Missing Marcuse: On gentrification and displacement

Tom Slater
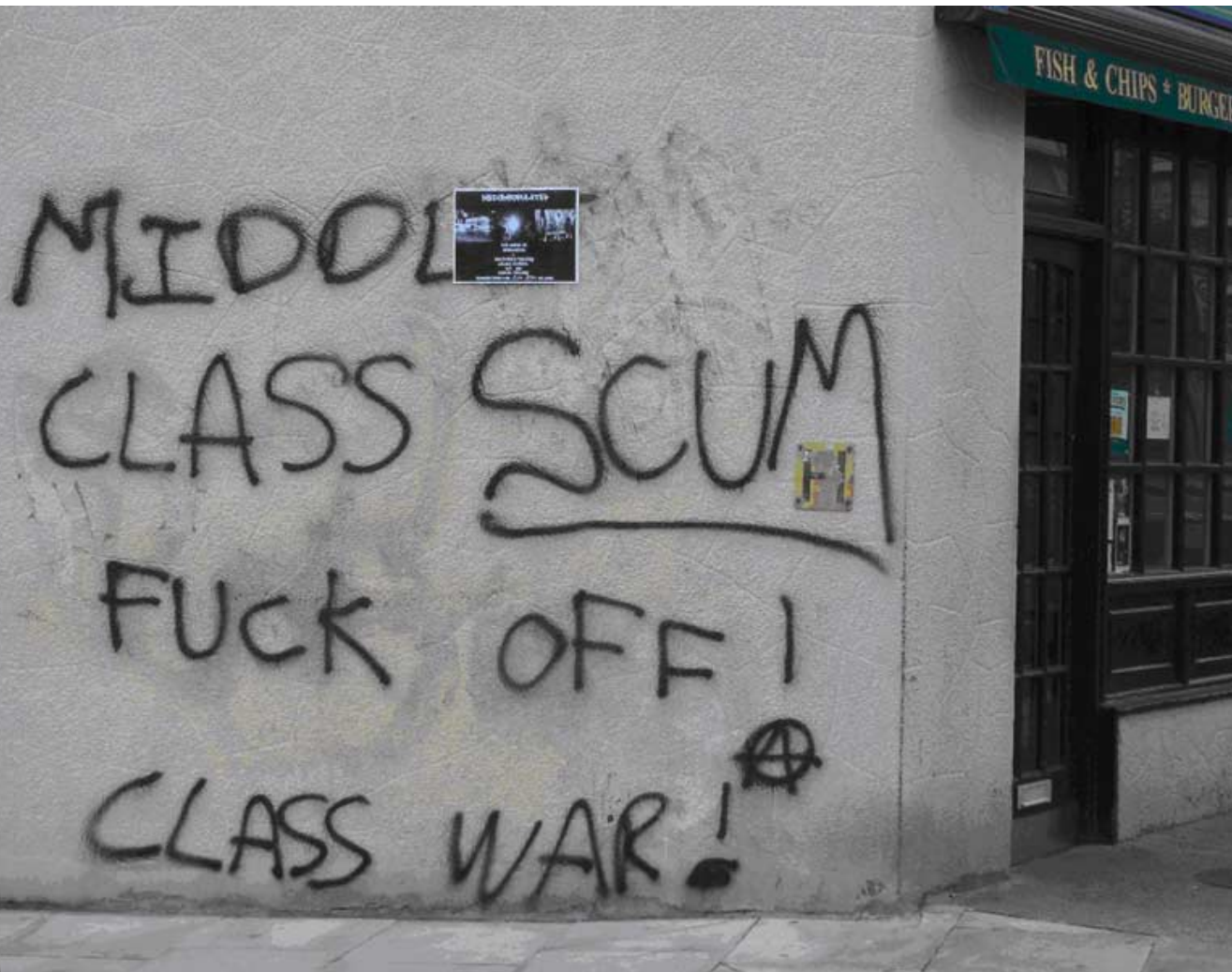
Image taken in Hackney, London, July 2006. Photo: Tom Slater

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Missing Marcuse
On gentrification and displacement[1]

Tom Slater

Peter Marcuse's contributions to the study of gentrification and displacement are immense, not just when measured in theoretical development, but in analytical rigour, methodological influence, cross-disciplinary relevance and intellectual–political commitment to social justice. However, his contributions have been conveniently missed in the disturbing 21st-century scholarly, journalistic, policy and planning rescripting of gentrification as a collective urban good. This paper charts and exposes the politics of knowledge production on this pivotal urban process by critically engaging with recent arguments that celebrate gentrification and/ or deny displacement. I explain that these arguments not only strip gentrification of its historical meaning as the neighbourhood expression of class inequality; they are also analytically defective when considered alongside Marcuse's conceptual clarity on the various forms of displacement in gentrifying neighbourhoods. Understanding and absorbing Marcuse's crucial arguments could help critical urbanists breach the defensive wall of mainstream urban studies, and reinstate a sense of social justice in gentrification research.

'In 1999 my landlord doubled the rent in the apartment but we didn't understand why.… My rent went from $750 to $1200. So he almost doubled it. There were five other families in the building, one from Ecuador, one from Columbia … worked in factories all of their lives, lived there for about 28 years; we were there for 8 years.… My apartment was taken over by a couple and their cat. So that's what he wanted. He always said he wanted to put trees on the block.… He put trees on it, fixed the gates and then sends everybody a letter saying the rent doubled. It wasn't that he wanted to make it nice for us. That's where gentrification affects people. He was making it look better and fixing it up but he was doing it with a mission to put in luxury condos for other people.' (A displaced New York tenant quoted in Newman and Wyly, 2006, p. 44)

'In particular, gentrification needs to decouple itself from its original association with the deindustrialisation of metropolitan centres …

and from its associations with working-class displacement.' (Butler, 2007, p.162)

Introduction

How many writers on gentrification have quoted the passage where Ruth Glass first coined the term (Glass, 1964), but not read the rest of the beautifully written essay in which it appears? Glass was not only a wonderful troublemaker; she was a politically committed scholar whose writings always displayed a powerful sense of urban social justice. Her 1964 classic contains an astonishingly prescient prediction about the fate of the city where she lived:

'Since the fifties, town and country planning legislation has, in essence, been anti-planning legislation.… [D]evelopment

rights have been de-nationalized, development values have been unfrozen; real estate speculation has thus been "liberated". These measures, together with the relaxation of rent control, have given the green light to the continuing inflation of property prices with which London, even more than other large cities, is afflicted. In such circumstances, any district in or near London, however dingy or unfashionable before, is likely to become expensive; and London may quite soon be a city which illustrates the principle of the survival of the fittest—the financially fittest, who can still afford to work and live there. Thus London, always a "unique city", may acquire a rare complaint.… [It] may soon be faced with an *embarrass de richesse* in her central area—and this will prove to be a problem, too.' (pp. xix–xx)

Forty-five years later, reading this is both illuminating and depressing; not just because Glass' predictions have proved correct,[2] but because the principles of social justice that animated Glass' concerns about gentrification are not so apparent in much of the writing on the subject today (Slater, 2006). 'Gentrification' as a concept and a political rallying cry has in many places been swept away by an alliterative garble of revitalisation, renaissance, regeneration, renewal, redevelopment, rejuvenation, restructuring, resurgence, reurbanisation and residentialisation—terms that bolster a neoliberal narrative of competitive progress (Peck and Tickell, 2002) that carves the path for ever more stealth forms of gentrification (Wyly and Hammel, 2001). In the last decade we have witnessed a dramatic expansion of this process all over the world, to the extent that many activists—and therefore anti-gentrification struggles—have been displaced from the central city (Hackworth and Smith, 2001; Hartman, 2002; Roschelle and Wright, 2003). These have been lean times for those fighting for affordable housing, protecting against displacement and insisting on viewing housing not as a commodity but as a source of basic need

satisfaction, upon which people depend absolutely. Urban scholars, in a far more comfortable position than those standing up to successive waves of gentrification, have a key role to play in finding strategies to reclaim 'gentrification' from its sugar-coated present (Smith, 2002).

