

URBAN FUTURES

Planetary Gentrification

Loretta Lees, Hyun Bang Shin
and Ernesto López-Morales



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1

Introduction

As readers of the gentrification literature will know, the British sociologist Ruth Glass coined the term 'gentrification' in 1964 in her book 'London: Aspects of Change':

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. Nowadays, many of these houses are being subdivided into costly flats or 'houselets' (in terms of the new real estate snob jargon). The current social status and value of such dwellings are frequently in inverse relation to their status, and in any case enormously inflated by comparison with previous levels in their neighbourhoods. 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 social character of the district is changed. (Glass 1964a: xviii–xix, italics added).

Ruth Glass's other writings, however, including those on urbanization outside of Britain are much less well known. For example, that same

year she wrote about the 'Gaps in Knowledge' in studies of urbanization in non-Western contexts:

So far, our knowledge of the current processes, configurations and implications of urbanization in the developing countries has been limited, or even apparently arrested, in several interrelated respects. First, the framework of analysis and enquiry in this field (as in many others) has been heavily conditioned by Western, and particularly Anglo-Saxon, experience – or rather by categories of thought derived from the as yet inadequately documented, only sketchily compared and partially interpreted, history of nineteenth and early twentieth urbanization in the now industrialized countries, notably Britain and the United States. It is partly because the 'shock of urbanization' felt in these countries during earlier periods is still reverberating, that the notions formed under its impact, whether expressed in terms of reason or unreason, have remained so tenacious and pervasive. The influence of such notions is reflected in the choice of subjects with which students of contemporary urban growth and phenomena in the developing countries have been preoccupied. The predominance of Western thought, in general, is reflected in the treatment of such subjects, which tends to follow both the conventional lines of demarcation between matters urban and rural, and also the established boundaries between the various disciplines of the social sciences. (Glass 1964b: 1–2)

Hers was a prescient 'comparative urbanism' that was concerned about the dominance of Western thought and experience in studies of urbanization in developing countries, what Ma and Wu (2005: 10–12) have called a Western-centric 'convergence thesis'. Other Marxists, for example Henri Lefebvre (2003: 29), had similar concerns about the hegemony of the Euro-American *industrialized* city in urban theory:

We focus attentively on the new field, the urban, but we see it with eyes, with concepts, that were shaped by the practices and theories of

industrialization, with a fragmentary analytical tool that was designed during the industrial period and is therefore reductive of the emerging reality.

In this book, we take on board a ‘new’ comparative urbanism (see Robinson 2006, 2011a) to address the concern that over the past two decades the term ‘gentrification’ itself has been conceptually stretched to uncritically assume a similar trajectory around the globe (see Lees 2012). It is ‘new’ because it focuses on cities beyond the usual suspects of London, New York, etc., and beyond the constructs that have come out of, or been based on, those places. As Ley and Teo (2014: 1286) argue, this conceptual overreach ‘represents another example of Anglo-American hegemony asserting the primacy of its concepts in other societies and cultures’.

This book is one of the first to unpack this hegemony and to question the notion of a ‘global gentrification’. Glass (1964b: 18) goes on to ask: ‘What happens to the elaborate theories and speculations on the trends and implications of urbanization on the international scale when it has to be admitted that even the most elementary raw material for their verification exists?’

In our unpacking of the notion of a ‘global gentrification’, we discuss gentrification beyond the usual suspects in Britain, Europe and North America, gathering in raw material on processes that have been labelled ‘gentrification’ in non-Western cities and on processes that have not been labelled as ‘gentrification’. In so doing, we consider the extent to which Western theorizing on gentrification can be useful in non-Western cities. For, like Glass (1964b: 27) we are conscious of the ‘persistence of the Western ideology of urbanism (or rather anti-urbanism)’ which may not exist (or at least not in the same way) in non-Western contexts where, for example, issues of informality, state developmentalism (often intertwined with advanced neoliberalism), and even the concept of neighbourhood itself, take on radically different meanings.

