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Is Gentrification an Almost Inevitable Consequence of Urban Regeneration - An Analysis of the Relationship Between Gentrification and Urban Regeneration and its Implications

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Abstract:

With the continuous process of urbanisation, urban redevelopment and urban regeneration has become a topic of increasing importance in the field of urban planning in recent years. The pursuit of economic efficiency in the implementation of policies and the physical and economic adjustments caused by urban regeneration has led to gentrification. On the one hand, gentrification can improve communities, provide infrastructure, and attract more investment and competitiveness; but on the other hand, gentrification can also lead to an increase in living costs, social polarisation and the displacement of former low-income residents. The paper argues that there is no regeneration without gentrification, but causing a degree of gentrification is a justifiable outcome of a regeneration scheme. The negative effects of gentrification can be reduced by empowering local communities, increasing social housing and encouraging community led regeneration to create a more inclusive urban regeneration.

1. Introduction

In recent years, cities around the world have been undergoing urban transformation and redevelopment, and the regeneration of urban space has received increasing attention. Gentrification is an important theme in urban regeneration, as it changes the physical and social structure of cities and may allow for gentrification in the form of class restructuring and displacement. It has been argued that urban regeneration can exist without gentrification [1]. However, some believe that gentrification is a positive process and that using positive gentrification is an effective way to achieve urban regeneration [2]. In fact gentrification is an inevitable consequence of urban regeneration. This paper will illustrate the relationship between gentrification and

ITS

urban regeneration and the consequences of gentrification. It then suggests and analyses some ways to reduce the negative effects of gentrification and displacement. Following the introduction, the paper first examines the meaning of urban regeneration and gentrification in Section 2. Then in Section 3, the relationship between urban regeneration and gentrification is described, as well as the reasons for the widespread occurrence of gentrification. This is followed in Sections 4 and 5 by an analysis of the impact of gentrification and an assessment of ways to control the displacement process and reduce the negative outcomes of gentrification.

2. What Is Urban Regeneration and Gentrification

Urban regeneration is the reinvestment in a place [3]. Urban regeneration aims to solve urban problems and refers to a fully comprehensive action, as well as the long-term enhancement of the physical and social conditions of an area [4].

As a result of liberal policies that support growth and development, there has been an increasing gentrification of low and medium cost housing in urban centres. Neil Smith[5] argued that Gentrification refers to the process of transforming working-class neighbourhoods by middle-class buyers, homeowners and developers. Gentrification includes the development of new flats, the provision of high value business, financial and professional advisory services [6]. The classic pattern of gentrification is the rehabilitation of dilapidated housing and the eviction of low-income tenants to higher social status residents; the shift from rental housing to home ownership in owner-occupied homes; transforming factories and warehouses into lofts or flats; and 'rejuvenating' the street scene with trees, the streets facilities and public artwork [7]. In developed countries, gentrification has taken in many forms in order to revive declining industry cities, or urban centres that have lost the ability to sustain employment for their residents due to suburbanisation and reorganisation of industrial transfers [6].

Gentrification is not only about the physical transformation of a place, but also about the creation of identity and status. The British sociologist Ruth Glass, who created the concept of gentrification in the 1960s, observed that once gentrification had begun in an area, it continued until all or most of the original residents were displaced [7]. Gentrification is a class reshaping of the city, creating space for wealthy users and requiring the relocation or exclusion of lower status users in the area [3]. It is clear that one of the key expressions of gentrification is displacement, where people are forced to leave their homes and their communities.

3. Why Gentrification Links Closely to Urban Regeneration

Urban regeneration is usually considered to be a euphemism of gentrification [3]. Glass also believes that gentrification is inevitable [8]. It is widely accepted that the reorganisation of the physical and economic structure of urban centres will lead to gentrification [9]. In Britain, gentrification meant that in the 1960s and 1970s the working class was replaced by the middle class [6].

The reduction of the social housing stock, the rush for economic efficiency, the introduction of the right to buy and the deregulation of rents, and a series of neoliberal policies, as well as the introduction of market elements in urban centres, allowed gentrification to take place. David Harvey and Neil Smith also argue that economic deregulation and laissez-faire led to this process [8]. On the one hand, Britain introduced market mechanisms into the council sector in the 1980s, empowering

tenants to buy homes from councils (also known as the right to buy) through the Housing Act 1980. Individual purchase was allowed in this period of urban regeneration, and the combination of this form of ownership with the better building form of the regeneration led to gentrification [9]. By the late eighties, gentrification in the form of a social movement led to greater capital investment in the development [6].

On the other hand, the long-term decline in the quantity and quality of council housing and rising land values in London have brought about state-led gentrification, widening the rent gap [10]. The rent gap refers to the disparity between current land rents and capitalized land rents, a gap that is a driver of gentrification [11]. The land value of council housing is high, but rents for its tenants are low. The local authorities, as landlords, evicted the residents and allowed developers to redevelop the land, resulting in large areas of private land replacing the council estates in the search for maximum profit.

