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## **Does Gentrification Help or Harm Urban Neighbourhoods? An Assessment of the Evidence-Base in the Context of the New Urban Agenda**

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## Abstract

*This paper looks at the research literature on gentrification dealing specifically with its neighbourhood impacts. The first part of the paper reports on the results of this review and concludes that the majority of evidence on gentrification has identified negative impacts. In the second part of the paper these results are interpreted in the wider context of the British urban renaissance agenda which stresses the need for social mix in cities through the encouragement of the middle classes back to the city. The paper asks what the implications are for this apparent 'Gentrifiers Manifesto' given the extant evidence on gentrification impacts. The paper concludes that gentrification has never been a cure-all for Britain's towns and cities but nor is it clear that gentrification will actually emanate from the Government's policy agenda. However, this conclusion is tempered by the fact that the precise details and impacts of the Government's agenda are still emerging and that there are many similarities between it and previous programmes which did in fact deliver both gentrification and inequitable development.*

## INTRODUCTION

The term 'gentrification' was first coined by the Marxist urban geographer Ruth Glass in the 1960s (Glass, 1964). Since then there has been protracted debate on its causes, consequences and whether it constitutes a dominant or residual urban form. The term was applied to the then newly observed habit of upper middle class households purchasing properties in the traditionally deprived East End of London. It was this apparent contrast with previous waves of middle class migration and residential choice that marked it out as a new phenomenon but also one with potentially profound impacts for the deprived and lower paid households in such areas. This paper asks first what evidence do we really have on what the neighbourhood impacts of gentrification have been, how good is this evidence and what gaps in our knowledge remain?

The definition of gentrification used for this review was: 'the rehabilitation of working-class and derelict housing and the consequent transformation of an area into a middle-class neighbourhood.' (Smith and Williams, 1986:1)
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The method of the paper pursues techniques of systematic literature review first pioneered in medical research (Black, 2001) but now increasingly found in the social sciences (Burrows, 2000). The precise scope and method of this systematic review are provided below. The results of this review are presented before considering what the sum total of international evidence on gentrification says about the British Government's urban policy agenda. The structure of the paper is as follows:

Part one details the systematic review and its methodology giving the precise delimitation and sources used to derive key literature on gentrification impacts. This section also provides some commentary on the wider use and appropriation of systematic reviews as a method for social and urban analysis.

Part two summarises the findings of the books, papers, reports and other material collated. This material is summarised according to a costs and benefits analysis, broadly conceived, while further space is devoted to a consideration of the adequacy of such an

approach given that the identified effects are partly dependent on our political position relative to the process.

Part three links the results of the review into its contemporary British urban policy context. Specifically, the work of the Lord Rogers Urban Taskforce, its related written products and fiscal and policy results (the Urban White Paper and the 2001 budget). This policy agenda has a marked resemblance to the concerns of HUD in the USA in its concerns to deal with white and middle class flight, urban sprawl and decay.

The paper closes with an assessment of the value of systematic review and a consideration of the links between it and government emphasis on evidence-based policy or what has been encapsulated in the mantra 'what works'. The paper concludes that systematic review in the social sciences cannot be used to generate direct policy answers to social problems but that systematic review provides an important tool in assessing where we are at and, perhaps, where we should be going.

## **1. SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF NEIGHBOURHOOD IMPACTS OF GENTRIFICATION**

In the last decade moves have been made to ensure that policy and practice are firmly based on evidence. The idea of using 'what works' suggests a move beyond party ideology but, in reality, it has become a powerful ideology in itself suggesting that government be based on pragmatic responses even where this goes against political expediency or financial constraints (Davies, Nutley, and Smith, 2000). However, it would seem self-evident that policy based on more and better evidence is no bad thing and that social scientists have pushed for such responsiveness for decades. Systematic reviews fall neatly under this growing movement and refer to studies that try to answer a clear question by finding, describing and evaluating all published and, if possible, unpublished research on a topic.

Systematic reviews (hereafter SR) may be differentiated from literature reviews in the social sciences. Such 'narrative' reviews are often carried out with no explicit search criteria, are not spatially and temporarily delimited and are usually not carried out with the aim of being exhaustive. A further charge is that literature reviews tend to be selective in their presentation of evidence.

Being systematic does not logically entail being comprehensive and thus a further phase in SR is the attempt to estimate coverage. Finally, SR often operates with the use of a hierarchy of evidence through which an assessment of the quality and relevance of research findings is made. However, such hierarchies have been criticised for their reliance on a medical understanding of causality and that policy interventions cannot be understood using an experimental approach as the apex of generalisable knowledge (Black, 2001). The complexity of social science's subject matter would suggest that appropriateness of methodological design, reliability and validity may be more important concerns in evaluating research quality.

The SR for this paper drew on research literature produced between 1964 and 2001. The scope of the review was determined by the question of the neighbourhood impacts of gentrification. This meant that a significant amount of material was excluded which

took as its main or exclusive subject matter the theoretical or explanatory aspects of gentrification, such material amounted to more than two hundred additional reports and papers.

