

# URBAN GEOGRAPHY



# Monetization of SPACE



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How do we want to design  
our urban space?

For profit?

Or for pleasure?

# URBANSPACE



- “The city is no longer the meeting place of the classes, it is a structured space of separation.”
- “Land becomes a form of fictitious capital – space is an asset.”
- “The perpetual reshaping of the geographical landscape of capitalism is a process of violence and pain.”
- Capital can't sit still, it has to grow.

# *¡Gentrification!*



# *¡Gentrification!*

A photograph of a street scene, likely in an urban area, showing several police officers in blue uniforms and a man in a white Dodgers jersey. The scene is overlaid with a teal semi-transparent box containing the text: 

***“Spatial expression  
of economic  
inequality...”***

# ***j Gentrification!***

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The process by which working class residential neighborhoods are 'rehabilitated' by *middle class* homebuyers, landlords, and professional developers.

The term **gentrification** expresses the class character of the process and for that reason.

"**Revitalization**" and "**renaissance**" suggest that the neighborhoods involved were somehow de-vitalized or culturally moribund.

# ***j**Gentrification!*

But, often working class communities are de-vitalized through gentrification.

Open doors, street games, and stoop-sitting are replaced with iron bars, high wooden fences, and a scorn for the streets.

The idea of "urban pioneers" is as insulting as the idea of the original "pioneers" in the West. Implying that no one lives in the areas being pioneered.





# ***j Gentrification!***

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## Results of Gentrification?

- 1. Demographic change (race, education, income, gender, age)**
- 2. Housing market dynamics (real estate prices)**
- 3. Urban amenities (infrastructure, transportation, commerce)**
- 4. Changes in economic base (Wages).**

# Rent [ ] Gap

**“The disparity between the potential ground rent level and the actual ground rent capitalized under the present land use.”**

In New York, land and space are very valuable, if the amount of rent being extracted from it is not maximal (low-income families), gentrification will begin as owners try to extract as much value from the space as possible.

Areas with high rent gap are prime targets for gentrification.

# Uneven Development

Ground rent levels most clearly illustrate the unevenness of development.

When this rent gap between actual and potential rents becomes a profitable prospect, capital begins to flow back into a neighborhood.



# *Gentrification!*



# ***jGentrification!***

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**Does 'revitalization' just mean more white people?**

**Do classic economic assumptions about consumer preference for more space make sense? Better vs. More space... quality vs. quantity. Gentrification disproves this assumption of economics?**

**Gentrification is part of a larger redevelopment process dedicated to the revitalization of the profit rate.**

**In some cases property taxes have been held down to subsidize gentrification.**

# *¡Gentrification!*





# URBAN Experiences

- “The purchase of private property rights secures exclusive rights to dominate a parcel of space.” But how is this secured?
- Through the deployment of policing forces...
- Space in New York is very expensive. We have the largest police force of any urban area (\$4.6 billion annual budget / 51,000 employees – more than FBI).



# URBAN Experiences

- Among other important work, much of the NYPD's work involves protecting investments (directly or indirectly).
- JP Morgan Chase 'donated' \$4.6 million to the NYPD.
- Goldman Sachs, Barclays Capital, Bank of America, and News Corp all make donations to the NYPD.
- Much of these financial institutions make their money on manipulations of Time and Space.



# FINANCIAL DISTORTIONS OF TIME/SPACE



- Banks make loads of money by lending real estate loans for purchasing houses/apartments
- Real Estate = Space /// Loans = Time.
- Banks want to ensure that the real estate remains valuable, so that their loans will continue to be paid well into the future with accordant interest.
- Is this connected to on-the-ground police policies like 'Stop & Frisk'?



## **& FRISK**

- In 'gentrifying' areas you see a greater number of police officers.
- These are areas in which space is rising in value, but there is still a large low-income population that has been there for a while and may own their homes, and are thus not paying anything to the banks.
- Stop & Frisk is a policy that has disproportionately targeted black and other minority individuals.



## **& FRISK**

- Ostensibly Stop & Frisk exists to minimize gun-related crime.
- But of the 700,000 stop & frisks (80% of which targeted black residents), only 0.02% had weapons.
- So the tactic seems more designed to harass and alienate residents that are not paying banks money for the use of potentially valuable space.

# *j* Gentrification!

- Capital has struggled to grow since the 1970s (following war time & post-war explosions of development).
- There have been periodic infusions, but these have not been based on actual growth of the economy:
  - Savings & Loan (early 80s)
  - Tech bubble (late 90s)
  - Real Estate bubble (00s)
  - Financial derivatives bubble (bursting in 2008)



# *¡Gentrification!*

- Gentrification has been one tool for suppressing this “crisis.”
- Gentrification is the movement of capital into areas that are not producing as much wealth as they could, and turning *space* into valued *real estate* assets.
- Easy to racialize the process, but is it largely unconscious? Different groups have differential access to capital and education, but the movement of capital into underexploited areas is not necessarily racial?



