. The pattern of diffusion is highly variable and is influenced by everything from architecture and parks to the presence of water. Above all, it is geared to the historical patterns of capital investment and disinvestment in the landscape. The more uneven the initial outward growth of capital investment and the more uneven the disinvestment in these newer landscapes, the less even will be the diffusion of gentrification. By the same token, in cities where the majority of spatial expansion has occurred in recent years and where the opportunities for sustained disinvestment have been circumscribed, the diffusion of gentrification may be similarly limited.

Finally, the sectoral generalization that typifies this most recent phase goes to the heart of what distinguishes the new gentrification. Whereas urban renewal in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s sought a full-scale remaking of the centers of many cities and galvanized many sectors of the urban economy in the process, it was highly regulated

and economically and geographically limited by the fact that it was wholly dependent on public financing and therefore had to address issues of broad social necessity, such as social housing. In contrast, the earliest wave of gentrification that followed urban renewal proceeded with considerable independence from the public sector. Despite considerable public subsidy, the full weight of private-market finance was not applied until the third wave. What marks the latest phase of gentrification in many cities, therefore, is that a new amalgam of corporate and state powers and practices has been forged in a much more ambitious effort to gentrify the city than earlier ones.

Retaking the city for the middle classes involves a lot more than simply providing gentrified housing. Third-wave gentrification has evolved into a vehicle for transforming whole areas into new landscape complexes that pioneer a comprehensive class-inflected urban remake. These new landscape complexes now integrate housing with shopping, restaurants, cultural facilities (cf Vine 2001), open space, employment opportunities—whole new complexes of recreation, consumption, production, and pleasure, as well as residence. Just as important, gentrification as urban strategy weaves global financial markets together with large- and medium-sized real-estate developers, local merchants, and property agents with brand-name retailers, all lubricated by city and local governments for whom beneficent social outcomes are now assumed to derive from the market rather than from its regulation. Most crucially, real-estate development becomes a centerpiece of the city's *productive* economy, an end in itself, justified by appeals to jobs, taxes, and tourism. In ways that could hardly have been envisaged in the 1960s, the construction of new gentrification complexes in central cities across the world has become an increasingly unassailable capital accumulation strategy for competing urban economies. Herein lies a central connection to the larger outline of a new urbanism, and we shall return to it shortly.

The strategic appropriation and generalization of gentrification as a means of global interurban competition finds its most developed expression in the language of "urban regeneration." Consonant with the importance of the state in the new wave of urban change, it is not in the US that this process has proceeded furthest, but rather in Europe. Tony Blair's Labour administration may be the most outspoken advocate of reinventing gentrification as "urban regeneration," but gentrification is a Europe-wide movement. Denmark, for example, made regeneration official policy in 1997 with a separate National Secretariat for Urban Regeneration, and Berlin bureaucrats have come to view the entire period of rebuilding after 1991 as one of "urban regeneration." A major conference was held in Paris in December 2000 on the theme of "Convergence in Urban Regeneration and Housing Policy in Europe." The conference was attended by senior

policy directors and advisors representing all governments of the European Union, together with some neighboring states aspiring to EU membership; its brochure signaled the intent to push the “debate on housing and regeneration ... beyond the narrow span of physical development to examine the institutional arrangements which have to be put into place” in order to make “urban regeneration” a reality. The mission of those attending the conference was practical and comprehensive: large-scale urban transformation will require solid links between “the providers of social housing, private investors, [and] those responsible for training or policing” as well as between “local regeneration agencies, local authorities, and national governments.” Regeneration policies are multifaceted and include various efforts that would not normally be included under the label of “gentrification,” yet it also makes sense to see these initiatives—the British urban regeneration manifesto, European state policies, and the efforts to establish a Europe-wide urban regeneration strategy—as the most ambitious attempts to incorporate gentrification into the heart of transnational urban policies.