Building upon recent urban studies scholarship that has revisited the concept of the urban and the process of urbanization at multiple scales (see Merrifield 2013a; Brenner and Schmid 2012, 2014; Keil 2013), we advance the view that gentrification is becoming increasingly influential and unfolds at a planetary scale. This foray into 'planetary gentrification' advances postcolonial geographies along some of the pathways that Sidaway et al. (2014) suggest, for in this book we: (i) narrate planetary gentrifications and the configurations *between* their paths, focusing on the ascendancy of the secondary circuit of real estate (Harvey 1978; Lefebvre 2003) (we offer a global perspective that considers colonialisms, analytical and everyday comparativisms, globalization, and also the globalized effects of financial capitalism), (ii) we acknowledge other (post)colonialisms (old and new), (iii) we demonstrate planetary indigeneity (organic gentrifications that are not copies of those in the West), and (iv) we problematize translations (West to East, North to South and vice versa).

Gentrification is argued to have 'gone global', to have spread geographically – what the late Neil Smith (2002) called 'gentrification generalized'. Atkinson and Bridge (2005: 1; *italics added*) have proclaimed that '*Gentrification is now global*' and gone on to discuss gentrification as the new urban colonialism in a global context. In arguing that gentrification has gone global, they assume a North to South, West to East trajectory, and that gentrification has moved down the urban hierarchy from First World to Second and Third World cities. They also assume that gentrification is not indigenous to these contexts and that it is new to them. The global is seen as originating from the West. Blaut (1993: 12) argues that such diffusionist thinking is an example of 'spatial elitism' that inscribes a geography of centre and periphery on the world. By way of contrast, others, for example Tim Butler (2007a, 2010), are concerned that lots of different changes are becoming subsumed under the 'gentrification brand' and as such the concept has become 'diluted' and we are 'losing sight of what it is

that needs to be explained or at least understood'. Indeed, Sharon Zukin (2010: 9) argues that 'gentrification generalized' is really a broad process of 're-urbanization' in which city space is taken up by white collar men and women and their consumption tastes and habits, creating an economic division but also a cultural barrier between rich and poor, young and old; her research focus though is in the West – New York City – again!

By way of contrast, this book begins the process of ontological awakening to the process of gentrification in cities outside of the Euro-American heartland, in so doing we consider the claim that gentrification 'has gone' global, the idea that gentrification is a 'force' that has travelled or diffused outwards from a certain 'centre' towards global peripheries. We show that gentrification is a phenomenon that cities worldwide have experienced (it is not totally new in the twenty-first century to the global South) and are experiencing (through different types of urban restructuring).

There are material issues at the moment of co-writing a book like this. We draw on: (i) our regional and linguistic expertise (Lees on Europe and North America [languages English, and some German and French], Shin on Southeast and East Asia [languages Korean, Chinese and English], and López-Morales on Latin America [languages Spanish, English, Portuguese]); (ii) the information we collected in the workshops we ran on global gentrification two years ago, that went into producing an edited collection on global gentrifications (see Lees, Shin and López-Morales 2015) and two regionally focused special issues – one on East Asia (*Urban Studies* 2016) and one on Latin America (*Urban Geography* forthcoming); and (iii) a survey of the various non-Western case studies of gentrification (in countries as diverse as China, South Korea, India, Brazil, Chile and South Africa) that have begun to emerge in the twenty-first century. We have done the learning that McFarlane (2011) asks for, one that actively involves bringing together assemblages of 'people-sources-knowledges'

to expose and unlearn existing conceptualizations/theories, ideologies and practices/policies.

We have done the comparative urbanism or transurban learning that underpins this book ‘together’, but it helped that we all share/d the same approach – critical political economy. We are concerned with uneven spatial development in cities and the modes of regulation that manage capitalism in cities, especially in its current phase. The domination of capitalist interests continues to shut down alternatives to gentrification. Although the theory behind critical political economy has been produced in the context of Euro-American cities, as Roy (2009: 825) argues, ‘this is not to say that this analysis is not applicable to the cities of the global South. Indeed, it is highly relevant.’ In fact, it would be naïve to claim North–South cultural and theoretical exchanges are a recent problem. Capitalism has unfolded in the South following its own trajectory of development, and major contributions from Marxism and liberalism in the South have input into theories of state developmentalism, dependency, and marginality (three useful concepts that still help to analyse urban change in many places). What we have to be alert to though are the different ways in which the uneven production of urban space, the production of differentiated spatial value, takes place in non-Western cities. Ours then is an open, embedded and relational understanding of gentrification, a stance that is (as we say) historical, and that draws on Massey (1993: 64):

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.