This paper charts and challenges the politics of knowledge production on this pivotal urban process by critically engaging with some recent arguments that celebrate gentrification and/or deny displacement. I draw on Peter Marcuse's contributions to this topic to refute several claims that gentrification can be a positive thing even for those most likely to be affected by the process. Such claims not only strip gentrification of its historical meaning and gut it of its conceptual content; they are also analytically defective when considered alongside Marcuse's conceptual clarity on the various forms of displacement in gentrifying neighbourhoods. In recent literature, scholars have not only been focusing powerful analytical lenses on the life and times of gentrifiers; they have been changing their mind about gentrification, calling it something else, or even disputing its negative effects from the outset. Resuscitating and understanding Marcuse's crucial arguments on displacement helps to foreground once more the question of social justice in gentrification debate, and offers much political ammunition for scholars and activists engaged in the Right to the City movement.

Some definitional clarity before proceeding—I define gentrification as the transformation of a working-class or vacant area of a city into middle-class residential and/or commercial use (see Lees *et al.*, 2008). 'Vacant' may trouble some readers, but I include it because of the many instances of exclusive 'new build' gentrification, which often occur on formerly working-class industrial spaces.[3] To define displacement I borrow an earlier definition from Chester Hartman *et al.*'s classic volume *Displacement: How to Fight It* (1982): 'The term describes what happens when forces outside the household make living there impossible,

hazardous, or unaffordable' (p. 3). Far too much ink has been consumed arguing about definitions; what is important is that definitions have both *analytical* and *political* usage, and that class inequality is at the forefront of any consideration of gentrification.

Comment is expensive

Every day the online version of *The Guardian* newspaper features several provocative commentaries by invited contributors on attention-grabbing topics, in a section entitled 'Comment is Free'.[4] The list of contributors over the last few years is impressive for its diverse cast of politicians, journalists, scholars and activists, and with few exceptions each commentary generates substantial public feedback in the form of online postings. A recent recruit is the renowned urban geographer Chris Hamnett. Some of his commentaries on the current global financial implosion have proved astute and informative, but one commentary in particular, a muse on gentrification tellingly entitled 'The Regeneration Game' (Hamnett, 2008) is memorable for its miserable amalgam of factual inaccuracy and analytical confusion. Before explaining further, it is necessary to provide some brief background on Hamnett's contributions to the study of gentrification, for his political metamorphosis offers a telling illustration of just how far the debate on gentrification has shifted, especially in the UK.

Hamnett produced the first academic study of gentrification following Ruth Glass' 1964 coinage (Hamnett, 1973). It focused on Inner London and the impact of the 1969 Housing Act, which set out 'to supplement the moribund level of new housing construction by raising the standard of the existing housing stock' (p. 252). One of the Act's key provisions was discretionary 'improvement grants' for owners, developers and landlords to upgrade the quality of their housing—substantial sums which proved 'extremely lucrative' (p. 253) for grant holders seeking to maximise returns on property investment. Thousands of dwellings across London were 'improved' under this scheme, but Hamnett was critical of what was going on:

> 'Where it [the 1969 Housing Act] has been far less successful has been in the improvement of conditions for the original residents who are often displaced in the process of improvement.… Owners can sell immediately after the improvement, without any obligation to pay back the grant in part or whole, and developers or landlords are at liberty to give notice to existing tenants and either sell or rent at triple or quadruple the rent after the improvement. Though this "no strings" policy has without doubt led to a marked improvement in the standard of part of London's housing stock, it is precisely that part which has traditionally provided accommodation to the lower income groups.' (pp. 252–253)

In the 1980s, Hamnett turned his attention towards tenurial transformation in London, and produced some fascinating co-authored studies of what was known as the 'flat break-up market' (the sale for individual occupation of what were previously purpose-built blocks of privately rented flats) (Hamnett and Randolph, 1984, 1986). Their analysis focused on capital investment flows lubricated by building society mortgage finance; their conclusion was that this type of gentrification led to the erosion of affordable private renting and, crucially, displacement:

> '[A]ffordable private renting in central London today is no longer a possible option for many. Those who cannot rent here have in effect been displaced to alternative locations beyond the central area …' (Hamnett and Randolph, 1986, p. 150)

In 1991 we saw a less critical and more argumentative Hamnett emerging in a highly cited essay (Hamnett, 1991) that chiselled away at Neil Smith's rent-gap theory before arguing that it is the professionalisation of London's labour force and the pressures that consumer demand places on the housing

market which explains gentrification in that city (and more generally).[5] In 2003, 30 years on from his first contribution, Hamnett appeared in a special issue of *Urban Studies* (appropriately entitled 'The Gentry and the City'[6]) with a paper examining the 'middle-class remaking of Inner London, 1961–2001' (Hamnett, 2003b). As well as unnecessarily repeating desperately tired criticisms of production-side explanations,[7] Hamnett denied that large-scale displacement has ever occurred in London:

> 'There is a consistent assumption in the literature that gentrification is a direct cause of working-class displacement. While this is undoubtedly true in some cases, it is argued here that the slow reduction of the working-class population in many inner-city areas is, in part, a result of a long-term reduction in the size of the working-class population of London as a whole (by a combination of retirement, death, out-migration or upward social mobility) and its replacement by a larger middle-class population. In other words, *the key process may be one of replacement rather than displacement per se*.' (p. 2419)

The argument emerged from his longitudinal study of Inner London's occupational class structure and its links to the housing market—a study that appears to have no room for his earlier arguments that displacement on a significant scale had occurred in London. Not only is it interesting how Hamnett now views working-class displacement in the gentrification literature as a consistent *assumption* (even his 1991 paper treated displacement as a *fact*, and a key reason that gentrification research is so important), he now comments on how well London's 'out-migrating' working class might have done out of gentrification:

> '[S]ome working-class owners, including ethnic minorities, may have taken the opportunity of rapidly rising prices to sell up and move out.' (p. 2422)

Perhaps more troubling is that the last sentence of the paper contradicts everything he says before: 'working-class residents have been priced out of most of the private housing market' (p. 2424). For Hamnett, the 'pricing out' is due to the inflationary housing prices caused by the expansion of professional middle classes in London—yet throughout his paper we are told that gentrification-induced displacement has not occurred. Some time ago Smith (1992) noted that Hamnett had abandoned an earlier concern for social justice in favour of a pro-gentry philosophical individualism. In his 2003 paper, we can see that Hamnett has gone further and now denies significant displacement during the wholesale gentrification of London that Ruth Glass predicted, because the occupational class structure 'shows' that Londoners are mostly middle class now.

Hamnett's 'Comment is Free' piece is sad to read. Accusations of collective amnesia are made from the outset:

> 'Some critics of gentrification have selective or limited memories. They forget that 30 years ago Britain's inner cities seemed to be in a long term spiral of economic and social decline and the middle classes were leaving in droves. The question the gentrification critics have to address is what would they do? Would they like to turn back the clock, to the urban dereliction and decay of 40 years ago, or would they accept that gentrification may have some positive benefits? Would they prefer the middle classes to abandon the inner cities and flee to the suburbs as they did in the 1970s and are still doing in the US, or return to the inner cities? They can't have it both ways.'

This argument, rooted in an empiricist concern for the middle classes as an expanding group who 'have to live somewhere', is hardly new, but can be thoroughly refuted in at least three ways:

(1) It erroneously treats the middle classes as the exclusive agents of urban restructuring, with the fate of cities entirely dependent on their hallowed, sacred presence.

Might Chris Hamnett be morphing into Richard Florida?

(2) It ignores a body of scholarship confirming that it is *not* from the suburbs where most gentrifiers originate.[8] Hamnett thus has a selective or limited memory of the very literature on which he is an acknowledged expert.

(3) Gentrification is treated as *the only conceivable remedy* for pathological 'urban dereliction and decay'. Those in the path of urban transformation are presented with a false choice: they can either have decay or gentrification. There is no alternative. This aligns Hamnett with established neoliberal urban policy discourses.

Here is how he portrays and reacts to the downside of gentrification:

> 'So, let's look at the downside. There is little doubt that urban regeneration success has helped to push up property prices in inner city areas, making some areas unaffordable to local residents. At £250,000 and upward for a small new apartment, local working class residents will not be buying in Clerkenwell, docklands or other, similar, regenerated areas. And the gastropubs and wine bars are likely to be too expensive for the local population who will also have lost some of the cheaper local shops and cafes. But is this a convincing argument against gentrification? The class structure of many British cities is changing with a growing middle class and a shrinking working class.'