There are a number of striking aspects of these new “urban regeneration” agendas. First is a question of scale. The coordination of urban “regeneration” strategies across national boundaries is unprecedented. While various international sources certainly contributed to the rebuilding of European cities after World War II, the subsequent urban renewal programs were resolutely national in origin, funding, and scope. Today, by contrast, Europe-wide initiatives on urban regeneration are pioneering cross-national gentrification at a scale never before seen. A central concern lies with efforts to integrate housing initiatives with “other regenerative activities.” Thus, as the title of the Paris conference conveys, this transition from housing-centered gentrification policy to a broad-based multisectoral “regeneration” is still in process—and, unlike the situation in the US, the question of social housing cannot be entirely excluded from the vision of regeneration. While a Europe-wide state-centered strategy of urban regeneration is by no means yet in place, therefore, for Eurekaocrats, developers, and financiers throughout the continent, it is very much in sight. A crucial connection to the earlier discussion of the new urbanism becomes clear: third-wave gentrification is increasingly expressive of the rescaling of the urban vis-à-vis national and global scales.

Second is the question of geographical focus. The 1999 British regeneration manifesto, apparently watchful of the environmental consequences of continued suburban sprawl, declares that over the next twenty-five years, 60% of new housing provision should occur on “brownfield” sites—that is, on urban land that has already gone through one or more cycles of development. Clearly, this initiative will be aimed at older urban areas that have undergone sustained

disinvestment, and while these can be scattered throughout metropolitan areas, it is reasonable to expect that they would be concentrated in or near urban centers. Enveloped as regeneration, gentrification is thus recast as a positive and necessary environmental strategy.

Connected is the question of “social balance” and the need, as the regeneration strategy puts it, to “bring people back into our cities” (DETR 1999). “Social balance” sounds like a good thing—who could be against social balance?—until one examines the neighborhoods targeted for “regeneration,” whereupon it becomes clear that the strategy involves a major colonization by the middle and upper-middle classes. To the politician, planner, or economist, social balance in London’s Brixton means bringing “back” more of the white middle classes. Advocates of “social balance” rarely, if ever, advocate that white neighborhoods should be balanced by equal numbers of people of African, Caribbean, or Asian descent. Thus, it is not “people” in general who are to be brought “back into our cities”; this appeal is not aimed at Welsh coal miners, Bavarian farm workers, or Breton fisher folk. Rather, the appeal to bring people back into the city is always a self-interested appeal that the white middle and upper-middle classes retake control of the political and cultural economies as well as the geography of the largest cities. Probing the symptomatic silence of who is to be invited back into the city begins to reveal the class politics involved.

Then there is the question of the anodyne language of “regeneration” in itself. In the first place where does this language come from? A biomedical and ecological term, “regeneration” applies to individual plants, species, or organs—a liver or a forest might regenerate—and insinuates that the strategic gentrification of the city is actually a natural process. Thus, the advocacy of regeneration strategies disguises the quintessentially social origins and goals of urban change and erases the politics of winners and losers out of which such policies emerge. Gentrification generally involves displacement, yet neither the British manifesto for “urban regeneration” nor the agenda of the Europe-wide Paris conference registers any recognition of the fate of those people displaced by the proposed reconquest of the city.

The language of regeneration sugarcoats gentrification. Precisely because the language of gentrification tells the truth about the class shift involved in “regeneration” of the city, it has become a dirty word to developers, politicians, and financiers; we find ourselves in the ironic position that in the US, where the ideology of classlessness is so prevalent, the language of gentrification is quite generalized, whereas in Europe it is suppressed. Thus even seemingly progressive planners and local councillors from Bochum to Brixton, who still think of themselves as socialists and who may be keenly aware of the dangers of displacement, have become captured by the bureaucratic promise

of “regeneration” to such an extent that the integral agenda of widespread gentrification of urban centers is largely invisible. Not only does “urban regeneration” represent the next wave of gentrification, planned and financed on an unprecedented scale, but the victory of this language in anesthetizing our critical understanding of gentrification in Europe represents a considerable ideological victory for neoliberal visions of the city.

The point here is not to force a one-to-one mapping between regeneration and gentrification strategies, or to condemn all regeneration strategies as Trojan horses for gentrification. Rather, I want to insist that gentrification is a powerful, if often camouflaged, intent within urban regeneration strategies and to mount a critical challenge to the ideological anodyne that sweeps the question of gentrification from sight even as the scale of the process becomes more threatening and the absorption of gentrification into a wider neoliberal urbanism becomes more palpable. Gentrification as global urban strategy is a consummate expression of neoliberal urbanism. It mobilizes individual property claims via a market lubricated by state donations.