Local authorities using their powers to transfer housing in its entirety to the private sector has also been a factor in achieving large-scale gentrification [9]. Local authorities have given too much power to developers in urban regeneration projects, even though a certain percentage of affordable housing is required, but in a planning system that is increasingly dependent on private funding, developers ensure the profitability of their schemes by selling private housing and providing residential, retail and leisure opportunities designed to serve the middle class. The increase in rents, utilities and other service costs following regeneration has left the original residents of the community unable to afford their homes, and the influx of the middle class into the community has accelerated class restructuring and displacement. When displacement or exclusion occurs, regeneration becomes gentrification [3].

4. Positive and Negative Consequences of Gentrification

Some scholars see gentrification as a positive process that can bring benefits to previously uninvested communities and their poor residents [2]. The middle class arising from gentrification, with its higher economic, social and cultural capital, made it possible to provide higher quality services, improve infrastructure and attract public investment within the community [2]. Rebalancing the population of disadvantaged and discriminated communities through positive gentrification [12]. It is also argued that the displacement caused by gentrification is small and not a bad thing, allowing those displaced to find better housing for less rent in other areas [13,14,15].

In addition, some argue that gentrification without displacement can mitigate some of the negative effects of gentrification. Considered a beneficial process of 'positive gentrification' , the influx of the middle class does not exclude the poor, and by increasing housing density, it expands the total population, thus bringing down the proportion of low-income residents [2]. This urban policy of social integration has been applied to redevelopment projects in the UK, Europe, North America and Australia [16]. Low-income people in socially mixed environments have the opportunity to improve their life chances and move up the social hierarchy [17].

In a world of increasing competition and globalisation, gentrification is being applied to re-establish a centre ground [6,18]. Previously neighbourhood-level gentrification has changed to a state-driven and market-facilitated approach to growth [19]. This state-led gentrification, with the collapse of post-war welfare system, hoped to bring the middle class back to the inner cities, catalyzing the reshaping of the entire

region's class and improving urban competitiveness [20]. Linking physical improvements to the economic restructuring of the city through the development of land and real estate is valuable to the overall restructuring of the urban core [9]. For example, Newcastle City Council, in its Green Paper, hopes to introduce new populations and integrate them with existing neighbourhoods in order to support the creation of new schools and other basic community infrastructure [12]; Gentrification has put Singapore at the forefront of global urban competition, and in the 1990s saw the dawn of a new era of downtown revitalisation, transforming the city centre through gentrification to make it more vibrant and with a more vibrant nightlife [6].

While the successful transformation of some areas has brought them new populations and livelihoods, it has also helped their former populations by upgrading local services and schools and erasing the stigma that has long been associated with their communities [12]. But even the most ambitious regeneration schemes may actually lead to displacement, segregation and social fragmentation [21]. The resulting displacement could shift the problem elsewhere, or isolate the new middle-class communities from the life around them. Some scholars have found, for example, that Barcelona's regeneration programme has contributed to polarisation and gentrification [22].

As a result of suburbanisation and systematic disinvestment in urban areas, environmental degradation and inadequate maintenance of buildings in urban areas, gentrification has received national attention as a tool to maximise capitalised ground rent and to attract the middle class and free capital to reshape the regional class. But this gentrification led to the displacement of low-income residents with little benefit to the working class [20]. Atkinson[23] also argued that gentrification is undesirable because of its negative consequences for displaced people. The exclusion of low-income families is unfair and destructive [24,25,26]. Displacement forces low-income residents out of their homes and communities in a number of ways: directly through demolition of housing, eviction by landlords, coercion through rent increases, and indirectly through changes in neighbourhoods, departure of friends, alterations in shops, and changes in public facilities, transport patterns, and support services [10], [27]. Even though physical displacement may not have occurred, in practice the benefits to low-income people who remain in gentrified communities are limited [2], the sense of local belonging is gradually disappearing.

5. Ways to Control Displacement and Exclusion

5.1. Empower the local community

The Localism Act 2011 was introduced by the coalition government in 2010. The main idea behind the Act is to 'devolve power to communities'. Through the Act, a new planning and planning tool was introduced into the UK planning system, namely Neighbourhood Planning [28]. This gives communities some power to participate in the planning process and allows them to play an important role in preventing gentrification. The communities living in the estates which are owned by the councils should also have a say in the decision making process [29]. For example, Lambeth Council intended to regenerate one of its council estates, Cressingham Gardens, in order to increase its housing stock, and as required, residents were allowed to vote on how to regenerate it. The problem was that the residents were given a choice between a partial or full demolition of the property, contrary to their wishes [30]. The community therefore took the case to court and asked for the withdrawal of the plan.