On the other hand, in unpacking ‘global gentrification’ we also draw on a recent wave of scholarship on postcolonial urbanism that seeks to

unhinge, unsettle, contextualize or 'provincialize' Western notions of urban development. Like Glass (1964b) we see the need to breach the divide between what was until recently called 'development studies' and urban studies, which has long been dominated by Western scholarship. This means unpacking Western-based approaches, including being more careful in dealing with theories on neoliberal urbanism. More recently, Jennifer Robinson (2002) has identified similar issues to Ruth Glass, identifying a geographical division between urban studies and theory focused on the West and development studies focused on what were once known as 'Third World cities'. The result of the overlapping dualisms 'theory'/West and 'development'/Third World is that 'urban studies is deeply divided against itself' (Robinson, 2002: 533), and this narrows the vitality and purchase of urban theory and has consequences for urban policy. Robinson (2003) calls this 'asymmetrical ignorance', and this book seeks to overcome that ignorance in looking at a particular process – gentrification – globally. This should not be misread as meaning that scholars in the global South are ignorant about the process they study, or incapable of producing theorizations about those processes. On the contrary, in analysing the currently available literature on gentrification 'beyond the usual suspects', we also focus very much on the hypotheses that have been constructed by local authors.

Gentrification studies has long been at the forefront of opening up and moving beyond the traditional dichotomies of urban studies – from its rejection of the ecological urban models of the Chicago School of Sociology to discussions of rural and suburban gentrification which have already demonstrated the extension of 'the urban world' beyond the city and the inner city (see Chapter 4 in this volume). As such, gentrification researchers are well positioned not just to dispense with the old binaries of city and suburb, urban and rural, but also between North and South, developed and developing worlds (Lees 2012, 2014a). To some extent, our book is a response to Andy

Merrifield's (2014) recent call for 'a reloaded urban studies', which calls for the removal of centre-periphery binary thinking, acknowledging the emergence of multiple centralities across urbanizing spaces and 'dispens[ing] with all the old chestnuts between global North and global South, between developed and underdeveloped worlds, between urban and rural, between urban and regional, between city and suburb, just as we need to dispense with old distinctions between public and private, state and economy, and politics and technocracy' (Merrifield 2014: 4).

Although the postcolonial urban critique that we undertake in this book means 'unlearning' what we have learnt (Spivak 1993 in Lees 2012) it also necessitates, we would argue, not throwing away what we have already learned from more established (Western) urban theories in gentrification studies. Instead, we ask which elements in the South as well as the North could enrich gentrification theory and concepts. We follow Ananya Roy (2009: 820; see also Parnell 1997, who made a similar point) in this regard:

The critique of the EuroAmerican hegemony of urban theory is thus not an argument about the inapplicability of the EuroAmerican ideas to the cities of the global South. It is not worthwhile to police the borders across which ideas, policies, and practices flow and mutate. The concern is with the limited sites at which theoretical production is currently theorized and with the failure of imagination and epistemology that is thus engendered.

Despite our interest in Glass's writings, we do not, however, follow Glass's definition of gentrification. For as Lees, Slater and Wyly (2008) show, the process of gentrification has mutated so much over time to make that definition rather dated. As Beauregard (2003: 190) has said by holding one city up as a model, in this case gentrification as Glass's London in the 1960s, 'comparative analysis is reduced to a perfunctory and unenlightening assessment of how the "others" compare.'

Instead, we follow Clark's (2005: 258) more recent and expansive definition that is not tied to the experience of a particular city at a particular time:

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

As Robinson (2011a: 17) reminds us, 'the most abstract concepts offer an opportunity to incorporate the widest range of cities within comparative reflection. Abstract concepts are also the level at which urban theory is most open to a creative generation of concepts that might help us look differently at cities and their problems . . . urban studies could find in the empirical, comparative interrogation of its most abstract concepts a rich field for creative reconceptualization.'