The keywords used for the search were ‘gentrification’, ‘gentrifying’ and ‘gentrified’. The inclusion criteria were set at a global scale. This material was then scanned for material that was empirical in content. Material in languages other than English had to be excluded for practical reasons. Book reviews and journalism in trade press and newspapers on the subject were also excluded.

Coverage of rural gentrification was omitted since the focus of the review was the policy implications of gentrification processes for cities and towns<sup>1</sup>. The review did not exclude any literature on the basis of methodological approach. A secondary manual search was made of the reference lists of all material gathered. Expert guidance was also sought through contact with academics and practitioners on the gentrification mailbase list (<http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/GENTRIFICATION.html>). This took the form of requests for grey literature from experts in the field and for identification of the key studies. Approaches were also made to the Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions and the regen.net bulletin board run by the Planning Exchange and the DTLR. Finally, Internet searches were also made of sources: Google, Savvysearch and British Government websites (DTLR, ONS).

**Table 1: Databases searched:**

ASSIA (Applied Social Science Index and Abstracts, 1987-2001)
Policy file (1990-2001)
Social SciSearch (1972-2001)
Social Science Citation Index (1981-2001)
Sociological Abstracts (1963-2001)
Social Science Citation Index (1981-2001)
IBSS (International Bibliography of the Social Sciences, 1964-2001)
<i>Grey literature sources:</i>
Planning Exchange database (1970-2001)
SIGLE (System for Information on Grey Literature in Europe, 1980-2001)

Of the 114 studies examined the following methodological approaches were utilised (these overlap in some cases as multiple methods were used) - 30 household and other survey instruments, 17 literature review, 31 census, 11 multiple census points, 2 longitudinal census data, 3 Polk (comprehensive household data for various US cities) data, 29 interview or other qualitative approach, 12 ethnographic and 33 some form of administrative or local authority/city records. Most studies utilised multiple methodological approaches.

The search produced over one thousand references papers, books and unpublished grey literature on gentrification (though these overlapped considerably between the various databases). These references were initially checked for inclusion to produce a short-list of studies on the neighbourhood impacts of gentrification. The final review included

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<sup>1</sup> Such studies are perhaps remarkably few in number, roughly three such studies exist for the UK while only two were found for the US.

114 papers, books and items of grey literature. While the study was systematic it was not comprehensive; in particular it is clear that the review did not include grey literature (such as local evaluations, policy documents and other unpublished or catalogued reports) which were not catalogued in any way.

**Table 2: Locations covered by UK studies**

Birmingham
Brighton - North Laine
Edinburgh (2)
Glasgow
Leeds
Newcastle (2)
Greater London as a whole (9)
London studies:
London Islington (2)
Docklands area (2)
Hammersmith (2)
Notting Hill
Barnsbury
Wapping
Tower Hamlets (2)
Islington (2)
Telegraph Hill
Wandsworth (2)
Battersea (2)

Within each geographic area it is clear that larger or capital cities have been the focus of studies. In the British context London forms the backdrop for an overwhelming proportion of the studies (27 out of 35, see Table 2 above). However, this is changing and more studies of rural and provincial locations are being carried out (e.g. Leeds – Dutton, 1998, Glasgow – Bailey and Robertson, 1997). A similar skewing of the research agenda was apparent in the US where cities such as Boston, New York, San Francisco, Seattle and Washington are heavily represented.

### **Quality and relevance of the review**

Since the early seventies empirical research on the neighbourhood impacts of gentrification have been carried out. However, some estimate should be made as to coverage of the review itself. The main lack of coverage lies in the gathering of city, consultancy and other unpublished ‘grey’ literature as well as literature not tagged up with the term gentrification but to all intents and purposes related to that process were not included. It is not possible to express the degree of comprehensiveness as a percentage or other proportion but we would summarise the gaps as following:

- Database coverage and error- moderate
- Error in determining irrelevance from titles or abstracts - low

- Inability to locate grey literature - high

Even where a SR approach is utilised its reliability may remain contentious – if others were to attempt a similar review from the vantage point of North America, for example, it is likely that other material could supplement this review which may skew any final judgement on quality.

**Table 3: Source of Research Studies**

Location of study	Number of included studies
UK	32
Europe	3
North America	73
Australia	5
International	1
Total	114

A more difficult question relates to the current relevance of literature that is, in certain cases, some decades old. Many of the research questions and contexts of the research are still evident today in a way that suggests that there remains a policy relevance to the work today. Another question is raised over the portability of the concept of gentrification and related empirical research from the US to the UK context. The spatial, fiscal and demographic characteristics of cities from these two areas differ markedly so that it remains difficult to draw direct lessons. Though cities characterised by profound gentrification are closer to the European model than other US cities – such as Boston, San Francisco, Seattle and Washington. This is not surprising given the architectural heritage of these cities. However, the market allocation of housing and the role of the growth in service economies in driving central city demographic changes is shared. Population loss and outward migration have also characterised British and American cities.

