Edited by Stéphane Sadoux, Marie-Pierre Vincent,
David Fée, and Louise Dalingwater

Gentrification and the Media

Building and Propagating Discourses on Exclusive Urban Change

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The Editors
Grenoble and Paris, France

Foreword

Brian Doucet

Not too long ago, gentrification researchers needed to carefully introduce and define their topic when they wrote media op-eds, spoke in television interviews, or talked to public audiences. In a similar vein, debates about housing more broadly were largely confined to scholarly research and niche policy. However today, gentrification is one of the central forces of change shaping contemporary cities, and housing has become one of the most pressing urban challenges. Both are now hotly debated public and political issues that garner regular, sometimes even daily, media attention.

In Canada, where I live, the word gentrification first appeared in the country's largest national newspaper, *The Globe and Mail*, in October 1980. This definition was included in that initial article:

> A relatively new word, quite graceless, but useful in identifying a recent phenomenon taking place in growing cities: the middle-class reclamation of slums, and the consequent pushing out of the poor.

The term would appear in 817 further articles between then and the end of 2017. Definitions of gentrification still accompanied most stories until well into the 2010s. As Giuseppe Tolfo and I found when exploring the shifting discourses of gentrification in *The Globe and Mail*, early accounts in the 1980s framed the process in a negative light, highlighting class conflicts and the displacement of working-class communities in Canada's largest cities. While these articles were few and far between, they ground to a halt during the recession of the early 1990s, when the bursting of a housing bubble led to talk of de-gentrification.

By the mid-1990s, gentrification resumed, and so too had media stories about it. But in this era of urban regeneration and an economy focused on middle-class consumption, the tone had shifted. No longer was displacement a major focus. Instead, gentrification was portrayed as an opportunity for

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the new middle class. The focus was on neighbourhood upgrading, hip lifestyles, and the aesthetics of these new urban idylls. If a middle-class household was priced out of neighbourhoods that gentrified a few decades before, it was no problem; you simply had to go a few subway stations away and there were plenty of affordable fixer-upper houses in neighbourhoods with good bones which could easily become the next gentrification frontier. Media stories of the era regularly celebrated the emergence of the next trendy neighbourhood.

More recently, however, even these more peripheral neighbourhoods have become too expensive and are already largely gentrified. Today, households with two very good incomes can easily be priced out of older, walkable neighbourhoods in Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal. Aspiring urban residents are finding that a combination of widespread gentrification, and a broader housing crisis are leaving them with far fewer options than their predecessors. As a result, the geography of gentrification is expanding; one of Toronto's contemporary gentrification frontiers is Hamilton, a mid-sized industrial city seventy-five kilometres away.

Media stories shifted and gentrification went from being portrayed as a middle-class opportunity to a middle-class challenge. Dominant discourses took on a more critical tone, just as the number of stories has grown exponentially. But there was one major difference compared to the 1980s: this new critique was based on a middle-class interpretation of the problem. Both middle-class affordability issues and the loss of a perceived "authenticity" of a prior era were lamented, with much less attention towards the plight of lower-income communities.

While more public attention towards gentrification opens up the possibility for harnessing collective action to reduce its consequences for marginalized groups in the city, this is not a guarantee. With little theoretical or conceptual grounding within media discourses, the term is used in ways that are largely devoid of any recognition of class struggles, or even the more tangible process of displacement.

Today, journalists rarely include a definition. This is a double-edged sword. People are now talking about gentrification in ways that never would have been imagined decades ago. But, as many chapters in this volume attest, the boundaries of what constitutes gentrification have expanded often beyond the realm of its conceptualization within academia. Every urban dweller can envision what gentrification entails, but very few (even those informed by the media) can define what it actually is.

This edited collection brings together a wealth of research about different neighbourhoods, cities, countries, and types of media. A common thread

throughout is that there is growing media attention towards gentrification, heightening the importance of academic inquiry. This begs the question: why now? Why has gentrification gone from an obscure topic to a household word that requires virtually no introduction or definition?