This passage exhibits two hallmarks of Hamnett's recent writing: first, reducing neighbourhoods to an 'urban regeneration success' of gastropubs and wine bars *trivialises* the loss of the right to housing suffered by working-class people in gentrifying contexts (Figure 1); second, the insistence on a changing class structure to refute critics of gentrification *exaggerates* the expansion of the middle classes beyond all sensible limits. As one of his former students (Watt, 2008) has pointed out, Hamnett's analyses of class change in London are drawn from occupa-

tional categories from the census that focus on the economically active only—meaning that the economically *inactive* (the long-term unemployed, the sick, disabled and the elderly, many of whom are likely to be working class) disappear off the analytical radar. Furthermore, as Watt explains, 23.2% of London's 16- to 74-year-old population were officially categorised as 'not classified' in the class schema on the basis of 2001 census data, as indeed were all those Londoners aged 75 years and over. Does this massive absence of evidence provide, as Hamnett is trying to, a convincing argument *for* gentrification?

Social class simply cannot be reduced to measurement. It is grounded in sets of power relations (domination and exploitation) which are etched onto urban space in the form of inequality—of which gentrification is a neighbourhood expression. Measurement is too often divorced from a broader theoretical view of the urban question, and in Hamnett's case, a *political* view that recognises that changing patterns of social class and housing in London reflect profound injustice.[9] But perhaps such an apolitical interpretation is to be expected in the city where Hamnett is based: just recently, a house in Highgate Cemetery sold for £6 million (see Davis and Alexander, 2008). The most famous occupant of that cemetery is doubtless turning in his grave.
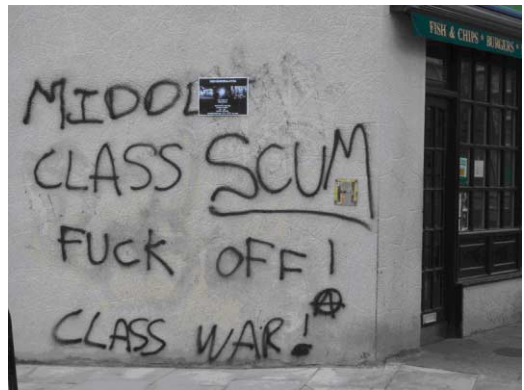

Figure 1   Image taken in Hackney, London, July 2006.

'Gentrification is a pretty good thing'

> '[T]he way to ensure that one's research has an impact is to tell policymakers and practitioners what they are already thinking, so that they can then claim that what they are proposing is research-based.' (Hammersley, 2005, p. 328)

When Chris Hamnett reprimands critics of gentrification, he is not alone. Three contributions in the 'positive gentrification' mould have recently informed media interpretations and policy/planning circles in the USA, and have even attracted attention beyond their national context. Each contribution maintains that critics of gentrification have got it all wrong, and contains broadly similar conclusions: that gentrification doesn't displace many people, and has a good side that should be encouraged.

In 2002 the neoclassical economist Jacob Vigdor, funded by the Brookings Institution, authored a paper entitled 'Does Gentrification Harm the Poor?' (Vigdor, 2002)—the most stunning example of an economist asking a rhetorical question since Cutler and Glaeser's 'Are Ghettos Good or Bad?' (1997). To his credit, Vigdor does acknowledge the literature beyond urban economics, particularly work by scholars who have tackled the displacement question, and does marshal a great deal of statistical evidence from the American Housing Survey to assess longitudinal changes in Boston's housing market (sensibly divided into 'core' and 'fringe' gentrifying census tracts, following Wyly and Hammel, 1999). Unfortunately, Vigdor's explanation of gentrification is not so wide-ranging, and rooted in conventional neoclassical land theory (each household's willingness to pay for land in a given neighbourhood based on its valuation of local amenities):

> 'What is the underlying cause of gentrification? Gentrification can occur when the preferences of high-status households change, or when the income disparity between high- and low-status households increases.' (2002, p. 171)

Not surprisingly, Vigdor is not willing to acknowledge the many critical reactions to this sort of reasoning (which is actually more *description* than explanation), and dives head-first into a tortured modelling exercise of 'preference-driven gentrification' that assumes consumer sovereignty. This approach also guts the concept of its inherent class character, for the section of his essay attempting to answer the question 'What is gentrification?' *does not even mention the word 'class'*; indeed, that word appears only twice (preceded by middle- and upper-) in an essay stretching to 40 pages. Class inequality is further jettisoned by a section entitled 'Gentrification in General Equilibrium' which smoothes over dislocation and smooches policy with the following:

> 'Gentrification might create job opportunities for low-status households, or relocate existing opportunities for low-status households, or relocate existing opportunities into areas more accessible to them. Second, increases in land values present property tax-dependent local governments with additional resources, which might translate into improved services or lower effective tax burdens for poor residents. Finally, the process of gentrification might improve neighbourhood quality for poor residents, offsetting the hypothesized negative effects of middle-class and upper-class abandonment of the central city.' (pp. 144–145)

On displacement in Boston, Vigdor sifts and sorts through a numbing array of independent variables and finds that for low-income households, 'the importance of a high-quality neighbourhood appears to outweigh that of a high-quality housing unit' and that 'less-educated households are actually significantly more likely to remain in their housing unit than they are elsewhere in the metropolitan area' (p. 161). This leads to a conclusion that Vigdor, in his concern for finding spatial equilibrium, appears desperate to reach throughout his article:

> 'Does gentrification displace low-status households? Whilst anecdotal evidence suggests that displacement does indeed occur,

these results place the magnitude of the phenomenon in context. The exit of less educated households from units in gentrifying areas occurs no more frequently—and may indeed occur less frequently—than in other areas.' (p. 161)

The obligatory dismissal of non-statistical evidence as 'anecdotal' leads Vigdor to advance further conclusions that are entirely speculative and not at all supported by his own evidence:

'Gentrification might make central city neighborhoods more attractive to low-status households.… The upgrading and socioeconomic integration of revitalizing neighborhoods might make them better places to live.… Neighborhood revitalization is not a market failure; as modeled here, it is an efficient outcome of changes in preferences or the income distribution in a local economy.' (p. 172)

Vigdor ends with a consideration of 'proper policy responses', and offers the shocking suggestion that older individuals living alone should be offered state and/or regional government assistance in 'finding and moving into a new, less expensive residence' (p. 173). No suggestions are offered as to how such individuals might be offered assistance to remain where they are at a more affordable rate. In effect, Vigdor is advocating displacement where he finds none. Qualitative studies across America from Marc Fried to Chester Hartman to John Betancur to Winifred Curran have found the sense of bereavement that comes with being displaced to be particularly acute among the elderly. Yet bereavement cannot be part of Vigdor's calculations, for it is not an independent variable: upset displacees would upset a search for logical, natural, inevitable gentrification within a broader spatial equilibrium framework. It is also worth remembering that Vigdor is writing about the city in which one of the first studies of urban displacement was undertaken. Its title needs no elaboration: 'Grieving for a Lost Home' (Fried, 1963).

Vigdor was soon joined in his sharp challenge to critics of gentrification by Lance Freeman. Three publications in particular have placed Freeman at centre-stage in policy and media attempts to recast gentrification as a collective urban good; a co-authored study using mobility data drawn from the triennial New York City Housing and Vacancy Survey (NYCHVS) (Freeman and Braconi, 2004); a national study also using mobility data, but drawn from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (Freeman, 2005); and a book that takes a more mixed-methods approach in two New York City neighbourhoods, entitled (misleadingly) *There Goes the 'Hood: Views of Gentrification from the Ground Up* (Freeman, 2006). Freeman's point of departure was that previous studies have 'failed to quantify displacement due to gentrification in a convincing fashion … [and] failed to shed much light on what happened to the putative displacees' (2005, p. 466). In some respects he his correct, but he refuses to accept the principle reason why: there are no statistical data available for such a task. Freeman believes that his data sources provide helpful indicators of the rate and extent of entry and exit from gentrifying neighbourhoods, but two immediate problems call this into question. First, using government housing databases to measure displacement precludes the propitious role of the government in the phenomenon being measured, as García-Herrera *et al*. (2007) explain:

'Insofar as the state at various scales adopts gentrification as a housing policy … it has little self-interest in collecting the kind of data that documents the level of displacement and the fate of displacees, data that would be tantamount to exposing the failure of these policies.' (p. 280)

Second, and taking the NYCHVS as an example, housing databases cannot capture the struggles low-income and working-class people endure *to remain where they are* in the face of neoliberal urban restructuring. Newman and Wyly (2006) are right on the case:

'The NYCHVS … is ill-suited for an analysis of the full social complexity of individual and family circumstances. Renters who cannot compete in the city's red hot real estate market and who leave for New Jersey (or elsewhere) disappear from view. Displaced individuals and families who are forced to double-up cannot be identified. And the structure of the survey (allowing only one choice on the question for the householder's reason for moving) terribly simplifies the circumstances of renters who were pushed out of their homes in the midst of other crises, such as unexpected bills that made it more difficult to meet the rent, job loss, or a divorce.' (p. 42)

Nevertheless, Freeman and Braconi (2004) concluded with considerable fanfare that between 1996 and 1999, in seven gentrifying neighbourhoods in New York City, lower-income and lesser-educated households were 19% less likely to move than those in other neighbourhoods. They hypothesised that such households appreciate the improvements in services and amenities brought about by gentrification, and went public soon afterwards with predictable media reaction. Freeman's national study (2005) did not find lower mobility rates, but concluded that 'the relationship between gentrification and displacement is not especially robust' (p. 483) and that gentrification is 'a gradual process that, although displacing some, leaves its imprint by changing who moves into a neighbourhood' (p. 488). This is not news to anyone who researches gentrification, even if Freeman insists that 'for students of neighbourhood change, this is an important lesson to understand' (p. 488). Students of neighbourhood change, however, need to treat with utmost caution the sentences that immediately follow:

'From a policy perspective, the implications are perhaps subtler. Gentrification brings with it increased investment and middle-class households to formerly forlorn neighbourhoods. This could potentially enhance the tax base of many central cities and perhaps increase socio-economic

integration as well. After decades of disinvestments and middle-class flight, these benefits from the gentrification should not be overlooked.' (p. 488)

Here we reach the perils of a 'nuanced' analysis. Freeman is aware of problems that gentrification can bring to disinvested neighbourhoods (he follows the above sentences with a brief discussion of them), but he does not *foreground* those problems from a policy perspective—one which is introduced alongside the supposed benefits of gentrification. Perhaps this is why *USA Today* seized upon Freeman's work and massaged it into the headline: 'Studies: Gentrification a Boost for Everyone'.

There Goes the 'Hood is admirable for its awareness in the limitations of statistical analysis. Two gentrifying neighbourhoods of New York City constitute the geographical focus—Harlem in Manhattan and Clinton Hill in Brooklyn, both of which experienced racialised disinvestment (severely in the former). Freeman's strategy was to interview 43 'indigenous residents'[10] in Harlem and 22 in Clinton Hill,

'to elicit from respondents their perceptions about how the neighbourhood was changing and how those changes were affecting them. Particular focus was given to changes in amenities, services, demographics, and neighbourhood social interaction. The interviews also sought information about respondents' housing situations and their future mobility plans.' (p. 10)

Freeman concludes from these interviews that (1) gentrification can bring improvements to neighbourhood services and amenities that long-term residents appreciate; (2) a great deal of 'cynicism' has greeted the arrival of gentrification; (3) residents are worried about displacement even if 'widespread displacement is unlikely' (p. 79); and (4) that gentrifiers can be both good and bad neighbours.

The most pervasive argument of his book is that long-term residents appreciate an

improving neighbourhood, and that it has to be better than its recent past. Freeman and his respondents see gentrification as better than the 'alternative' of severe disinvestment and its symptoms, and that while gentrification raises the 'spectre' of displacement, it has a good side to be encouraged because it makes places look better than they did before, and provides them with better services. (The crucial question never considered by Freeman is: why does it have to be gentrification that brings better services?) However, ethnographic analyses of gentrification in black ghettos, such as Michelle Boyd's work in Bronzeville, Chicago (2005), rejects as an *illusion* the contention that gentrification is happening in the interests of—and with the approval of—the poor black residents it threatens to displace. Class—the essence of gentrification—is something experienced *through* race in Boyd's analysis; in Freeman's, race *trumps* class, thwarting an investigation of gentrification that is sensitive to its conceptual content and its historical meaning.

Vigdor and Freeman both position themselves as lonely voices of reason, and appear rather unaffected by how their research findings can get away from them and be amplified and aggravated to suit certain agendas. Newman and Wyly's reaction (2006) implicitly raises the question of ethical responsibility once research findings are available:

> 'The new evidence on gentrification and displacement … has rapidly jumped out of the obscure scholarly cloister to influence policy debates that have been ripped out of context … [and] used to dismiss concerns about a wide range of market-oriented urban policies of privatisation, home-ownership, "social mix" and dispersal strategies designed to break up the concentrated poverty that has been taken as the shorthand explanation for all that ails the disinvested inner city. If displacement is not a problem, many are saying, then regeneration (or whatever else the process is called) is fine too. Perhaps it will even give some poor people the benefits

of a middle-class neighbourhood without requiring them to move to a middle-class community.' (p. 25)

The last two sentences accurately capture the tenor of the most recent national study to trumpet the low mobility rates of the poor in gentrifying neighbourhoods, and to exhibit little restraint when journalists come knocking. From the outset urban economists Terra McKinnish *et al.* (2008) are positively gleaming about what they have done:

> 'In this paper we take advantage of confidential Census data, specifically the 1990 and 2000 Census Long Form Data, to provide the richest study of gentrification to date.' (p. 2)

For such a 'rich' study, the section of the paper entitled 'Definition of Gentrification' is desperately confused; in fact, it contains no definition at all. Instead, they simply look at which poor census tracts experienced an increase in average family income between 1990 and 2000 of at least $10,000. Boasting further about their privileged access to statistics usually under lock and key, they claim that their narrowing of geographical scale and provision of more detailed demographic information on 'movers and stayers' allows them to validate beyond all doubt Vigdor and Freeman's suspicions regarding why low-income minorities do not appear to exit gentrifying contexts:

> 'Overall, we find that rather than dislocating non-white households, gentrification creates neighbourhoods that are attractive to middle-class minority households, particularly those with children or with elderly householders. Furthermore, there is evidence that gentrification may even increase incomes for those same households.' (p. 2)

Aside from the embarrassment of presenting *as a novel research finding* the established fact that gentrification creates neighbourhoods attractive to the middle classes and increases their incomes, of most concern should be what happened once this paper

was produced. The National Bureau of Economic Research circulated the paper widely and soon afterwards *Time* magazine produced an article entitled 'Gentrification: Not Ousting the Poor?' Particularly bothersome was the comment by Randall Walsh, one of the authors of the study:

> 'We're not saying that there aren't communities where displacement isn't happening. But in general, across all neighbourhoods in the urbanized parts of the U.S., it looks like gentrification is a pretty good thing.'

The *Time* article concluded that 'the study paints a more nuanced picture of gentrification than exists in the popular imagination'—precisely the same language (forming the bedrock of the current *academic doxa* on the topic) which Jacob Vigdor and Lance Freeman have used in their efforts to maximise the visibility and impact of their research.

The studies under scrutiny here are, in fact, not that 'nuanced' at all. Indeed, what appears to have motivated them was deep suspicion of radical perspectives on gentrification which present this process as one which causes low-income and working-class communities anything from serious anxiety to serious upheaval. There is little sense of moral outrage at moving people from their homes, denying them the right to housing via the erosion of affordability, and the commodification of a basic human need. One only has to read the first few pages of *Displacement: How to Fight It* (Hartman *et al.*, 1982), as much a challenge to neoclassical land theory as a guidebook for community activists, to see the importance of what has been silenced by those who have been insisting on gentrification's positives:

> '*Moving people involuntarily from their homes or neighbourhoods is wrong.* Regardless of whether it results from government or private market action, forced displacement is characteristically a case of people without the economic and political power to resist being pushed out by people

with greater resources and power, people who think they have a "better" use for a certain building, piece of land, or neighborhood. The pushers benefit. The pushees do not. [It is also] *fundamentally wrong to allow removal of housing units from the low-moderate income stock, for any purpose, without requiring at least a one-for-one replacement.* Demolition, conversion, or "upgrade" rehab of vacant private or publicly owned lower-rent housing should be just as vigorously opposed as when those units are occupied.' (pp. 4–5, emphasis in the original)

The ongoing search for 'robust evidence'—the same foraging which allows Chris Hamnett to refute his own earlier findings—has also shut out any chance of conceptual development and analytical sophistication with regard to urban displacement and its links to gentrification. The communicators of low mobility rates among the poor need an analytical corrective to land in their epistemological pumpkin patch, and this can be found in the writings of Peter Marcuse.