## **2. THE NEIGHBOURHOOD IMPACTS OF GENTRIFICATION**

Gentrification has regularly divided the opinions of policy-makers, researchers and commentators. Where some see a boon to the public purse and the revitalisation of the built environment others see huge social costs and the continued moving of the poor with little if no net gain to cities and the wider society. Clearly what makes the gentrification debate so difficult and so interesting is the interaction between our own political standpoint and the phenomenon – where liberals see the market salvation of the inner city others, generally of the political left, point to the damaging entrenchment of social relations and displacement. This suggests a strong role for a systematic review of gentrification to establish precisely what we do and do not know about the process.

The review is presented according to the costs and benefits that have been identified in the literature. These are summarised and the evidence for each of these themes is identified. Table 4 summarises the full range of costs and benefits which may be associated with gentrification. From this it is clear that some of the positive aspects have identifiable downsides and vice versa. The table also detracts from the genuine complexity of many of the debates about what exactly is a positive and negative impact. For the sake of simplicity this is not elaborated upon here. However, a point made by

Lang (1982) is that many of the costs and benefits associated with gentrification should be interpreted according to the particular stakeholder involved. For example, rises in property values may be good for owners but bad for poorer households trying to purchase in the area and for property tax burdens of poorer homeowner in the same area.

**Table 4: Summary of Neighbourhood Impacts of Gentrification**

Positive	Negative
	Displacement through rent/price increases
	Secondary psychological costs of displacement
Stabilisation of declining areas	Community resentment and conflict
Increased property values	Loss of affordable housing
Reduced vacancy rates	Unsustainable speculative property price increases
	Homelessness
Increased local fiscal revenues	Greater take of local spending through lobbying/articulacy
Encouragement and increased viability of further development	Commercial/industrial displacement.
Reduction of suburban sprawl	Increased cost and changes to local services
	Displacement and housing demand pressures on surrounding poor areas
Increased social mix	Loss of social diversity (from socially disparate to rich ghettos)
Decreased crime	Increased crime
Rehabilitation of property both with and without state sponsorship	Under-occupancy and population loss to gentrified areas
Even if gentrification is a problem it is small compared to the issue of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Urban decline</li> <li>- Abandonment of inner cities</li> </ul>	Gentrification has been a destructive and divisive process that has been aided by capital disinvestment to the detriment of poorer groups in cities.

### **A. The Costs of Gentrification**

This section summarises the research evidence on the negative aspects of gentrification as it impacts on communities giving details of coverage, quality and the main findings. Table 6 (on page 14) summarises these problems and gives details of when the studies were carried out.

#### ***Displacement***

The majority of studies of gentrification identified displacement as a significant problem (for example, LeGates and Hartman, 1986, Lyons, 1996). However, this issue has taken on a cumulative weight of its own, often without supporting empirical data in

many studies. Nonetheless, displacement is the most dominant theme in the research literature with more than half of the studies (71) examining the issue of displacement. The research approach used in these studies was mainly based on census data but only nine studies used multiple censuses to infer displacement from the data, usually in the form of correlations rather than household displacement estimates. The use of surveys, administrative and other data sources was also popular (a third of the studies). Only two studies used longitudinal data sources, both in the UK, (Atkinson, 2000, Lyons, 1996) and two others used Polk annual survey data to examine change and infer displacement (Henig, 1981; Schill and Nathan, 1983). Sixteen studies utilised qualitative research techniques to look at the problems facing displacees (for example, Bondi, 1999).

**Table 5: Summary of Displacement Quantities from Empirical Research**

Author	Date	Location	Method	Results
Cousar/ Sumka	1978/ 1979	US	Annual Housing Survey	More than a half million households per year (1974-1976)
Grier and Grier	1980	US	Review of data and literature	No more than 100-200 households annually per city
LeGates and Hartman	1981	US	Systematic review of evidence	Portland – 2000 per year Denver – 2000 h.holds Seattle 14,000 h.holds between 73 and 78
Schill and Nathan	1983	1 neighbourhood in each of 5 cities in US	Postal questionnaire to moving renters	23% of movers were displacees (range: 8% in Richmond to 40% in Denver)
LeGates and Hartman	1986	US	Data review	2.5 million people displaced annually (conservative)
Marcuse	1986	New York City	J51/SRO closure data City rent data	Between 10 and 40,000 households per year
Atkinson	2000	London	Longitudinal Census Data	Between 1981 and 1991 in gentrified areas losses of : -46% inactive -38% working class -18% elderly -78% unskilled

Those studies that looked at displacement see it as a problem. However, in other literature it is also clear that the boundary between displacement and replacement is a difficult one to tread (Barrett and Hodge, 1986). Table 5 gives the headline estimates or conclusions from studies that have managed to give such figures and highlights the variation but also the dramatic extent of gentrification-induced displacement.

The use of quantitative data is problematic. Imputing problematic migration (i.e. displacement) through the use of cross-sectional data has been used where gentrification is known to have occurred and where flows exceed city-wide averages (for example, Hamnett and Williams, 1980; Gale, 1980). A classic example of this kind of wrangling over definitions and the scale of displacement was made between the US HUD's researcher Sumka (1979) and the academic planning researcher Hartman (1979).