Gentrification for us, like for Zukin (2010), is a displacement process, where wealthier people displace poorer people, and diversity is replaced by social and cultural homogeneity. This we believe undermines urbanity and the future of cities as emancipatory places. As Betancur (2014: 3) points out, some authors have built their careers by denying displacement – for example, Freeman (2006), Hamnett (2003) and Vigdor (2002) – despite the obvious 'class substitution' involved. Notably, these are all studies from the 'global North'. Displacement goes beyond 'physical' displacement of residents from their dwellings, and encompasses the phenomenological displacement (see Davidson and Lees 2010) that occurs due to the increase in displacement pressures as neighbourhoods change their characteristics and the way of life of

the previous inhabitants faces extinction. Moreover, it is not socially just. Gentrification in the West, in cities like London and New York, now limits the possibilities of urbanity (see Lees 2004 on these possibilities). Ironically, what seems to be happening in the West now is a kind of suburban-like gentrification where the vitality of the city has become hybridized with the comforts of suburbanization, creating a kind of third space of 'sub-urbanity' in which 'bourgeois bohemians' live. This blurring of urban and suburban in contemporary gentrification processes in cities like London and New York reminds us of the way that early gentrification. Indeed the term itself was associated with the rural. As Lees, Slater and Wly (2008) point out, Glass's coining of the term 'gentrification' was ironic in that it made fun of the snobbish pretensions of affluent middle-class households who really wanted a rural, traditional way of life but did not have the chance to do so. In similar vein contemporary gentrifiers in Western cities want the excitement and diversity of urbanity but a sanitized, suburbanized, version of it. The big question is: do Western ideologies of urban, suburban and rural have any purchase in non-Western contexts? For, as Roy (2009) argues, epistemes embedded in a singular model of industrialization related to modernity and development are outmoded.

In Glass's (1964b) 'Gaps in Knowledge', she argued: 'apparently, in most areas of the world urban-rural differences are becoming more inconsistent, and rather faint – though for varying reasons' (p. 5). This adds another dimension to the equation. Indeed, Glass was already ahead of the conceptual game, in pointing towards what some urban scholars have called 'planetary urbanization' (see Brenner and Schmid 2012; Merrifield 2013a) where the distinctions between urban and rural have broken down as we have all become urban. By 2050, more than three quarters of the world's population is predicted to be urban, this is what Merrifield (2013b), building upon Henri Lefebvre (2003), calls the final frontier – the complete urbanization of society, or what Brenner and Schmid (2012) call the totalization of capital. Some

might argue that gentrification going global is an example of planetary urbanization. Yet others, for example, Roger Keil (2013), are now arguing that in a world of cities, suburbanization is the most visible and pervasive phenomenon.

While we agree with Keil that suburbanization is growing around the world on megacity peripheries from Istanbul to Shanghai and it is deserving of study, we would argue, building upon Merrifield (2014), that urbanization around the world is seeing the production of multiple centralities, forcing us to rethink the traditional singular centrality (inner-city, central city or historic core) of urban development, and also the traditional assumption of gentrification as an inner-city process. We argue that processes of planetary gentrification in cities around the world are producing plural sites of contention as capital accumulation and its spatial fix produce concentrated forms of the urban in historic urban, suburban and rural territories. These processes also take place in the context of making and remaking of the urban and the rural, and of their redefined relationships (see Brenner and Schmid 2015; Walker 2015). It is evident in cases like Santiago (López-Morales forthcoming), Seoul (Shin and Kim 2015) or Washington DC (Mueller 2014) that the redevelopment of low-income neighbourhoods is the most salient housing issue there, if measured quantitatively, let alone qualitatively. Our focus then, for the most part, is on urban gentrifications around the globe where contentions have escalated due to an assault from the state and capital, which has endangered settlements and neighbourhoods that serve the urban poor, as well as those factions of the middle classes who are falling into poverty due to economic restructuring. Why the central city continues to be important globally will become apparent as you read this book, but here, centrality does not correspond to a singular centrality as was assumed by the concentric zone model once espoused by the Chicago School. The location of gentrification in planetary urban debates vindicates the enduring interest in gentrification as being at the cutting

edge of urban studies and the title of this book: 'Planetary Gentrification'. Importantly, we move beyond the usual gentrification suspects (e.g. London and New York City) to present a picture of urbanization as gentrification. We agree with Smith (2002) that gentrification is the leading edge of global urbanism, at least for now, but it is the leading edge beyond the usual suspects, and this is closely correlated with the ways in which contemporary capitalism raises the status of speculation in real estate in particular, not only in the global North but increasingly in the global South too (e.g. Goldman 2011; Desai and Loftus 2013; Shin 2014a, 2015).