# *j* Gentrification!

## MYTH OF EQUALITY (in the expansion of capital):

-It sometimes appears that 'standards of living' are rising equally (within a city or throughout the world).

-But is this actually just the expansion of a single culture of ideas?

-It's not that everyone is attaining more freedom to pursue the lifestyle and values they choose.



# *¡Gentrification!*

MYTH OF EQUALITY (in the expansion of capital):

What is “economic development”???

**Expansion NOT Equality**



# Welcome to my Neighborhood

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# Welcome to my Neighborhood

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# Welcome to my Neighborhood

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# Gentrification on Franklin Avenue



“One of the inspirations for me was that I love to read the newspaper and have a baguette every morning, and you couldn’t do that here before.”

# Gentrification on Franklin Avenue



“I actually don’t have many feelings about it,” said one white newcomer, a twenty-eight-year-old woman who bought an apartment in the area last year. “I like my neighborhood because it’s nice and it has fancy coffee, but also because it’s still not totally white, so it’s a little less of a shopping mall.”

# Gentrification on Franklin Avenue



He also opened It Takes a Village, a non-profit community space for children to play and parents to congregate, across the street from Little Zelda. Nearly one hundred families have already signed up, paying \$35 dollars a month in membership fees. A majority of them are white.

# Gentrification on Franklin Avenue

“They try to harass you into selling,” said a West Indian man named Mike. He claims that MySpace NYC agents have been hounding him ever since. “They call you at all kinds of hours. They’ve come to my house and I have to chase them away.”

what happens in your apartment  
... stays in your apartment

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722 Franklin Avenue | 105 Central Avenue  
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# Gentrification on Franklin Avenue



“I don’t want this to turn  
into another Park  
Slope.”

# Gentrification on Franklin Avenue

‘Did you hear the loud music playing last night?’

‘Of course. It happens every Saturday night. It’s no big deal.’

‘Hey, I’ve got a young baby. I can’t be having her kept awake all night. It’s unacceptable and the police need to shut it down.’





# Gentrification on Franklin Avenue

Cory, a thirty-year-old white man who moved to the neighborhood in 2007, says, “There’s a Haitian restaurant shitbox next door that I’d never dream of going into.”



# Gentrification on Franklin Avenue



“White people pass by here, and they’re talking, but they won’t talk to you,” said Edward, a Trinidadian-born property owner in his sixties who went on to perform a pantomime of a white person passing a black person—suddenly speeding up and averting eye contact.

# Gentrification Frank

“It’s just a little strange, you go from four-dollar Chinese food sold from behind bulletproof glass to a twenty-eight dollar pizza and a Lambrusco in half a block. What fills the gap between them?”