The main question hanging over the issue of displacement is how many people it affects. This has important ramifications for policy responses given that the belief that

displacement is a small problem has underpinned the idea that Government responses should be muted. Displacement has been located most strongly in metropolitan areas where the economy has been at full tilt (Seattle, Washington, London, San-Francisco for example). Estimates in the US in the late seventies and early eighties ranged from a few hundred households in the major cities (Grier and Grier, 1980) to 2.5 million people per year (LeGates and Hartman, 1986) which was viewed as a conservative estimate.

Gentrification-related displacement has been shown to affect poor white and non-white households (to a lesser extent), the elderly, female headed households and blue collar/working class occupational groupings. This has led to displacement often to adjacent areas into housing which is more expensive and therefore often rated more highly by the displacees.

The fact that displacement has been inferred more often than directly measured is directly linked to the difficulties of developing methodologies capable of tracking those who are displaced. However, on the whole the general concurrence of researchers on who is involved and the social costs imposed suggests that this area of research is robust in its conclusions and, further, that persistent or newly engendered gentrification will have similar effects.

The role of individual neighbourhood contexts is important in determining the prevalence of displacement. For example, areas with high levels of social housing will be less prone to gentrification but will also form protective areas for residents who might otherwise be moved on if market rents were applied. In determining levels of displacement as opposed to replacement researchers have also considered existing rates of turnover to be important and taken into account wider local and national economic changes (e.g. the production of greater needs for white collar labour and lower demand for working class/service occupations in the central city).

The strongest evidence on displacement comes from a series of national studies in the US whereas Britain has seen only sporadic attempts to examine the issue, primarily in relation to the availability of private sector housing grants that had led to gentrification and displacement. In the British context studies of displacement were universally clustered in London (McCarthy, 1974; Pitt, 1977; Power, 1973) but have also been carried out again in the nineties using more sophisticated longitudinal data sources linked to the census (Lyons, 1996; Atkinson, 2000).

The negative displacement aspects of gentrification are generally time limited but may be prolonged. Research in Hamburg (Dangschat, 1991) and London (Lyons, 1996) shows that ever higher social groups may successfully gentrify and be displaced from these areas. In general once a neighbourhood has achieved a relatively complete level of transformation the social costs diminish as nobody remains to be displaced (Robinson, 1995).

### ***Harassment and eviction***

Displacement has been achieved through landlord eviction and harassment (also described as 'flipping' (US) and 'winkling' (UK) and price increases (also referred to as exclusionary displacement). More subtly the qualitative studies have shown that

displacement also occurs when people decide to move because friends and family have been moved on, thus leaving gaps in the mutual support structures around them.

### ***Community conflict***

The conflict generated within areas subjected to gentrification has been given coverage by less than a quarter of the studies examined (24). This has manifested itself through popular protest, aggressive campaigns to ‘mug a yuppie’ (London and San Francisco) and more generalised resentment at the pricing out and changing characteristics of gentrified neighbourhoods. Linked to this has been the issue of social displacement in which the voice of the community itself is changed as the area is gentrified (Chernoff, 1980). This in itself highlights the wider significance of such neighbourhood change – as areas become fully gentrified they fade from view and become established middle class enclaves. However, while clearly divisive it is difficult to estimate the full wider impacts of neighbourhood-based community conflict.

### ***Loss of affordable housing***

A key recurring theme in the research is that gentrification, due to its speculative and investment maximising rationale provides a key problem due to the loss of affordable housing, often in wider city housing markets which are themselves under stress (for example, Robinson, 1995). This has implications for:

*Displacees* – displacement is over a longer distance with related impacts on travel to work distances or even the possibility of gaining employment

*Housing need* - The availability of housing to deal with housing need is reduced thereby increasing housing stress in the local area.

Measures of the loss of affordable housing have been primarily through estimates of affordability ratios that have altered as prices in the area have increased dramatically (28 studies). This has been linked to exclusionary displacement (Marcuse, 1986) whereby poor households are unable to obtain housing in the area and are diverted to other locations.

### ***Homelessness***

In a handful of studies (6) it has been possible to identify links between gentrification and homelessness. This has most often been made through secondary effects from the loss of social and affordable housing (Hopper, Susser and Conover, 1985; Kasinitz, 1984) or directly through harassment and eviction from private rented accommodation (Power, 1973) and single room occupant (SRO) dwellings (Marcuse, 1986; Badcock and Cloher, 1980). Only six studies were able to examine this, four of which were carried out using administrative records. In the Badcock and Cloher study moreover it was established that loss of SRO dwellings, though this led to homelessness, was related as much to wider housing market changes as to gentrification itself.

### ***Changes to local service provision***

While some studies have argued that greater numbers of the middle classes in the city is a good thing (see below) because of the increased fiscal boon that this represents this has been contested by other research. Since gentrification is not a “back to the city” movement it means that the process relates to a shifting of these groups around the city. Further, and more important, research has suggested that gentrifiers represent an articulate and vigorous lobbying group who generally take more from the city coffers than they contribute. This can be through amenity forums, local business groups and residents associations who seek to bend the local political agenda and mainstream funding towards their own localities (Gale, 1984).