The book is part of an emergent 'cosmopolitan turn' in urban studies which seeks a truly global urban studies. We follow this in seeking a truly global gentrification studies. This necessitates what Heidegger (1927/1996) calls 'de-distancing' and Spivak (1985) calls 'worlding'—the art of being global, of looking at the distinctive experiences of non-Western cities (see also Roy and Ong 2011). As Roy (2009) has said:

While the twentieth century closed with debate and controversy about the shift from a "Chicago School" of urban sociology to the "Los Angeles School" of postmodern geography, the urban future already lay elsewhere: in the cities of the global South, in cities such as Shanghai, Cairo, Mumbai, Mexico City, Rio de Janeiro, Dakar, and Johannesburg. Can the experiences of these cities reconfigure the theoretical heartland of urban and metropolitan analysis? (p. 820)

Work by 'new' comparative urbanists, like Jennifer Robinson, Ananya Roy, AbdouMaliq Simone, Susan Parnell, Colin McFarlane, and others, is often lumped together even if there are subtle differences between their works. Comparative urbanists like Robinson and Parnell do not want a central urban theory, rather they want theory to be emergent in different places, making it more agile and flexible. They desire different analytical potentials for conversations and want to take on big

concepts. Their comparative thinking is about changing theories and understandings: it is about new practices of theorizing, which in turn reshapes our intellectual practices. We do not need to travel, they argue, because in doing so we enact colonialism: rather what is required is a collegial production of knowledge. Such a collegial production of knowledge underwrites this book. McFarlane (2006) posits a 'strategy of critique' that reveals the distinctiveness of urban theories, like gentrification theories, and a 'strategy of alterity' that generates new ideas, lines of enquiry and positions. For McFarlane (2006), like ourselves, comparison is learning across 'the North-South divide'.

The comparative urbanism that we do in this book is not simply the systematic study of similarity and difference among cities in terms of like processes, rather it 'addresses descriptive and explanatory questions about the extent and manner of similarity and difference' (Nijman 2007: 1). We are focusing on gentrification as an urban process, less an urban form, even if they are interrelated. Ours then is not the comparative study that Robinson (2002) rejects (see Table 1.1): ours is a transnational examination that uses one site to pose questions of another (Roy 2003: 466). We perform Robinson's (2011a) 'comparative gesture', but at the same time we try hard to avoid academic impressionism (Lees *in press*). Ours is a relational comparative approach that acknowledges both the territorial and relational geographies of cities (see Ward, 2009). This involves looking at how cities' pasts, presents and futures are implicated in each other, posing questions of each other. As Hart (2004: 91) has argued, we need to come 'to grips with persistently diverse but increasingly *inter-connected* trajectories of sociospatial change in different parts of the world'. Before Lefebvre, Marxism attempted this goal but it failed. Currently, given our critical political economy backgrounds a relational comparative approach to gentrification globally makes a lot of sense, given the increasingly neoliberalized and interconnected world in which we reside. It is an approach, though, that desires to theorize back, reflecting, as we do throughout the book, but especially in the

Table 1.1 Traditional comparisons of gentrification versus a relational comparative approach

Traditional comparisons in gentrification studies

The city is bounded.

The city is a given.

The singularity of cities.

The neighbourhood is bounded.

The neighbourhood scale relates directly to the city scale.

Similarities and differences are used to back up theory and project theory.

Theorizing/conceptualizing from single case studies.

Theory building is certain.

A relational comparative approach in gentrification studies

The city is unbounded.

The city is constituted through its relationships (flows and networks) with other places.

The multiplicity and diversity of cities and their centralities (including renewed centre-periphery relationships).

The neighbourhood is constituted through its relationships with other places.

The neighbourhood, city, regional and global scales are inter-scalar and politicized.