One possible explanation lies in this shift from a middle-class opportunity to a middle-class problem. While gentrification and displacement have affected working-class households for decades, if not centuries, we must critically ask ourselves whether we are talking about these issues today because of some newfound collective and journalistic concern for the urban poor?

Or, are gentrification and the wider housing crisis major talking points because there now are millions of people who a decade ago never would have dreamed that they would be victims of a housing crisis, who now struggle to find adequate and affordable shelter? Within this group are many of those who make and shape cities—journalists, planners, urban designers, architects, policymakers. While they rarely run the risk of becoming homeless, they are increasingly priced out of the cities they help to build and write about.

That housing has become a middle-class issue is also an opportunity and a challenge. On the one hand, gentrification's presence within public discourses opens up new possibilities for transformative policy and political change. On the other hand, if we are talking about gentrification primarily because it is now a middle-class problem, we run the danger of implementing solutions that only benefit middle-class households, thereby continuing to exclude and displace poorer communities. Urban land is scarce: a piece of land could be developed at higher densities to provide nominally more affordable housing for those who cannot afford the $1.5 million dollar house, but might be able to afford the $1 million unit in a lovely new triplex. But that same piece of land could also be the site of social housing for those who have been on waiting lists for years. Unfortunately, the same piece of land rarely achieves both aims.

This book brings together a series of important and interdisciplinary perspectives on media and gentrification. It richly highlights the ways in which gentrification appears *in* the media, including detailed analysis of media accounts of gentrification in very specific locations. It also focuses on the broader relationship between gentrification *and* the media, particularly the media's role in framing how gentrification is perceived and conceived by the wider public. This is important because the media play a major role in shaping how we think about a place or issue.

Struggles about how to define a civic problem, whose voices are listened to, and what solutions are advocated for, all feature within media accounts

of gentrification. However, not all perspectives are given equal prominence. Importantly, this book also highlights and analyzes what is not being covered. Journalists do not report on everything, nor do they cover every angle. The media defines what is newsworthy, but those choices represent ontological decisions about what is worthy of being reported. Those decisions may be influenced by a variety of factors including a journalist's own lived experiences, editors and editorial policy, the target audience, and the owners or funders of media companies.

Like with other sources of knowledge, such as photographs, media stories of gentrification cannot be taken as indisputable facts. Instead, as this book does extremely well, we need to understand the broader social constructs of the media being studied. Analyzing the media's agency, especially its role in defining and shaping the public interpretation of the gentrification process is therefore essential to critically assessing the discourses produced by various media. The nuance and detail of this book enables readers to position media accounts of the process within the broader political economy of gentrification. The examples of alternative media focusing on rendering visible aspects of gentrification and displacement ignored by the mainstream media give us glimmers of hope for a more just city.

A book about gentrification and the media is long overdue. This volume brings together both established and emerging scholars who are helping to define research agendas. More than just a collection of individual essays, this book is a conversation across disciplines and geographies. This dialogue is greatly enhanced by the addition of critical reflections at the end of each of the book's four parts.

Gentrification is central to the lives of millions of city dwellers. For academic researchers, that means our work is neither abstract, nor distant to the broader population. This connection to the ordinary, everyday city necessitates an in-depth, critical analysis of the ways in which those public discourses are created, interpreted, and engaged with. There are major debates about gentrification taking place entirely *outside* the confines of academia, much of it within the media. If scholars wish to move beyond academic discussions and actually influence the conversations that make and shape cities, they would be wise to pay attention to them. For those looking to better understand the role of the media in shaping public and political debates about gentrification, this book is an excellent place to start.

Brian Doucet
University of Waterloo

1. Introduction: Gentrification and the Media

Stéphane Sadoux, Marie-Pierre Vincent, David Fée, and Louise Dalingwater

Although gentrification has been subject to a vast amount of research, few scholars have sought to investigate this process in relation to the media. In a recently published paper, geographers Giuseppe Tolfo and Brian Doucet identified this issue as "an under-researched lens to examine urban change" (Tolfo and Doucet 2021)—a conclusion which Japonica Brown-Saracino and Cesraéa Rumpf had already reached ten years earlier in their pioneering piece that appeared in the *Journal of Urban Affairs* (Brown-Saracino and Rumpf 2011).