Missing Marcuse: gentrification and displacement explained

> 'What makes a subject hard to understand—if it's something significant and important—is not that before you can understand it you need to be specially trained in abstruse matters, but the contrast between understanding the subject and what most people *want* to see. Because of this the very things which are most obvious may become the hardest of all to understand. What has to be overcome is a difficulty having to do with the will, rather than with the intellect.' (Ludwig Wittgenstein, 1977 [1931])

New York City in the early 1980s exhibited a landscape where two processes that appeared to be polar opposites were happening simultaneously—abandonment and gentrification. To policy-makers, the former was painful, and nothing could be done to stop it short of triage. Gentrification, on the other hand, was highly desirable to policy-makers—a cure for

abandonment, financed mostly by the private sector, and any displacement it causes would be trivial. For low-income communities, however, urban policy didn't exactly offer much hope; the message was that you can either have abandonment or gentrification. Peter Marcuse took a knife to the soft underbelly of this false choice with a series of papers[11] showing how abandonment and gentrification are neither opposites nor alternatives, but tightly connected (Marcuse, 1985a, 1985b, 1986). With typical conceptual precision, here is Marcuse (1985a) summarising his argument:

> 'Abandonment drives some higher-income households out of the city, while it drives others to gentrifying areas close to downtown. Abandonment drives some lower-income households to adjacent areas, where pressures on housing and rents are increased. Gentrification attracts higher-income households from other areas in the city, reducing demand elsewhere, and increasing tendencies to abandonment. In addition, gentrification displaces lower-income people—increasing pressures on housing and rents. Both abandonment and gentrification are linked directly to changes in the economic polarization of the population. A vicious circle is created in which the poor are continuously under pressure of displacement and the wealthy continuously seek to wall themselves within gentrified neighbourhoods. Far from a cure for abandonment, gentrification worsens the process.' (p. 196)

In its commendable simplicity, this account offers a devastating indictment of consumer sovereignty interpretations of gentrification and abandonment, which hold that the former is explained by rising demand for housing, the latter by falling demand. As Marcuse showed, 'dual market' housing demand arguments (gentrification in one market, abandonment in the other) are immediately derailed by the geographical fact that 'the two phenomena often occur around the corner from each other' (p. 197). Crucially, gentrification and abandonment

were not explained as the result of individual household preferences, but rather as disturbing outcomes of the private and public institutional factors *behind* any preferences; quite simply, the state of the housing market and of public policy.

But what of the extremely difficult displacement question? Marcuse built upon and extended the earlier work of Grier and Grier (1978), and LeGates and Hartman (1981), to conceptualise four types of displacement:[12]

(1) *Direct last-resident displacement*: this can be physical (e.g. when landlords cut off the heat in a building, forcing the occupants to move out) or economic (e.g. a rent increase).

(2) *Direct chain displacement*: this looks beyond standard 'last-resident' counting to include previous households that 'may have been forced to move at an earlier stage in the physical decline of the building or an earlier rent increase'.

(3) *Exclusionary displacement*: this refers to those residents who cannot access housing as it has been gentrified/abandoned:

> 'When one household vacates a housing unit voluntarily and that unit is then gentrified or abandoned so that another similar household is prevented from moving in, the number of units available to the second household in that housing market is reduced. The second household, therefore, is excluded from living where it would otherwise have lived.' (p. 206)

(4) *Displacement pressure*: this refers to the dispossession suffered by poor and working-class families during the transformation of the neighbourhoods where they live:

> 'When a family sees the neighbourhood around it changing dramatically, when their friends are leaving the neighbourhood, when the stores they patronise are liquidating and new stores for other clientele are taking their places, and when changes in public facilities, in transportation patterns, and in support

services all clearly are making the area less and less livable, then the pressure of displacement already is severe. Its actuality is only a matter of time. Families living under these circumstances may move as soon as they can, rather than wait for the inevitable; nonetheless they are displaced.' (p. 207)

Whilst anchored in an analysis of New York City's housing market in the 1980s, the huge literature on gentrification since the 1980s provides nothing obvious to suggest that these insights are not applicable elsewhere. Marcuse was arguing for a panoramic view of displacement where there is abandonment and gentrification:

> 'The full impact of displacement must include consideration of all four forms.… It must include displacement from economic changes, physical changes, neighbourhood changes, and individual unit changes.' (p. 208)

He was acutely sensitive to the difficulties in measuring gentrification-induced displacement precisely, yet he was pointing out that it is essential to have *conceptual clarity before research on displacement begins, and before any conclusions can be drawn*. This is a masterclass for all gentrification researchers, but sadly it has been skipped by those whose work has made the headlines.

Let us take exclusionary displacement as an example. The studies reported in the last section all maintained that lower household mobility rates among the poor in gentrifying neighbourhoods suggested that concerns about displacement are overblown, and in turn, suggests that poor people must appreciate the 'improvements' taking place in those neighbourhoods, and find ways to stay. Here is Marcuse's (2005) response:

> 'Do they have a "lower propensity to move" because they are finally getting decent neighborhood services (an odd phrase, incidentally, quantitatively considered: judging just by statistics, prison inmates have a "low propensity to move"); or are they not moving because the very process of gentrification reduces their possibilities of

finding affordable housing, in a tight and tightening market?'

Freeman's counter-charge (2008) is as follows:

> 'It is unlikely that this [exclusionary displacement] would explain Freeman and Braconi's results for it does not explain why mobility rates would be *lower* in gentrifying neighborhoods and those experiencing the most rapid rental inflation. Presumably, poor households in non-gentrifying neighborhoods would also be trapped [because so much of the city's housing has gentrified] as well.' (p. 187)

The 'poor households in non-gentrifying neighbourhoods' to which Freeman refers represent the control group from the Freeman and Braconi (2004) study, and this group includes residents from some of the poorest parts of New York City (parts of Brooklyn and Queens with high poverty rates, plus all of the Bronx). Refuting exclusionary displacement by saying that this group would be unable to access gentrified housing too is an interesting defence, but not one sensitive to a litany of studies which document high levels of *forced* mobility for poor renter households (via evictions):

> '[R]enters, who have far less security of tenure than homeowners, are disproportionately represented among involuntary movers. And since, compared with homeowners, renters tend to be disproportionately minority and to have lower incomes, the problem of involuntary moves disproportionately affects the more vulnerable households in our society.' (Hartman and Robinson, 2003, p. 467)

So, as Newman and Wyly (2006) explain with respect to Freeman and Braconi's control group:

> 'We might expect that these residents move more frequently than those in other areas of the city, producing an artificially high standard to use as a comparison for displacement rates from gentrifying neighbourhoods.' (p. 28)

In addition, if gentrification theory teaches us anything, we should know by now that *rent gaps are widest in non-gentrifying neighbourhoods* (when the gap between the actual ground rent in the area and the ground rent that could be extracted were the area to undergo reinvestment becomes wide enough to allow that reinvestment to take place). Higher levels of mobility—especially evictions—are to be expected as landlords and developers realise that systematic disinvestment has reached a point where neighbourhoods can be redeveloped at substantial profit (see also Clark, 1987; Hammel, 1999). To put all this in clearer conceptual terms, direct displacement (last-resident and probably chain forms) is suffered by poor households in non-gentrifying neighbourhoods, and exclusionary displacement is suffered by poor households in gentrifying neighbourhoods, where low mobility is also to be expected.