Gentrification of one neighbourhood can have price-shadowing (increasing rents and prices in adjacent areas) and other effects on surrounding neighbourhoods. Wyly and Hammel (1999) argue that the gentrification of neighbourhoods around poor areas has altered the policy frameworks within which poor areas are considered. In research by Shaw (2000) gentrification in one area was shown to have impacts on surrounding gentrified areas in terms of a decline in its reputation in an attempt to suggest that gentrification was a potential solution for that area.

### ***Social displacement***

The change from deprived to affluent areas imposes a similar range of social costs. Social mix as a goal for supporters of those working within a framework of social justice and for planners who have long held that social diversity and not segregation is preferable have all suggested that gentrification produces negative outcomes. However, the research evidence on this is relatively scant and we would perhaps have to look outside the gentrification literature to find this.

### ***Crime***

Three studies have been carried out to look at changes in crime levels in neighbourhoods that have been gentrified. This research has produced contradictory research results with one study showing crime falls (McDonald, 1986) while others have shown crime rises and changes within different crime categories (Taylor, and Covington, 1988 and Covington and Taylor, 1989). Different hypotheses can be linked to gentrification. First, ecological theories that that crime will fall through displacement of criminal elements and social problems. Second, rational actor theories asserting that crime will increase due to the greater prevalence of affluent households which act as targets for criminals in neighbouring areas.

The first study cited suggested that personal crime rates dropped in almost all gentrified neighbourhoods but that property crime rates remained unchanged (McDonald, 1986). However, this is contradicted by the Taylor and Covington studies that showed that aggravated assault and murder rose in gentrified areas while property crime declined. It may well be that differing operational measures of gentrification affected these studies while their location in different cities may also have provided different contexts in which crime varied more widely.

### ***Population loss***

A more general point relating to gentrification concerns measurable changes in occupancy levels often charted through multiple census measurements over time. This shows that gentrifying areas continue to lose population leading to the charge that gentrifiers 'under-occupy' their property (Wagner, 1995, Bailey and Robertson, 1997). The conversion of sub-divided units into larger units suitable for more affluent households is one explanation for this process as is more general household displacement of poorer groups. The observation of population loss has only been made in just over ten per cent of the studies even though the evidence base for this issue is strong.

### **Summary**

Evidence on the negative neighbourhood impacts of gentrification covers a wide range of issues. The numerous studies which have found negative changes in the neighbourhoods affected. The commonality of outcomes found goes beyond the individual contexts where gentrification was found and suggests a predictive quality to the evidence and that where gentrification is found in future it may also have similar consequences. There are some contradictory findings in the research, particularly on the issue of crime although these studies are few in number. The overwhelming bulk of evidence relates to displacement and its problems socially, psychologically and economically. While there have been various and wide-ranging estimates of the prevalence of displacement it has been difficult to refute that it has occurred and that this has been a distinctive and problematic feature of gentrification regardless of whether it was unintended or not.

**Table 6: Negative Impacts Identified in Empirical Studies of Gentrification by year of study**

<b>Date range</b>	<b>Total Number</b>	<b>Displacement</b>	<b>Harassment/ Eviction</b>	<b>Homelessness</b>	<b>Loss/changes to local services</b>	<b>Social Displacement</b>	<b>Loss of affordable housing</b>	<b>Community conflict</b>	<b>Crime</b>	<b>Population loss</b>
1973-1980	24	21	6	1	3	2	8	3	1	4
1981-1985	17	16	2	2	1	0	4	3	0	0
1986-1990	15	8	2	1	1	0	4	3	2	2
1991-1995	26	14	5	1	1	0	6	7	1	3
1996-2001	26	12	3	1	1	3	3	8	1	3
Total	114	71	18	6	7	5	25	24	5	12

## **B. Positive Neighbourhood Impacts of Gentrification**

The research evidence on the benefits of gentrification is significantly more sparse than that of its ill effects and it is also clear that many of these benefits have analogous downsides. Table 7, below, highlights the timing and identified positive outcomes in the studies reviewed.

There are perhaps two important points to make about the coverage of the positive effects of gentrification. First, it is likely that there is a high degree of selectivity about gentrification as a subject for research. Many academics are drawn to the subject because of its relationship to issues of social justice and conflict and this goes back to its Marxist hallmark in the 1960s and theoretical explanations and treatments by writers such as Neil Smith (for example, 1979). Second, non-research literature from other domains such as journalism and political commentary has often had interests in promoting or glossing over gentrification as part of a wider discourse of boosterism that sees gentrification as a simple cure-all to inner city ills. Thus, much of the positive account of gentrification appears in published outlets not included in this review, as they are not research-based.

The positive effects highlighted here are more often cited in the literature as part of a wider exploration of the process and the research evidence on these aspects is relatively thin or is suggested as a logical rather than measurable phenomenon.