The intersection of gentrification and the media can be approached from two main perspectives. One can look at gentrification *in* the media, namely at the ways in which the process is documented, described, analysed and discussed. In this case, the focus is on content, which is scrutinized to identify and explain recurring terminology and themes. One can also reflect upon gentrification *and* the media in order to think about the posture of organizations and individuals who produce content. Here, attention is paid to agency and to the possible involvement of the media in promoting or resisting gentrification processes. Although distinct, these two perspectives are intertwined and are therefore simultaneously addressed throughout this book.

Even though the significant role played by the media in gentrifying processes was highlighted as early as the 1980s (Zukin 1982), they were not referred to as agents or transmitters of gentrification until the 2000s. For decades, researchers referred to magazines or newspapers rebranding areas as "hip" or "cool" and in such cases, media content was put forward as a signal of rampant gentrification and therefore became a thermometer to measure the extent of change. At the same time, some scholars attempted

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to demonstrate that gentrification processes were sometimes supported by the media (Clerval 2008), although these claims were most often grounded in limited evidence. Media coverage plays a significant role in shaping public opinion (McCombs 2005 2014) as it is "successful in telling us *what to think about*, but also can be successful in telling us *how to think about it*" [emphasis in original] (McCombs 2005). In this sense, media content frames the information by taking "some aspects of a perceived reality and mak[ing] them more salient in a communicating text" (Entman 1993). The media not only document hot topics: they also act as a gatekeeper and decide whether a story is newsworthy (Shoemaker and Reese 1996). Moreover, as Winter (2011) pointed out, the media produce and reproduce public discourse. They can also oppose and challenge official narratives. It therefore comes as no surprise that Podmore (2008) called for further investigations that would jointly examine place, identity, and the media.

The body of work investigating the media as a research object in gentrification studies only truly started to appear in the 2010s. Two factors can contribute to explaining this rather late emergence. Firstly, and perhaps most importantly, the word "gentrification" was seldom found in the media prior to that period, even though it first appeared in the *Guardian* in 1988 (Richard, Bourgeois, and Pellet 2022). The mostly qualitative paper on the evolution of discourses on gentrification in British newspapers published by Richard, Bourgeois and Pellet (2022) demonstrated that the term only started to gain momentum in the 2010s. The second factor worth highlighting is that research into gentrification and the media can in many respects be seen as resulting from the evolution of debates on gentrification, particularly in the academic sphere. The initial coining of gentrification by Ruth Glass in the 1960s laid the foundations for multiple ensuing monographs and for the lively discussions on its causes that occurred in the 1980s. These debates involved the rise of a range of tentative explanations, including Neil Smith's rent gap theory (Smith 1979), David Ley's consumer preference theory (Ley 1986) and, ultimately, Chris Hamnett's integrated theory (Hamnett 1991). The keen interest in the gentrification process led to an increasing use of the term in the 1990s and research was pursued after the turn of the century. Of particular interest in the mid-2000s was the emergence of a critical perspective spearheaded by Tom Slater (2006) who denounced what he perceived as a consensus depicting gentrification as a positive process. Another key trend which resulted from critical perspectives was the appearance of a body of research that scrutinized gentrification in the light of specific topics and issues such as aesthetics, art, food, race, or environmental justice to name a few (Gould and Lewis 2017; Lin 2019;

Doering 2020; Alkon, Kato, and Sbicca 2020; Lindner and Sandoval 2021). In our view, studies on the media and gentrification stem from these critical perspectives. This book reflects a desire to contribute to such an approach. Studying the media primarily provides gentrification scholars with an insight of what is labelled as gentrification and therefore, of the material non-academics are exposed to, which may shape their perception of the process of gentrification. It provides the first edited volume that specifically addresses gentrification through the lens of the media.