Similarities and differences are used to theorize back and check/change theory.

Theorizing/conceptualizing beyond single case studies.

Theory building is more tentative and evolving.

conclusion, on what this means for existing theories on gentrification. Importantly it can only be an ongoing conversation across cities around the world, a conversation whose ultimate goal is social justice for all.

Like the 'Subaltern Studies School' (e.g. Chakrabarty 2000) which questioned universalizing Western Marxist categories for studying

historical social and economic change in South Asia but who wanted to retain a Marxist analysis, we too separate ourselves from Marxism's universalist history of capital, the nation and the political, and from readings of class consciousness that do not travel well to contexts outside of the industrialized West. And like them, we also insist on a Marxist focus on the struggles of subaltern groups, the oppressed and the alienated in urbanizing societies, that aligns with our critical political economy approach. The book also argues that the role of the state has been under-conceptualized in gentrification studies to date and in so doing shows how urban governance in metropolises in the global South has entered what Schindler (2015) calls 'a territorial moment' in which municipal governments are increasingly focusing on transforming urban space rather than improving populations (even if the latter still happens to different degrees in different places and the latter is also used to 'sell' the former as upgrading for the population as a whole). This shift has been driven by political economic circumstances, and Schindler (2015) argues that any attempt now to 'reload' urban studies (see Merrifield, 2014) must focus on 'the governance of territory – i.e. the reconfiguration of power and place – in metropolises at the frontier of the urban revolution' (p. 7). So, what is fostering this shift or moment? Schindler (2015: 14) makes some useful points – that elites, not always the 'middle classes', prefer to invest in real estate in the global South rather than in productive sectors of the economy because there is a disconnect between capital and labour. As he says:

residents of, say, Lagos, Jakarta or Istanbul, may reasonably assume that in cities of such size they will be able to find a buyer for a luxury apartment in the future, while producing commodities – for domestic consumption or for export – is perceived as risky in comparison. Finally, middle classes in developing countries are not only local beneficiaries of the global regime of open markets and internationalized production,

but according to Ballard (2012, p. 567) they enjoy 'almost entirely positive and unproblematic connotations' among many development agencies and governments. Thus, the construction of infrastructure and the development of a regulatory framework that encourages urban renewal and investment in real estate can be interpreted as attempts to 'reinforce the conditions for their further accumulation' (Ballard, 2012, p. 569)

In brief, governments in Southern metropolises are excited at the possibility of accumulating capital while remaking their cities.⁴ Especially in the context of pursuing industrial production as well as the remaking of cities, the spatial fix as a remedy for over-accumulation crises may not be what is happening. As Shin (2014a: 511–12) states in relation to China's speculative urbanization, 'it is not simply the over-accumulation in the primary circuit of industrial production which facilitates the channeling of fixed asset investment into the secondary circuit of the built environment. Both circuits reinforce each other's advancement, while the state monopoly of financial instruments provides governments and state (and state-affiliated) enterprises the possibility of tapping into the necessary finances.'

Remaking cities in Southern metropolises is done in different ways. The most subtle form of governance has been around *the regulation and securitization of space* – from slum pacification programmes and slum tourism in Rio de Janeiro (see Cummings 2015), to moving *ambulantes* off central city streets in Mexico City (see Lees 2014a); often, this is a sanitization of space in order to attract tourists and it leads to 'tourification' (see Lees, Shin and López-Morales, 2015). As Peck and Theodore (2010a: 172) say, there are deep-seated historical connections between Mexico City, Washington DC and New York City facilitated through the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank that give policy advice on such revanchist programmes. This can be considered to be another example of Clarke's (2012) 'actually existing

comparative urbanism'. *Megaprojects* are another way that governments seek to accumulate capital while remaking their cities. Schindler mentions the Eko Atlantic megaproject in Lagos, Nigeria, which aims to reclaim submerged coastline for a new district – Bill Clinton's inauguration comments sum up the overinflated aspirations of such projects:

It will work to improve the economy of Nigeria. All over the world, it will bring enormous opportunities. I am convinced that within five years, people will be coming from all over the world to see this [retaining] wall. (Akinsami 2013, cited in Schindler 2015: 16)