### ***Renewal***

Perhaps the most obvious upside to gentrification is the rehabilitation of the physical fabric of neighbourhoods. In many cases architecturally desirable areas have been upgraded. Few researchers would deny this but it still gets little research coverage. In the UK this outcome has also been achieved in part through the disbursement of housing grants (Hamnett, 1973) though this link has been broken for some time since means-testing and other rule changes have taken place.

In other cases gentrification and rehabilitation have occurred without state sponsorship though the lack of tenure neutrality in housing policy more generally makes this harder to disentangle. In other words, a general preference through subsidies and other fiscal measures has made owner occupation desirable so that detecting gentrification among a general shift towards mass homeownership, particularly through the right to buy since 1980, is made more difficult.

### ***Increased property values and tax revenues***

Few studies have alluded to increased property values as a benefit of gentrification though clearly it is for those who are homeowners (but see Sumka, 1980). This point has been made sometimes by identifying areas of gentrification through such price and rental increases. For others price increases are mentioned as a logical rather than researched outcome. Clearly such increases represent an opportunity or social cost depending on which stakeholders are involved. Even where more deprived owners decide to cash in such increases they are likely to be faced with prices elsewhere which at least match such gains. Nevertheless, as a means of boosting equity and wealth homeownership still appeals and delivers to many households.

However, a point made by a number of commentators has been that gentrification provides a boost to city tax revenues through having more households, and more affluent households at that. Research evidence on this barely supports this position. Only five studies found any evidence of this and this research is contradicted almost overwhelmingly by a near-universal finding in gentrification research that gentrifiers are almost exclusively movers *within* the city (e.g. Gale, 1984). This lack of net household gain is further undermined by a) the possibility that displacees will reduce city revenues if they leave the city and b) if in-comers who are more articulate bend local authority services to their neighbourhood.

### ***Local service improvement***

Although, the benefits of gentrification primarily accrue to the gentrifiers there are examples of studies using survey methods which have shown that existing residents also see benefits including better quality local services and shops (Henig and Gale, 1987). The problem here is that they may be displaced in time thus not seeing all the improvements being made. Further, where services are 'improved' dramatically this can effectively represent a loss of services geared up to poorer households in the neighbourhood (Tobin and Anderson, 1982).

### ***Poverty deconcentration***

The debate over the benefits of gentrification has sometimes moved towards the position of poverty deconcentration (e.g. Kennedy and Leonard, 2001) though there is no current empirical evidence to support this. We might infer that population stability in the form of homeownership was a preferable change in neighbourhoods experiencing population decline. However, the evidence on gentrification is that it generally transforms a neighbourhood leaving pockets of poverty often protected through social housing. At the level of the neighbourhood therefore we tend to find a move from deprived and working class households to professional and managerial households. The suggestion, therefore, is that incoming affluent households benefit local residents by acting as role models for integration into the labour market or that the reduction of stigma of an area may also have such an effect though this remains as much a value judgement as a position based on research evidence .

### **Summary**

The evidence on the positive neighbourhood impacts of gentrification are identified more often in non-research based literature. A further position can be identified in which authors assert that the bottom line is that gentrification represents a drop in the ocean compared with the problems of suburbanisation and sprawl. This utilitarian focus has been used to detract from the downside that authors have identified and there has been occasional mud slinging relating to the ideological and political affiliations of those identifying both positive and negative outcomes. Overall the quality and coverage of research identifying positive effects has relied more heavily on the perceived logic of such outcomes rather than systematic research. However, this is not to say that such outcomes have not accrued from the process but rather that more balanced research may be required in the future.

The research evidence overwhelmingly leads to the conclusion that gentrification has a negative impact on the neighbourhoods it affects. However, we must recognise an interaction between political beliefs and the effects of gentrification. In a world where the value of architecture and non-market intervention are considered to be optimum outcomes the displacement of households may be viewed as an unhappy yet inevitable event. However, there is scant research evidence of the magnitude of fiscal and investment returns from gentrification. Of course, this is different from saying that such effects have not occurred, rather that they have not been measured.

**Table 7: Benefits Impacts Identified in Empirical Studies of Gentrification by year of study**

<b>Date range</b>	<b>Total Number</b>	<b>Increased Property Values</b>	<b>Social mix/poverty deconcentration</b>	<b>Boost to local tax revenues</b>	<b>Physical and architectural renewal</b>	<b>Improvement of local services</b>	<b>Crime decreases</b>
1973-1980	24	2	2	2	6	4	1
1981-1985	17	0	1	2	3	0	1
1986-1990	15	1	1	0	1	1	1
1991-1995	26	1	2	3	4	1	0
1996-2001	26	4	5	0	1	0	1
Total	114	8	11	7	15	6	4

### 3. THE URBAN RENAISSANCE AND GENTRIFICATION IMPACTS

Given that the research evidence on gentrification largely relates to negative neighbourhood impacts what are the implications for the current thrust of British urban policy which seeks to revitalise British cities? The rationale behind the Government's urban policy agenda has been driven by two main forces. First, fears that projections of massive increases in household numbers (4 million over the next twenty five years) will lead to a growth of green-field development and suburban sprawl. Second, that the economic role of cities can only be encouraged if the tide of outward migration is reversed, driven as it has been by fear of crime, poor environmental quality and coupled with decentralisation of many work opportunities. These aims have been translated into a raft of neighbourhood-focused policies and programmes briefly examined here and are similar to the concerns of a series of US HUD State of the Cities Reports from 1997 on.