The team of scholars who contributed to this publication sought to strike a balance between the provision of diverse and distinct case studies and the formulation and discussion of cross-cutting issues that arise from the confrontation of media representations to the frameworks used in disciplines that focus on space and communities. In this respect, the work carried out reflects the fact that the gentrification debate is attractive because it stands at the intersection of a wide range of disciplines (Atkinson 2003). In many ways, this book echoes the *Aesthetics of Gentrification*, edited by Lindner and Sandoval (2021), which was published in this Cities and Culture series. The volume studied gentrification through the lens of aesthetics and this interaction was looked at by scholars from a range of disciplines and fields: those who contributed to the volume are active in geography, history, French studies, sociology, the arts, and critical studies.

Gentrification and/in the Media: A Brief Review of Literature

To date, most scholarly research that has looked at gentrification and the media has tended to focus on the press and has provided critical viewpoints, in line with Slater's seminal paper (Slater 2006). Three such pieces of work examined the framing of gentrification and attempted to highlight the positive or negative depiction of the process in the press. Waymer's doctoral thesis provided a case study of Cincinnati from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s (Waymer 2006) and reflected upon the use of positive terminology such as renewal or rebirth, rather than gentrification, and on its impact. This work also addressed the intentional or unintentional agency of the media in urban change and therefore illustrates the joint scrutiny of gentrification in/and the media. Almost ten years later, Modal and Wells revealed that much of Washington, DC's coverage focused on the semiotics of gentrification without critically examining how process is effectively generated and by whom (Modan and Wells 2015). These critical findings were echoed in later pieces focusing on North American newspapers (Rucks-Ahidiana 2018; Tolfo and

Doucet 2021). Shortly after Modal and Wells's paper was published, Lavy et al. (2016) identified a critical shift in the framing of gentrification in Austin, Texas. They argued that the year 2011 was a turning point in newspapers coverage, when gentrification started to be perceived in a negative way.

Social and ethnic minorities or other specific social groups appear to form another sub-theme of research. As early as 2010, Makagon examined the press coverage of artist-led gentrification and concluded that it was essentially grounded in a bohemian image of the city which mostly focused on young white artists (Makagon 2010). More recently, Rucks-Ahidiana showed that ethnicity, as much as class, pervaded reporting through oversimplified and skewed portraits of those who benefit from or are made worse off in the gentrification process (Rucks-Ahidiana 2018). A couple of years ago, Tolfo and Doucet threw light on the eviction of critical working-class perspectives from the critique of gentrification in the media (Tolfo and Doucet 2021). In addition, a pioneering paper on resistance to gentrification was published quite early on. Building on the critical dimension spurred by Slater (Slater 2006), Gin and Taylor (2010) examined the factors influencing the ability of anti-gentrification movements to capture media interest.

Whilst research on the press has been growing since the mid-2010s, publications on television and cinema only started to appear towards the end of the 2010s. The first to be listed (Bayramoğlu 2013) was published long before subsequent productions. Its distinctive feature is that it dealt with a gender minority (transgender people) and a television show. Later publications focused on fictionalized content, whether it be television series (Fowler 2018; Shearer 2020; Martinez 2022) or cinema such as 1980s New York cinema (Andersson 2017). More recently, scholarly work that looks at fiction writing has proliferated (Brouillette 2009; Moiles 2011; Peacock 2019; Heise 2021; Henryson 2024).

A whole new avenue for research in the field has been provided by the recent interest in digital media. It is noteworthy that publications home in more on social media than digital media and that they follow a similar pattern to those on the press. First, they shed light on the hegemonic role of social media, mainly Facebook, Instagram, Twitter (Gibbons et al. 2018; Walters and Smith 2022; Bronsvoort and Uitermark 2022; Chapple et al. 2022), and other media platforms such as YouTube and Flickr (Törnberg and Uitermark 2022) in the construction of gentrifying districts. They also question the framing of gentrification and gradually counter the idea of monolithic media representations of gentrification (Törnberg and Uitermark 2022). Thus, on balance, they are in line with the critical perspective on gentrification and some scholars have also underscored the role of media