Some of these megaprojects are more temporary, for example, those associated with mega events like the Olympics, World Cup or Commonwealth games. Others are more permanent. However, they commonly produce lasting impacts on the social fabric of host cities and beyond, as governments make use of these mega-events as a means to initiate more permanent urban spatial restructuring. Shin (2012, 2014b) discusses how mega events such as the 2008 Beijing Olympics, the 2010 Shanghai World Expo, and the 2010 Guangzhou Asian games became the catalysts to spatial restructuring in respective host cities and further accumulation of fixed assets at the expense of the loss of affordable homes and housing rights of affected residents (see also Davis 2011 for the case of the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games). Such processes provide breeding grounds for gentrification. In cities with global aspirations, there have also been more *comprehensive transformations*, as seen in the global or world city visions of Shanghai, Mumbai or Dubai. All of these different strategies of accumulating capital have meant that capitalism has rendered parts of the population disposable, and led to large and small-scale displacements. Yet, ironically some of these large-scale urban renewal (read gentrification) schemes are supported by the very populations they dispossess (see

Doshi 2015 and Ley and Teo 2014). So, the question of new forms of resistance to these state-led forms of gentrification in the global South becomes quite interesting. The key question is, as Schindler (2015: 21) puts it so well:

Mainstream Marxian theory narrates how this class [the proletariat] became a class-for-itself in the context of being collectively alienated from means of production. But how do urban residents understand their place in the city, either individually or collectively, if they cannot realistically conceive of selling their labor power for a wage in an era of disconnected capital and labor? Are residents in twenty-first-century metropolises subjectified by regimes of urban transformation in ways that activate them to participate in the transformation of cities? Or does antagonism over access to urban space, infrastructure, and material flows of resources produce a collective consciousness the way that struggles on the shopfloor once did?

Policymakers worldwide are more interested in their new urban imaginations than they are in providing labour access to jobs. As Harvey (2012) has said, we need a different definition of the proletariat now, of what they are and where they want to go. Together with the reconceptualization of what the urban means, this forces us to think of urban social movements and the question of urban rights in the contemporary world.

Planetary urbanization unfolds in a multi-faceted way, involving a diverse set of agencies and actors that have a stake in accumulation and sustenance of class power. In particular, planetary urbanization plays out in the form of 'accumulation by dispossession.' Harvey's (2007) upgrading of 'primitive accumulation' for the twenty-first-century neo-liberal context involves, we argue, state-led gentrification taking place more often than not on formerly public land. Like Merrifield (2013a, 2013b), we prefer the term '*planetary*' as it suggests something more

vivid and growing than the moribund global. (Re)investment in the secondary circuit of capital (the built environment, real estate) is key to this process and incurs a range of dispossessions, of which gentrification constitutes a major part. In some parts of the global South, (re)investment in the secondary circuit is happening at the same time as investment in the primary circuit of capital (industrial production), for example, in China (see Shin 2014a). In other places, it is triumphing (re)investment in the primary circuit (for example, Dubai). Importantly, with planetary urbanization, 'rural places and suburban spaces have become integral moments of neoindustrial production and financial speculation, getting absorbed and reconfigured into new world-regional zones of exploitation, into megalopolitan regional systems . . .' (Merrifield, 2013b: 10). One key issue that Merrifield (2013a, 2013b) and others have paid less attention to, however, is the double character of access to land and housing as both a commodity and a social right (part of the postwar social contract – which is breaking down) in Western capitalist society and how this is not evident in non-Western cities, at least not in the same way. Ley and Teo (2014) discuss this in relation to whether or not gentrification exists in Hong Kong, and how the 'culture of property' influences people's understanding of their housing rights.

Our challenge was to access the different social, economic and political histories of different places and the different languages of gentrification and how they reflect processes of gentrification in different places. But beyond these differences we needed to get to grips with the city as both territorial and relational (with links to elsewhere). We began by thinking, in broad regional terms, about what we knew about gentrification globally:

In *Europe*, despite the hegemony of 'Western' understandings of gentrification, it is important to note that there is not as cohesive a 'Northern' or 'Western' idea about gentrification as one might presuppose. In Paris, for example, whose central city has long been middle