In order to stem urban decline the Government seeks to enhance liveability in an attempt to improve the quality of life and increase the social diversity of British towns and cities. While these aims are also bound up with a wider agenda of diminishing social exclusion; fears have been expressed by some commentators that the subtext underneath talk of urban pioneers and inner city revitalisation is the promotion of gentrification. This will be carried out through area-based renewal, fiscal incentives and the encouragement of the middle classes back to the cities that many had previously abandoned.

The first move by the New Labour Government in this area was to set up its Urban Taskforce. The taskforce was headed by the architect Richard, now Lord, Rogers. Its purpose was to consider ways of bringing an urban agenda back to British policy-making and to promote a design-led strategy in improving the country's urban public spaces and neighbourhoods. Over a period of just under two years the Taskforce delivered a series of documents to the Prime Minister for approval (notably the Urban Taskforce final report of 1999). A number of conclusions from the Rogers Taskforce relate to the encouragement of the middle classes back to the city.

One of these proposals was to create Urban Regeneration Companies with powers of compulsory purchase and charged with housing and environmental regeneration. These are now enshrined in the Government's urban white paper "Our towns and cities" (DETR, 2000). The remit of these urban regeneration companies closely resembles that of the Urban Development Corporations under the Conservative administration that encouraged gentrification and the loss of affordable housing options in such areas. 'Brownfield' and inner city areas were to be recycled and regenerated to ease pressure for new homes on greenfield sites bringing a greater proportion of new and existing households to the towns and cities. With regard to urban depopulation this was to be stemmed through a growth in the number of people living in towns and cities as well as a movement from city outskirts to inner areas representing more closely the image of the gentrification process<sup>2</sup>. Distinctions were also to be made between market and social

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<sup>2</sup> Suburb in the British and European context refers to generally but not always affluent residential districts within the city boundary as compared with the North American and literal meaning of the word meaning out of the city.

housing to be blurred through the creation of socially mixed neighbourhoods and mixed tenure development.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, a range of fiscal instruments were and have been applied to deprived areas where residential property conversion was to be zero rated for Value Added Tax. A reduction in stamp duty (property tax) on house sales in deprived areas (currently 1% of value over £60,000) was also proposed. These measures were designed to encourage private sector interest in deprived areas and to generate market growth in areas where a lack of market activity had trapped many households and stunted inward investment.

It was in the subsequent 2001 budget that measures were put in place to respond to the proposals of the Urban White Paper to promote the regeneration of towns and cities. These were:

- Exemption from stamp duty (property tax of 1% on transactions over £60,000) for all property transactions in the most disadvantaged parts of the UK to encourage businesses and families to locate in these areas.
- a 150 per cent tax credit to cover the costs of cleaning up contaminated land to encourage brownfield residential development, and;
- reducing the rate of VAT to 5 per cent for the cost of converting residential properties into a different number of dwellings and an adjustment to zero for VAT on the sale of renovated houses which have been empty for 10 years or more.

While the direct impact of these changes is hard to quantify at present it is reasonably clear that they can be interpreted as a general encouragement for private sector interest in deprived areas. Bringing the affluent back to towns and cities may be viewed as a laudable aim through creating sustainable city spaces and greater fiscal self-sufficiency. However, there is a possibility that this will lead to gentrification and the moving around of the urban poor rather than creating liveable neighbourhoods. The reality is more likely that these measures are the icing on the cake rather than direct incentives for gentrification and that areas subject to gentrification pressures will simply be made more attractive thus bending rather than directing private sector investment to deprived neighbourhoods. It is perhaps more likely that the future prospects of gentrification will continue to be bound up with macro-social and economic forces that have driven location decisions among the affluent.

One of the overwhelming conclusions stemming from research on gentrification strongly indicates that the previous location of gentrifiers has been from other parts of the same city rather than a 'back to the city' movement. This is perhaps the fundamental sticking point of an urban renaissance predicated on bringing back the middle classes and others to the city. Gentrification itself will produce very little, if any, net population gain to cities while migration by the affluent back to cities is most likely to be to neighbourhoods which do not require revitalisation anyway. In addition, areas targeted by the fiscal measures may not have the architectural heritage or local amenity qualities that have been found in gentrified areas in the past. Gentrifiers have also been found to be dwellers who require more, not less, space such that conversion of existing property may hinder this expression of residential preferences.

It is not fully clear that the government intends a renaissance based on a back to the city movement and yet a reading of the kind of fiscal, architectural and land-use planning arrangements that are being put in place are strongly suggestive of this. On the basis of this it is perhaps wise to begin to question whether the social costs associated with gentrification will begin to accrue under these measures. After all, there has been a long-term association between British urban policy and gentrification going back to the 1970s when the availability of grants for private sector rehabilitation both encouraged gentrification and displacement (Hamnett, 1974, McCarthy, 1974, Balchin, 1979).