## Conclusion

In this paper, I present two rather different arguments. On the one hand, I challenge the Eurocentric assumption that global cities should be defined according to command functions rather than by their participation in the global production of surplus value. On the other hand, I want to highlight the ways in which gentrification has evolved as a competitive urban strategy within the same global economy. The post-1990s generalization of gentrification as a global urban strategy plays a pivotal role in neoliberal urbanism in two ways. First, it fills the vacuum left by the abandonment of twentieth-century liberal urban policy. Second, it serves up the central- and inner-city real-estate markets as burgeoning sectors of *productive* capital investment: the globalization of productive capital embraces gentrification. This was neither inevitable nor accidental. Rather, as cities became global, so did some of their defining features. The emerging globalization of gentrification, like that of cities themselves, represents the victory of certain economic and social interests over others, a reassertion of (neoliberal) economic assumptions over the trajectory of gentrification (Smith and DiFilippis 1999).

Even where gentrification per se remains limited, the mobilization of urban real-estate markets as vehicles of capital accumulation is ubiquitous. A further symptom of the intense integration of the real-estate industry into the definitional core of neoliberal urbanism comes from cities such as Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, Rio de Janeiro, and Mumbai, where real-estate prices in the 1990s have multiplied manyfold. The same processes of capital centralization that accentuate

the contradiction between production and social reproduction also enhance the gentrification process, although of course this works out in very different ways in different places. In Mumbai, in particular, market deregulation and global competition in the mid-1990s led to “extravagantly high prices” that briefly eclipsed even those in New York, London, and Tokyo (Nijman 2000:575). The highly volatile extremes of 1996 have receded, but the upper end of the Mumbai real-estate market now forever finds itself in competition with real estate in cities across the world, a condition which has brought small-scale but very real gentrification to some neighborhoods.

Whereas the major territorial axis of economic competition prior to the 1970s pitted regional and national economies against each other, by the 1990s the new geographical axis of competition was pitting cities against cities in the global economy. This competition takes place not simply in terms of attracting and keeping industrial production but also in the marketing of cities as residential and tourist destinations. This has been explicit in British regeneration policies such as the City Challenge in the 1990s (Jones and Ward this volume), and equally explicit from New York to Atlanta to Vancouver, where antihomeless policies have been justified in terms of an enhanced tourist industry. *Travel and Leisure* magazine now hosts a regular feature that appropriates the language of “emerging economies” to put a spotlight on “emerging cities.” Montevideo is renowned for its “thriving café society”; Tunis “has a grandeur that calls to mind Prague and Vienna”; “Panama City is fashioning itself as the culturally savvy gateway” to the Canal Zone: “[O]nce you’ve settled in, get out and shop”; and “Cracow is experiencing a renaissance” (On the Town 2000:50). Similar aspirations scripted Mayor Giuliani’s intense urban boosterism following the World Trade Center catastrophe: “[G]o out and lead a normal life,” he exhorted three days after September 11. “Go to restaurants, go to plays and hotels, spend money.”

Lefebvre (1971) once argued that urbanism had supplanted industrialization as the motive force of capitalist expansion: industrialization might have bred systemic urbanization, but urbanization now engendered industrialization. That claim has not withstood the test of time, especially in light of the globalization of industrial production and the expansion of East Asia that was well in tow as Lefebvre wrote. And yet, he seems to have anticipated something very real. In a global sense urbanization has not, of course, supplanted industrialization; all of the products that fuel urbanization are made somewhere in the global economy. Nonetheless, urban real-estate development—gentrification writ large—has now become a central motive force of urban economic expansion, a pivotal sector in the new urban economies. An adequate theoretical understanding of neoliberal urbanism will have to revisit Lefebvre’s argument and differentiate its insights from its exaggerations.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> This notion of city-based foreign policies with global reach was quite illiberally lifted from social democratic proposals made at a concurrent New York-based international conference organized by the ex-mayor of Barcelona, Pasqual Maragal. Giuliani refused to attend, but appropriated their ideas anyway.

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