Judicial review ruled that Lambeth Council had acted illegally [31]. And the GLA has withdrawn funding for the redevelopment project on the estate because the council did not properly vote on the residents [32]. Residents eventually won the right to transfer (RTT) to a community-owned company not controlled by the council (the right to transfer is one of the tools of the Neighbourhood Planning tier of the Localism Act) in order to gain ownership and management of the property [33]

However, the empowerment of local communities is not enough. The Localism Act 2011 requires neighbourhood planning schemes to be consistent with the strategic planning objectives of local planning authorities, making it difficult for communities to have a voice [28]. Also for larger projects, the community participation process is led by the developer and may be selective. Overall, in most partnership projects to date, communities remain on the margins of power, even if they are relatively well organised (Jones, 2003).

5.2. Social housing requirements

Public housing makes an important buffer against gentrification [10]. For example, urban regeneration in the UK in the 1970s did not negatively affect low income groups. The reason for this is the massive slum clearance and regeneration history of the 1950s to 1970s, which led to the establishment of extensive social housing in many British cities. The social context of council housing, its built form, and the nature of the required allocation of social rented housing was considered undesirable and difficult to gentrify using market mechanisms [9]. Thus council housing can stop the flow of high income populations brought about by the reorganisation of the city centre. London has set a strategic target that half of the new homes built should be affordable [34].

5.3. Community-led regeneration

The social sector, as opposed to the private sector approach to redevelopment, enables existing low-income residents to remain in their homes and communities. The social sector approach is clearly desirable, but it only changes the housing of groups, not people [12,35]. And a mixed public-private sector like social enterprises [36] can offer new opportunities. Community participation is now an increasingly used bottom-up approach in urban regeneration strategies [37,38,39], and many scholars prefer a regeneration methodology that builds on the demand and involvement of existing residents to drive economic development [12], [40]. Communities, residents, planners to work together to stop demolitions and deliver community-led schemes [41]. Community-led regeneration not only improves the built environment, but also increases the potential for community development and promotes the empowerment of local communities to limit gentrification [42].

For example, the CSCB was established in 1984 by residents of the coin street community to acquire land and implement a regeneration programme for the community, marking the beginning of a community-led regeneration model [43]. In order to meet the diverse housing needs, the CSCB has developed four housing areas, all of which are managed under a fully co-operative model and are rented, not sold, at affordable rents [44]. The income generated by land ownership and commercial development has allowed it to maintain its independence and the community's specific and long-term non-profit objectives. The CSCB has redeveloped two commercial spaces, collecting rents by renting out shop premises, the profits of which support the development of the community, the design and construction of housing, the

maintenance of facilities and the organization of events. CSCB has also improved the waterfront space and created a garden to improve the community environment and attract people to the community. A neighbourhood centre has also been established to host community activities. [44,45].

The CSCB adopted the co-operative form of housing management for two main reasons: firstly, to involve all tenants in this form, to spend more time and effort maintaining the houses and gardens, and thus to maintain a strong community bond; secondly, the inability of co-operative tenants to buy their own houses ensures that Coin Street can rent them out to those who really need them at relatively low rents. Community-led regeneration involves residents in the community, strengthening their sense of belonging and identity on the one hand, and gaining knowledge and skills to boost the community economy on the other. Community-led regeneration projects are more responsive to the needs of the community, with housing designed to meet real needs and community services appropriately located. This model of regeneration, although profitable in terms of introducing market elements, leads to a degree of gentrification, but avoids the displacement and class reshaping of residents and reduces the negative effects of gentrification. Cameron [46] also argued that urban regeneration that does not involve the displacement of existing low-income residents, the reduction of housing opportunities or their disadvantages should not be seen as gentrification in the direct sense. The problem with this model, however, is that community organisations are not necessarily representative of the community as a whole, and local authorities may not be sufficiently supportive of community-led urban regeneration.

6. Conclusions

The reduction of the social housing stock, the physical and economic restructuring of urban centres and the implementation of a series of neo-liberal policies in pursuit of economic benefits make gentrification an inevitable consequence of urban regeneration. Gentrification has a significant contribution to environmental and economic improvement, on the one hand through the regeneration of the old urban environment, improving the overall quality of the urban environment; on the other hand, the urban regeneration movement can significantly improve the surrounding environment and the level of public services, attracting more investment agents, creating value added to urban real estate, thus contributing to the overall welfare and economic sustainability, and promoting the optimisation of the industrial structure of the gentrified areas. This contributes to the overall well-being and economic sustainability of the city, and to the optimisation of the industrial structure of the gentrification area. However, along with the improvement in environmental quality and value added to urban real estate, the phenomenon of gentrification has more negative socio-spatial benefits. This is because the reuse of formerly undesirable urban land has made gentrified communities more attractive to higher-income urban groups and pushed up the prices of real estate markets and public service goods, forcing the lowest-income segments of the region's indigenous population to relocate to other, less desirable areas. In response to this neoliberal trend and the attendant negative consequences of gentrification, this paper argues that people-centred urban regeneration is one way to counteract gentrification by empowering local communities, increasing social housing and implementing community-led urban regeneration as an effective means of controlling market dynamics and reducing displacement and exclusion.

ITS

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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