Much of what the taskforce, the Government and current policy are aiming for is a socially just vision of the improvement of British towns and cities. However, it is also possible that the latent costs of such a program will not be visible for some time. Indeed, the displacement of many in the wake of gentrification has only recently been identified in the UK with any degree of certainty (Lyons, 1996; Atkinson, 2000). In the absence of evidence debates have nevertheless raged over the problem of housing affordability for key-workers in the South East of England and controls over the buying and selling of property in rural areas such as the South West. However, popular commentary on the solution for the ills of city living has explicitly linked gentrification as a saviour for the inner urban areas (Schoon, 2001).

In short, it would appear that gentrification does form a part of the policy programme of the urban renaissance with the general encouragement of the middle classes back to the city. However, this kind of city living has been consistently shown to be favoured by existing city residents. This suggests an incommensurability between the aims of urban policy, writ large, and the nature of gentrification. It would be cynical to suggest that the Government agenda aims to produce displacement from gentrification but also naïve to think that the full impacts of a return to the city have been fully thought through.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has examined three related themes. First, how are SRs useful to policy and as a research technique in their own right for urban analysis? Second, what is the evidence of the neighbourhood impacts of gentrification and of what quality and coverage is this evidence? Finally, what do the results of this research imply for the Government's proposals to encourage an urban renaissance through encouraging middle class and professional households back to the city? The paper has offered tentative views on the first and third questions but has been able to produce a definitive statement of the impacts of gentrification.

On the first point it is argued that the analysis of extant data through SR has become part of an evolving paradigm of evidence-based policy but is also useful in its own right. In bringing together the wide range of existing material it is possible to get a well-developed overview of what we know about how gentrification affects neighbourhoods and the quality of that evidence. Clearly, evaluating the quality of such research and understanding how this information can be turned into policy lessons are more difficult questions.

On the issue of neighbourhood impacts it can be seen that the majority of research evidence on gentrification points to its detrimental effects. However, this is also linked

to the research agenda that has so far been undertaken. All that we can say is that that research which has sought to understand its impacts has predominantly found problems and social costs. This suggests a displacement and moving around of social problems rather than a net gain either through local taxes, improved physical environment or a reduction in the demand for sprawling urban development.

Even where positive effects have been identified, these are widely considered to be relatively small compared to the downside. Some will argue that we already know this but to the quality of that evidence is another issue. For example, it is apparent that much of the evidence on displacement have relied on old data and studies which have pointed at displacement as a logical rather than measured impact of gentrification. This has led to a cumulative weight of evidence as the ripples of earlier results run through the later literature.

Use of SR helps us to identify gaps in an existing body of research. In relation to this review it would seem that there are two interpretations that one might make. First, that gentrification has and will continue to be a largely negative process driven by capital accumulation with the breaking up and displacement of poorer communities. Second, that the wider and positive ramifications of gentrification have been under-explored using systematic research techniques to fully validate these outcomes. Within this second area it would also seem important to get out of dominating case study cities such as London and to encompass a wider variety of smaller towns and cities. Both of these interpretations may, of course, be held at the same time and a move away from a black and white portrayal of the process as a simply good or bad will inevitably be an improvement.

For practitioners this review may serve to shed more light on the evidence on gentrification. For some working in regeneration and in the delivery of urban policy there has been a tendency to see gentrification as a possible panacea for local problems. Within this context this review suggests that what we define here as gentrification is unlikely to fit the bill in this respect. For the revitalisation of our towns and cities we need to look less to an invasion of middle class households who already live in the city and more to ways of improving amenity and environmental quality in cities to attract a wider social base of households. Further, the language of gentrification should be avoided unless this is what is actually intended. If it is intended, reviews such as this should help to make clear the social costs and benefits associated with this terminology.

The final question is more difficult to deal with. First, the negative impacts of gentrification, and the positive ones for that matter, do not translate immediately into actions for policy (Pawson, 2001). Further, in order to inform policy research must logically come before it. However what we tend to see in the area of urban policy are evaluations during program administration or after they have concluded (Solesbury, 2001). The urban taskforce proposals were based on evidence of sorts having been charged with collecting best practice and evidence from other countries and areas to inform policy in other areas. However, it is still not entirely clear what effects the Government's urban renaissance agenda will have.

It is worth reiterating that one of the strongest conclusions gentrification research shows that gentrifiers come from the city same city rather than moving back to it. This is an important point in relation to a wider understanding of the possible benefits of the

process since the zero-gain to population demonstrates that gentrification cannot be viewed as a solution to the problems of urban decline evidenced by population decline in towns and cities.

In conclusion, this paper has tried to use systematic review to respond to a segment of the Government's urban policy agenda. Using this method has yielded insights into the gaps as well as the coverage of the literature. On the basis of current research evidence there is little reason to expect that future waves of gentrification will be any less damaging than that documented so far. Whether this will be the effect of the fiscal and planning arrangements currently being implemented is hard to anticipate. These are difficult questions requiring an element of wait and see.

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