platforms in resistance (Hartmann and Jansson 2022). While the press has been used as a signal of ongoing gentrification, social media was used not only to measure the extent of the process (Poorthuis et al. 2021), but also to predict which areas of a city would next be subject to it (Chapple et al. 2022). Furthermore, while publications on the press almost exclusively examined North American cities, those looking at social media have tended to broaden the geographic coverage of research which has included Australia (Walters and Smith 2022), Europe (Bronsvoort and Uitermark 2022), South America (Törnberg and Uitermark 2022) as well as additional case studies of US cities (Chapple et al. 2022; Poorthuis et al. 2021; Gibbons et al. 2018).

Finally, the dearth of research on the matter is also noticeable in the latest handbooks whether these primarily focus on gentrification or the media. The recent publication of a handbook of gentrification studies (Lees and Phillips 2018) has confirmed that the diversity of approaches, issues, settings, and methods employed and addressed by scholars allows to refer to gentrification studies as a distinct field. Yet, media coverage of the gentrification process is not addressed as a distinct topic in this key publication. It is also noteworthy that the recent *Routledge Companion to Urban Media and Communication* (Krajina and Stevenson 2020) occasionally alludes to gentrification but does not offer a chapter dedicated to this process. It includes a chapter narrowly devoted to journalism rather than to the media in the broader sense (Rodgers 2020). Whilst this section does not refer to gentrification once, the chapter focusing on television (Brunsdon 2020) does mention it on several occasions. A two-volume set *Gentrification around the World* (Kraze and De Sena 2020a; 2020b) includes a chapter on the media, but it focuses on cinema and deals with the gentrification of education rather than of a specific city neighbourhood.

Notwithstanding the quality of all the aforementioned publications on gentrification and the media in recent years, considerable research is still needed in this under-explored area of the prolific gentrification studies field. Lindner and Sandoval (2021, 14) recently argued that "aesthetics are integral to the story of gentrification." The rationale underpinning this book is that the media are also integral to the story of gentrification: their interplay should thus become an object of research *per se* in the field of gentrification studies.

Whilst inquiries into gentrification and the media will undoubtedly benefit from the expert eye of scholars involved in media studies and communication, this book primarily approaches the question through the lens of disciplines and fields that deal with space and communities such as geography, urban studies and planning, sociology or cultural studies. This

book suggests that research into gentrification should also be carried out by scholars who are mostly not media specialists, for two reasons. First, because scientists in other fields must confront their understanding of gentrification to corpora other than those they are accustomed to. Second, because such an approach may contribute to raising theoretical and methodological issues that have not been identified by media specialists. In that vein, this volume intends to appeal to an audience who may not necessarily have an interest in gentrification.

The authors examine gentrification and media from the two perspectives. They consider a range of means that are used to shape and publicize representations: contributions investigate printed and online newspapers, websites, blogs, and television programmes. This publication also aims to highlight the diversity of players who produce and disseminate media discourses on gentrification. Overall, it is this second dimension that is central to the book, which seeks to show how media producers contribute to shaping discourses on gentrification. Whilst media are considered both as the vehicles used to communicate and the people who produce the content which is being disseminated, we have not sought to cover all types of media. Thus, some types, particularly social media are excluded. This book does not intend to be comprehensive.

Fundamental to the book, however, is the idea that new research should engage with the theoretical and methodological issues that emerge when media products are used as a corpus to study gentrification, particularly since gentrification studies primarily use interviews, observations, and statistics as sources. Building on Loukaitou-Sideris, Gonzalez and Ong (2019), we have sought to combine mostly empirical investigations of specific neighbourhoods with epistemological discussions focusing on the nature of data collected and its analysis. In addition, with a view to contribute to the moving studies on gentrification and the media outside North America, the geographic scope of this volume is mostly narrowed down to European contexts: we believe that there is still a need for research in this zone, notwithstanding calls for scholarships in the Global South.

The ten chapters are organized into four parts, each of which concludes with a discussion to highlight some of the key issues that run throughout and suggest paths for future research.