To claim that displacement concerns are overblown, and to replace those concerns with the hypothesis that poor people must appreciate the 'improvements' taking place in gentrifying neighbourhoods, is greatly to disregard the ongoing struggles non-gentrifiers endure in order to make rent as 'improvements' around them make everything more expensive; not to mention the constant fear of displacement among vulnerable renters in particular. Freeman (2006) discusses this fear, but throughout his book unfortunately characterises it as 'cynicism'[13] that can and should be 'dampened' by community organisations (p. 186). In addition, he wonders if displacees will be fine in the long run:

> 'There is a strand of research in social psychology that suggests people routinely underestimate their resilience in the face of adverse life events like the loss of a limb or a loved one. Displacement could possibly be similar in this way.' (p. 164)

Another example of how scholars conveniently miss Marcuse can be found in a recent paper by Hamnett (again!) and Whitelegg (2007) on loft conversions in Clerkenwell, London:

> 'Commercial gentrification … [has] significantly and probably irrevocably changed the social mix and ethos of the area which was dominated by social rented housing tenants. This has not, however, been accompanied by significant residential displacement as almost all the new housing units were in what were previously warehouses, industrial, or office buildings. As such, it is a clear example of gentrification without displacement although it may well be accompanied by growing feelings of relative deprivation on the part of existing residents who have seen traditional working men's cafes and pubs replaced by swish restaurants, wine bars, kitchen shops, and florists.' (p. 122)

Gentrification without displacement … yet the social mix has changed, the area *was* (it no longer is) dominated by social rented housing tenants, and working men's cafes and pubs have disappeared in favour of swish establishments? What Hamnett and Whitelegg are describing is Marcuse's *displacement pressure*—so they have actually uncovered a clear example of gentrification *with* displacement. It is also a pity that they did not consult the recent scholarship on 'indirect displacement' in surrounding neighbourhoods as warehouse, industrial and office building conversions elevate rental and sales prices in 'up and coming' areas adjacent to those conversions (Davidson, 2007); furthermore, the work of Curran (2004, 2007) on *industrial displacement* in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, reveals the futility of seeing gentrification-induced displacement as something that just affects occupied housing units.

A final note regarding the wider applicability of Marcuse's conceptual logic—his writings have much to offer anti-gentrification struggles. Exclusionary displacement is a potentially devastating *political* reaction to all those who have been pressing the view that low mobility among the poor in cities of the Global North is tantamount to the poor appreciating gentrification. When New Urbanist blowhard Andres Duany (2001) asks 'So what's all the fuss about over

gentrification?', ridiculing neighbourhood activism in the process, the Marcuse-inspired reply is that gentrification has removed so much affordable housing that poor people in gentrifying neighbourhoods are trapped. They do not in fact 'appreciate' gentrification, as it has severely limited their residential mobility. In cities in the Global South, slum clearances for mega-events (such as the Beijing Olympics) mean that 'direct last-resident displacement' and 'direct chain displacement' could not be more relevant to understanding the magnitude of dislocation,[14] and the dynamics behind it. It is only by grasping the mechanisms that create different forms of displacement can any attempt to legitimise upheaval be effectively refuted.

Conclusion: on alternatives

> 'Eviction from the neighbourhood in which one was at home can be almost as disruptive of the meaning of life as the loss of a crucial relationship. Dispossession threatens the whole structure of attachments through which purposes are embodied, because these attachments cannot readily be re-established in an alien setting.' (Peter Marris, 1986, p. 57)

The debate over both gentrification and displacement is currently dominated by mainstream perspectives which rob the former of its historical meaning as the neighbourhood expression of class inequality, and gut the latter of its conceptual content by viewing low mobility among poor residents in gentrifying neighbourhoods as robust evidence that the displacement concerns of anti-gentrification activists are overblown. These perspectives, anchored in neoclassical urban economics and dressed up in methodological sophistication and nuanced reasoning, have proved highly seductive to journalists seeking sound bytes and neat statistics, and to urban policy-makers searching for a 'reliable evidence base' free from 'anecdotes'.

The task for critical urban studies is to reject the celebration of gentrification and

the denial of displacement by reorienting the debate away from the positivist humdrum of independent variables drawn from survey categories (legitimised by appeals to 'policy relevance'), and towards a sturdier analytical, political and moral framework which is rooted in *housing as a question of social justice*, and in particular, adequate and affordable housing as a human right and a basic human need. Housing is a fictitious financial asset (Harvey, 1985); its non-fictional status as shelter and as *home* is beyond question. 'Home' tends to evoke some of the most elevated human reactions:

> 'A home exists where sentiment and space converge to afford attachment, stability, and a secure sense of personal control. It is an abiding place and a web of trustworthy connections, an anchor of identity and social life, the seat of intimacy and trust from which we pursue our emotional and material needs.' (Segal and Baumohl, 1988, p. 259)

Dispossessing or depriving someone of their home is therefore 'a heinous act of injustice' (D.M. Smith, 1994, p. 152), and one that makes the decade-long preoccupation with researching the consumer preferences of middle-class gentrifiers even more baffling. As grim as the current global financial implosion may seem (it was caused in large part by housing becoming the major vehicle of capital accumulation), there is a golden opportunity for critical urbanists amongst the detritus left in the wake of the mobilisation of state power in the extension of market rule (Tickell and Peck, 2003). In the USA, the widespread analogies with the Great Depression offer an unexpected opening, for in the 1930s the threat of massive unrest around issues of housing and unemployment led to moratoria on mortgage foreclosures, strong federal support for low-income home-ownership (as opposed to private support) and the enactment of a nationwide public housing programme (Squires, 1992). So, the large-scale displacement caused by epidemic foreclosures and repossessions should not only be analysed as symptomatic of the

fundamental flaws of three decades of economic deregulation; it should be analysed as part of a wider intellectual project *to bring social justice back in* to research on the housing question (and, of course, the urban question).

This will not be straightforward. Careful scrutiny of recent issues of the journals *Housing Studies* and *Urban Studies* reveals them to have become instruments of the 'growing heteronomy of urban research' (Wacquant, 2008); that is, research guided by the priorities of policy-makers and city rulers, and the worries of the mainstream media, sidelining autonomous intellectual projects carrying a 'higher theoretical payload' (p. 203). There appears to be little room for perspectives which call into question the underlying structure of socio-political interests constituting capitalist urban and land economies and policies,[15] or what Neil Smith (1996) called 'all the economic and political exploitation which makes gentrification possible' (p. xx). Urban researchers—often funded by the state—seldom have the capacity to formulate their own questions and to seek answers with total freedom, no matter where their inquiries lead them. The function of 'policy-relevant' research seems to be less about changing cities for the better, but rather to stand guard and protect the dominant class from the impertinent questioning of critical reason (Wacquant, 2004).

But what of alternatives to gentrification? This is hardly a topic bursting with ideas lately. In fact, one of the more striking trends in recent scholarship has been a proliferation of policy-oriented suggestions on how we might 'manage' gentrification, rather than stop it (for an exception, see Ley and Dobson, 2008). This research precludes the vital moral question of *what property ought to be* (Blomley, 2004). DeFilippis (2004) gets right to the heart of the problem to be tackled:

> 'The importance of gentrification … is that it clearly demonstrates that low-income people, and the neighbourhoods they live in, suffer

not from a lack of capital but from a lack of power and control over even the most basic components of life—that is, the places called home.' (p. 89)

DeFilippis' insightful discussion of assorted efforts to gain power and control in communities across America[16] nudges us closer to a consideration of possibilities for the *decommodification of housing*. Particularly exciting in this regard is that Peter Marcuse co-authored a punchy essay in this very issue in the mid-1980s (Achtenberg and Marcuse, 1986). Policy researchers would probably dismiss this essay as some sort of radical idealism (or even socialist madness), but much of the content of this essay is highly relevant to today's housing meltdown:

> 'Now that the political counterattack on housing is in full force and housing and economic conditions are worsening, there is an opportunity to develop a broad-based progressive housing movement that can unite low- and moderate-income tenants and homeowners around their common interest in decent, affordable housing and adequate neighbourhoods.… Needed is a program that can alter the terms of existing public debate on housing, that challenges the commodity nature of housing and its role in our economic and social system, and that demonstrates how people's legitimate housing needs can be met through an alternative approach.' (p. 475)

Achtenberg and Marcuse carefully outlined the goal of such a programme:

> 'To provide every person with housing that is affordable, adequate in size and of decent quality, secure in tenure, and located in a supportive neighbourhood of choice, with recognition of the special housing problems confronting oppressed groups.' (p. 476)

A strategy for housing decommodification[17] would be an attempt 'to limit the role of profit from decisions affecting housing, substituting instead the basic principle of socially determined need' (p. 476). They called for the social ownership of housing, the social

production of housing supply, public control of housing finance capital, the social control of land, the resident control of neighbourhoods, affirmative action and housing choice, and equitable resource allocation.