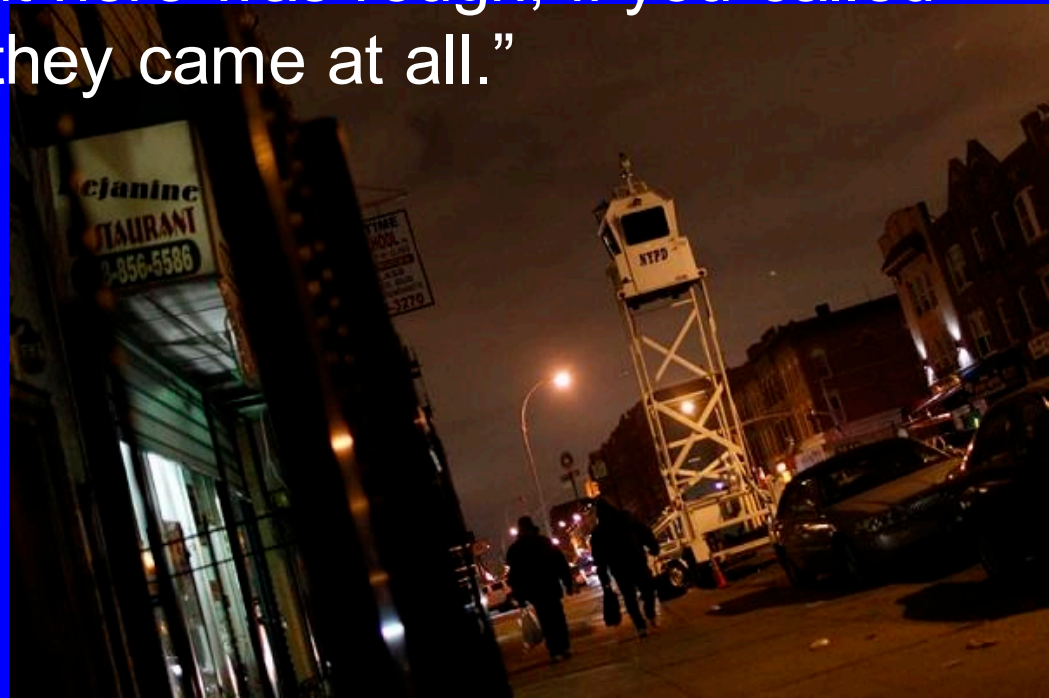
# Gentrification on Franklin Avenue



“Police officers became a regular presence on the avenue, standing at street corners and creating an environment in which criminal behavior could not go unnoticed. For some, the surge in cops seemed suspicious, as if it was designed to hasten the change.”

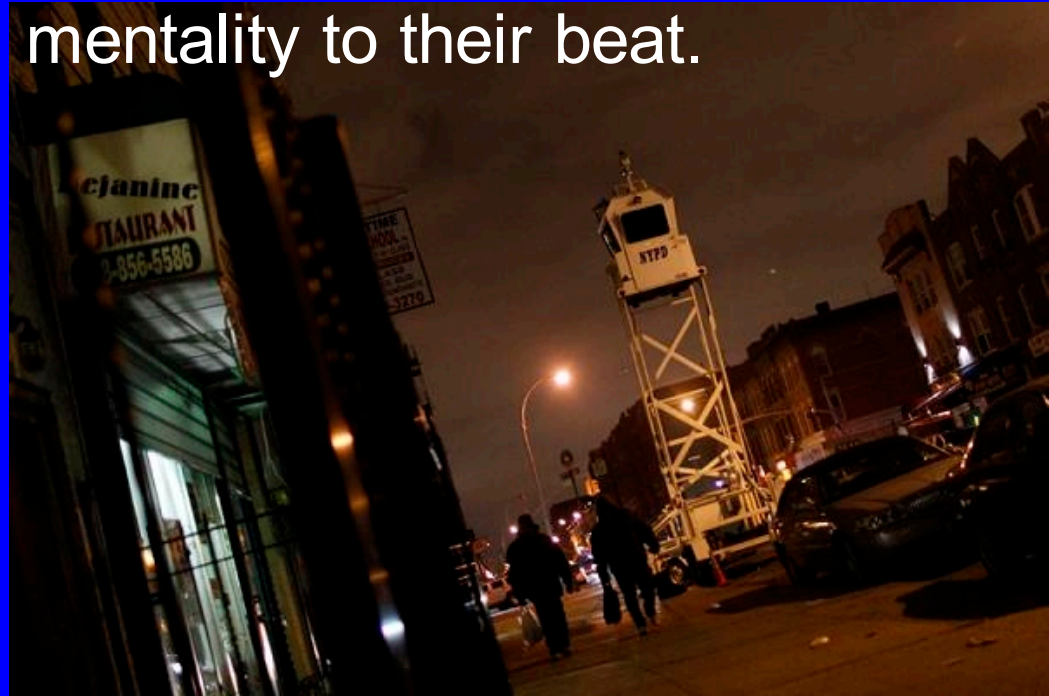
# Gentrification on Franklin Avenue

“It’s like, ‘Wow, you didn’t come before when we were calling, but now you’re here everyday,” said Craig, a forty-year-old black man who has lived in the neighborhood for seventeen years. “When out here was rough, if you called the police you was lucky if they came at all.”



# Gentrification on Franklin Avenue

Street corner drug handoffs and gunplay are now rare occurrences on Franklin Avenue. But many say its tactics have proved antagonistic. Some residents say the police officers bring a “war zone” mentality to their beat.



# Gentrification on Franklin Avenue

Abraham Paulos, a thirty-one-year-old of Eritrean descent, says he had no trouble with police before 2010. Since then he has been stopped and frisked twice, and wrongfully arrested once, spending a weekend in Rikers Island jail in the midst of midterm exams at The New School, where he was pursuing a master's degree in human rights.



# Gentrification on Franklin Avenue

“If I was white I would be a gentrifier,” noted Paulos, who said he felt safer in pre-gentrified Crown Heights. “But I’m not, so I’m a threat.”





# Gentrification on Franklin Avenue

Is there “a better more ethical way to get from a broken down, crime-ridden, drug-ridden neighborhood to a place that is safe and enjoyable for everyone while still maintaining a sense of community ownership?”

# Gentrification on Franklin Avenue

“It is important to dispel the myth that gentrification is a natural process, says twenty-two-year-old Crown Heights resident Nick Petrie, “because it so conveniently leaves out very important actors in the process.”