Now, to advocate the decommodification of housing is neither to get carried away in some romantic haze that is divorced from empirical reality, nor to cop out of practical solutions to the immediate problem of gentrification and displacement. It is simply to argue that there is considerable mileage in resuscitating these ideas at a time when they are so urgently needed.[18] The eloquence with which they were written, their theoretical sophistication, their scientific rigour and their deep-seated concern for the plight of those most affected by urban socio-spatial restructuring provide a compelling case for, at the very least, serious discussion and debate. The task for scholars engaged in the 'Right to the City' movement is not just ongoing inquiry into what leads some to have more rights to the city than others, but the construction of a set of morally defensible principles which might bring about the political will to do something about the class inequalities so vividly written into the landscape of the neoliberal metropolis. As Marcuse (1986) himself argued:

> 'The large question is not *whether* abandonment can be avoided, gentrification controlled, displacement eliminated, or even *how* these things can be done, but rather whether there is the desire to do them. That is a question that can only be answered in the political arena.' (p. 175)

Notes

1 This title is a deliberate play on Peter Marcuse's memorable (1991) book *Missing Marx: A Personal and Political Journal of a Year in East Germany, 1989–1990*, an absorbing personal and political account of the dissolution of the socialist state based on his observations of key events and experiences in the tumultuous year of 1989.

2 Global financial institutions liberated by economic deregulation have turned central London—and indeed much of south-east England—into an appallingly expensive place, especially in terms of housing.

3 Jason Hackworth (2002, p. 815) has defined gentrification as 'the production of space for progressively more affluent users', the justification being 'in light of several decades of research and debate that shows that the concept is usefully applied to non-residential urban change and that there is frequently a substantial time lag between when the subordinate class group gives way to more affluent users. That is, the displacement or replacement is often neither direct nor immediate, but the process remains "gentrification" because the space is being transformed for more affluent users' (p. 839).

4 http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree. The title is a reference to a famous sentence in a 1921 essay written by a former *Guardian* editor C.P. Scott: 'Comment is free, but facts are sacred.'

5 For much of the 1990s, Hamnett lambasted Saskia Sassen for presenting a 'polarisation' view of global cities that did not take into account changing occupational structures (in particular, an expanding professional middle class). He never considered, however, the wider political messages contained in her work (this presumably explains why Sassen never felt it necessary to respond in print).

6 The issue emerged from a conference in Glasgow in September 2002 entitled 'Upward Neighbourhood Trajectories', and was notable for its almost exclusive focus on gentrifiers (despite a wide-ranging call for papers), a striking lack of critical perspectives, its unearthing of old debates (Redfern, 2003) and assessments of 'positive gentrification' (Cameron, 2003).

7 Smith pointed out this problem after Hamnett delivered his conference paper in Glasgow, and several influential contributions in the 1990s and beyond have insisted gentrification researchers move on from this theoretical quagmire. But neither Hamnett, peer reviewers, the editor of the special issue or the editors of the journal took any notice.

8 This literature is so extensive that it's a challenge to single out a few examples, but see Marcuse (1985a) for a discussion of the 'back-to-the-city' myth, and Beauregard (1993) for a very detailed discussion of the 'discourse of decline' which led to erroneous assumptions of gentrification being a physical movement away from suburbia. To be sure, gentrifiers certainly rejected suburbia, but this was *for what it symbolised*—most never left the central city (see Ley, 1996).

9 Particularly galling is the fact that Hamnett (2003a) has recently accused contemporary human geographers of 'fiddling while Rome burns'—but

on the basis of his arguments about gentrification, might they have borrowed his fiddle?

10 The 'indigenous residents' were all non-white, 37% of them college educated (gentrifiers?), and the median length of tenure for both neighbourhoods was 17 years, even though a few residents interviewed were not indigenous at all but 'recent arrivals'.

11 He was not the first to point this out. Neil Smith (1979) had challenged hegemonic neoclassical economic thought with his rent-gap thesis, where abandonment represented the most extreme stage of capital devolarisation in the built environment before opportunities for profitable redevelopment could be captured.

12 This discussion also serves as a corrective to Atkinson's summary (2000, pp. 150–151) of Marcuse's work, which gets confused and misses 'displacement pressure' altogether.

13 Re-casting any opposition to gentrification as 'cynicism' on the part of residents is a powerful political move, implying that such residents are falsely conscious, incapable of understanding that gentrification is good for them. I am grateful to Martine August for this point.

14 Shenjing He and Fulong Wu's study (2005) of the gentrification of the working-class Xintiandi neighbourhood in Shanghai revealed that 1950 households were evicted and displaced to poor suburbs within six months, and in neighbouring Taipingqiao Park, 3800 households and 156 work units were evicted and displaced in 43 days (the record for the fastest displacement ever in Shanghai) to make way for a public park connected to gentrification. The consequences of direct displacement were emotionally and economically devastating: 'Although these residents have been offered resettlement housing, many people have become chronically unemployed after a few years, due to excessive commuting costs and broken social networks' (He, 2007, p. 194).

15 In their editorial introduction to a recent special issue of *Urban Studies* entitled 'Gentrification and Public Policy', Lees and Ley (2008) hope that the scholarship within the issue 'may aid a first step towards a more inclusive policy portfolio that addresses head-on the unequal life chances associated with the contemporary gentrification project' (p. 2383). This erroneously assumes that (a) policy-makers are going to read the issue and (b) that policy-makers are interested in resisting neoliberal urbanisation.

16 DeFilippis focuses on Limited Equity Housing Cooperatives, Community Land Trusts and Mutual Housing Associations; forms of collective ownership that hardly disrupt the wider political–economic status quo, but at least remove land and housing from the brutality of the market.

17 Smith and Williams (1986) concluded their edited volume as follows: 'In the long run, the only defence against gentrification is the decommodification of housing' (p. 272). It is a sign of the times that Peter Williams ended up as the Deputy Director of the Council of Mortgage Lenders in the UK!

18 There can be little doubt that capitalised ground rent is now on a downward spiral, and that there is a great deal of devalorisation taking place. Any talk of 'degentrification' should really be stalled by the likelihood that the neighbourhoods hit hardest by foreclosures will be the gentrifying neighbourhoods of five to eight years from now. It may be more fruitful to think about the decommodification of housing in the context of preventing widening rent gaps from being exploited by the owners of capital.

References

Achtenberg, E.P. and Marcuse, P. (1986) 'Toward the decommodification of housing', in R. Bratt, C. Hartman and A. Meyerson (eds) *Critical Perspectives on Housing,* pp. 474–483. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Atkinson, R. (2000) 'Measuring gentrification and displacement in Greater London', *Urban Studies* 37, pp. 149–166.

Beauregard, R. (1993) *Voices of Decline: The Post-War Fate of U.S. Cities.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Blomley, N. (2004) *Unsettling the City: Urban Land and the Politics of Property.* New York: Routledge.

Boyd, M. (2005) 'The downside of racial uplift: the meaning of gentrification in an African-American neighbourhood', *City & Society* 17, pp. 265–288.

Butler, T. (2007) 'For gentrification?', *Environment and Planning A* 39, pp. 162–181.

Cameron, S. (2003) 'Gentrification, housing redifferentiation and urban regeneration: "Going for Growth" in Newcastle upon Tyne', *Urban Studies* 40, pp. 2367–2382.

Clark, E. (1987) *The Rent Gap and Urban Change: Case Studies in Malmo, 1860–1985.* Lund: Lund University Press.

Curran, W. (2004) 'Gentrification and the nature of work: exploring the links in Williamsburg, Brooklyn', *Environment and Planning A* 36, pp. 1243–1258.

Curran, W. (2007) 'From the frying pan to the oven: gentrification and the experience of industrial displacement in Williamsburg, Brooklyn', *Urban Studies* 44, pp. 1427–1440.

Cutler, D. and Glaeser, E. (1997) 'Are ghettos good or bad?', *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 112, pp. 827–872.

Davidson, M. (2007) 'Gentrification as global habitat: a process of class formation or corporate creation?', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers,* 32, pp. 490–506.

Davis, H. and Alexander, L. (2008) 'Karl would not be amused', *The Times,* 15 August.

DeFilippis, J. (2004) *Unmaking Goliath: Community Control in the Face of Global Capital.* New York: Routledge.

Duany, A. (2001) 'Three cheers for gentrification', *American Enterprise Magazine,*April/May, pp. 36–39.

Freeman, L. (2005) 'Displacement or succession? Residential mobility in gentrifying neighborhoods', *Urban Affairs Review* 40, pp. 463–491.

Freeman, L. (2006) *There Goes the 'Hood: Views of Gentrification from the Ground Up.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Freeman, L. (2008) 'Comment on "The Eviction of Critical Perspectives from Gentrification Research"', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 32, pp. 186–191.

Freeman, L. and Braconi, F. (2004) 'Gentrification and displacement: New York City in the 1990s', *Journal of the American Planning Association* 70, pp. 39–52.

Fried, M. (1963) 'Grieving for a lost home', in L.J. Duhl (ed.) *The Urban Condition: People and Policy in the Metropolis.* New York: Basic Books.

García-Herrera, L., Smith, N. and Mejías Vera, M. (2007) 'Gentrification, displacement and tourism in Santa Cruz de Tenerife', *Urban Geography* 28, pp. 276–298.

Glass, R. (1964) 'Introduction: aspects of change', in Centre for Urban Studies (ed.) *Aspects of Change,* pp. xiii–xlii. London: MacGibbon and Kee.

Grier, G. and Grier, E. (1978) *Urban Displacement: A Reconnaissance.* Washington, DC: US Dept. of Housing and Urban Development.

Hackworth, J. (2002) 'Postrecession gentrification in New York City', *Urban Affairs Review* 37, pp. 815–843.

Hackworth, J. and Smith, N. (2001) 'The changing state of gentrification', *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* 92, pp. 464–477.

Hammel, D.J. (1999) 'Re-establishing the rent gap: an alternative view of capitalized land rent', *Urban Studies* 36, pp. 1283–1293.

Hammersley, M. (2005) 'The myth of research-based practice: the critical case of educational inquiry', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 8, pp. 317–330.

Hamnett, C. (1973) 'Improvement grants as an indicator of gentrification in Inner London', *Area* 5, pp. 252–261.

Hamnett, C. (1991) 'The blind men and the elephant: the explanation of gentrification', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 16, pp. 173–189.

Hamnett, C. (2003a) 'Contemporary human geography: fiddling while Rome burns?', *Geoforum* 34, pp. 1–3.

Hamnett, C. (2003b) 'Gentrification and the middle-class remaking of inner London, 1961–2001', *Urban Studies* 40, pp. 2401–2426.

Hamnett, C. (2008) 'The regeneration game', *The Guardian,* 11 June, http://www.guardian.co.uk/ commentisfree/2008/jun/11/housing

Hamnett, C. and Randolph, B. (1984) 'The role of landlord disinvestment in housing market transformation: an analysis of the flat break-up market in central London', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 9, pp. 259–279.

Hamnett, C. and Randolph, B. (1986) 'Tenurial transformation and the flat break-up market in London: the British condo experience', in N. Smith and P. Williams (eds) *Gentrification of the City,* pp. 121–152. London: Allen and Unwin.

Hamnett, C. and Whitelegg, D. (2007) 'Loft conversion and gentrification in London: from industrial to postindustrial land use', *Environment and Planning A* 39, pp. 106–124.

Hartman, C. (2002) *City for Sale: The Transformation of San Francisco.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Hartman, C. and Robinson, D. (2003) 'Evictions: the hidden housing problem', *Housing Policy Debate* 14, pp. 461–501.

Hartman, C., Keating, D. and LeGates, R. (with Turner, S.) (1982) *Displacement: How to Fight It.* Berkeley, CA: National Housing Law Project.

Harvey, D. (1985) *The Urbanization of Capital.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

He, S. (2007) 'State-sponsored gentrification under market transition: the case of Shanghai', *Urban Affairs Review* 43, pp. 171–198.

He, S. and Wu, F. (2005) 'Property-led redevelopment in post-reform China: a case study of Xintiandi redevelopment project in Shanghai', *Journal of Urban Affairs* 27, pp. 1–23.

Lees, L. and Ley, D. (2008) 'Introduction to special issue on Gentrification and Public Policy', *Urban Studies* 45, pp. 2379–2384.

Lees, L., Slater, T. and Wyly, E. (2008) *Gentrification.* New York: Routledge.

LeGates, R. and Hartman, C. (1981) 'Displacement', *Clearinghouse Review* 15(July), pp. 207–249.

Ley, D. (1996) *The New Middle Class and the Remaking of the Central City.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ley, D. and Dobson, C. (2008) 'Are there limits to gentrification? The contexts of impeded gentrification in Vancouver', *Urban Studies* 45, pp. 2471–2498.

Marcuse, P. (1985a) 'Gentrification, abandonment and displacement: connections, causes and policy responses in New York City', *Journal of Urban and Contemporary Law* 28, pp. 195–240.

Marcuse, P. (1985b) 'To control gentrification: anti-displacement zoning and planning for stable

residential districts', *Review of Law and Social Change* 13, pp. 931–945.

Marcuse, P. (1986) 'Abandonment, gentrification and displacement: the linkages in New York City', in N. Smith and P. Williams (eds) *Gentrification of the City,* pp. 153–177. London: Unwin Hyman.

Marcuse, P. (2005) 'The politics of research about gentrification'. Unpublished manuscript, Department of Urban Planning, Columbia University, New York.

Marris, P. (1986) *Loss and Change,* rev. edn. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

McKinnish, T., Walsh, R. and White, K. (2008) 'Who gentrifies low-income neighborhoods?', National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper No. W14036.

Newman, K. and Wyly, E. (2006) 'The right to stay put, revisited: gentrification and resistance to displacement in New York City', *Urban Studies* 43, pp. 23–57.

Peck, J. and Tickell, A. (2002) 'Neoliberalizing space', *Antipode* 34, pp. 380–404.

Redfern, P. (2003) 'What makes gentrification "gentrification"?', *Urban Studies* 40, pp. 2351–2366.

Roschelle, A. and Wright, T. (2003) 'Gentrification and social exclusion: spatial policing and homeless activist responses in the San Francisco Bay Area', in M. Miles and T. Hall (eds) *Urban Futures: Critical Commentaries on Shaping the City,* pp. 149–166. London: Routledge.

Segal, S.P. and Baumohl, J. (1988) 'No place like home: reflections on sheltering a diverse population', in C.J. Smith and J.A. Giggs (eds) *Location and Stigma: Contemporary Perspectives on Mental Health and Mental Health Care,* pp. 250–263. London: Unwin Hyman.

Slater, T. (2006) 'The eviction of critical perspectives from gentrification research', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 30, pp. 737–757.

Smith, D.M. (1994) *Geography and Social Justice.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Smith, N. (1979) 'Toward a theory of gentrification: a back to the city movement by capital, not people', *Journal of the American Planning Association* 45, pp. 538–548.

Smith, N. (1992) 'Blind man's buff, or Hamnett's philosophical individualism in search of gentrification?', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 17, pp. 110–115.

Smith, N. (1996) *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City.* London: Routledge.

Smith, N. (2002) 'New globalism, new urbanism: gentrification as global urban strategy', *Antipode* 34, pp. 427–450.

Smith, N. and Williams, P. (eds) (1986) *Gentrification of the City.* London: Allen and Unwin.

Squires, G. (ed.) (1992) *From Redlining to Reinvestment: Community Responses to Urban Disinvestment.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Tickell, A. and Peck, J. (2003) 'Making global rules: globalisation or neoliberalization?', in J. Peck and H.W.-C. Yeung (eds) *Remaking the Global Economy,* pp. 163–181. London: Sage.

Vigdor, J. (2002) 'Does gentrification harm the poor?', *Brookings-Wharton Papers on Urban Affairs,* pp. 133–173.

Wacquant, L. (2004) 'Critical thought as solvent of doxa', *Constellations* 11, pp. 97–101.

Wacquant, L. (2008) 'Relocating gentrification: the working class, science and the state in recent urban research', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 32, pp. 198–205.

Watt, P. (2008) 'The only class in town? Gentrification and the middle-class colonization of the city and the urban imagination', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 32, pp. 206–211.

Wittgenstein, L. (1977 [1931]) *Culture and Value.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Wyly, E. and Hammel, D. (1999) 'Islands of decay in seas of renewal: housing policy and the resurgence of gentrification', *Housing Policy Debate* 10, pp. 711–771.

Wyly, E. and Hammel, D. (2001) 'Gentrification, housing policy, and the new context of urban redevelopment', in K. Fox-Gotham (ed.) *Critical Perspectives on Urban Redevelopment,* Vol. 6, pp. 211–276. New York: Elsevier Science.

Tom Slater is Lecturer in Human Geography at the University of Edinburgh, UK. Email: tom.slater@ed.ac.uk