Part 1 aims to highlight the ways in which media discourses on gentrification can evolve over time. In chapter 1, Girardin provides an American-decentred study and analyses discourses glorifying those who pioneered the gentrification of Leipzig, in stark contrast with previous representations that focused on industrial decline. The chapter draws on neo-Marxist theories

and highlights the dramatic shift in media representations of real estate intensification, which have recently been widely supported.

In chapter 2, Wallace studies the *New York Times*'s contribution to the place-making process of SoHo. First, she shows how narratives focused on a widely mediated missing child case in 1979, thus marking the area as a dangerous one. She then explains how the newspaper then shifted to promoting the neighbourhood by emphasizing its post-industrial transformation.

Part 1 of the book ends with discussion by geographer Martine Drozdz.

Part 2 compares and contrasts the advocating and silencing of discourses related to gentrification in different media. In chapter 5, Howard uses the House and Garden Television programme *Selling the Big Easy* as a lens through which to explore shifts in New Orleans's housing market. She sheds light on a double research niche in the field: television and TV shows (since the current literature mainly focuses on narrative fiction in series). In chapter 6, Baron studies the coverage of gentrification as imbricate with another object (mobility) as it deals with the role of the media in the politicization of a microtransit-induced gentrification controversy in a Washington, DC BID (Business Improvement District). She addresses the ways in which readers of the *Washington Post* forced the newspaper into giving more visibility to diverse opinions, thus providing a balanced coverage of urban change.

Part 2 of the book ends with discussion by ethnographer Japonica Brown-Saracino.

Part 3 shows that the gentrification of a neighbourhood can generate contrasting discourses. While much of the literature has previously focused on North American cities, our publication not only shifts the geographical focus to European cities (Paris and Barcelona) but also provides comparative studies at the neighbourhood scale. In chapter 8, Joffre looks at the Goutte d'Or and Château-Rouge areas in Paris and reflects on the relative absence of social relations of race and class from the media coverage of gentrification. Its originality is to focus on two retail gentrification emblems and touch upon the social relations of race through the lens of gentrification in a French-context—the literature review has indeed revealed a gap in both themes. In chapter 9, Montaner then compares media representations of change in El Raval, Barcelona and Belleville, Paris. She examines the extent to which the nature of media, their business model and editorial lines can contribute to explaining the discourse they put forward. In chapter 10, Albert-Blanco discusses the ambivalent role of religious minorities in the media, drawing on the spatial turn that has occurred in the study of religion in urban space. Whilst religious minorities can be rejected and seen as a

source of disruption in the light of supposedly secular public spaces, religious pluralism has also been strategically used to market the neighbourhood as a multicultural and cosmopolitan one.

Part 3 concludes with a discussion led by sociologist Yankel Fijalkow.

Part 4 looks at cases where the media are instrumental in voicing discourses that resist gentrification processes—an understudied topic in the literature. In chapter 8, Renoir deals with the setting up of the "I am Denver" storytelling project, which has involved the construction of a discourse to counter the dominant media narrative of gentrification in the city. In chapter 9, Sadoux focuses on an example of hyperlocal media, namely the *Brixton Blog*. He shows how the language used in this media reflects the attitude, beliefs, and concerns of one part of the local community and is thus a powerful indicator of community reaction to urban change. Thus, both chapters delve into a double research niche by analysing how the digital media can offer counter-narratives to gentrification, whether at the city or hyperlocal scale. In chapter 10, Vincent homes in on the local newspapers' coverage of an anti-gentrification resistance action (another object which has indubitably been overlooked), namely the Cereal Killer Cafe attack in London in 2015. It highlights the importance of the local press as both a potential catalyst and stakeholder of anti-gentrification resistance.

Part 3 of the book ends with discussion by architect and urbanist Matthew Hardy.

The various contributions follow three key principles. Firstly, the main empirical evidence used by each scholar consists of a corpus of textual, visual, or audio-visual material exclusively produced by media organizations. The sources that underpin the research were therefore produced for the purpose of large-scale dissemination and are representative of the rhetoric and images to which non-academics are exposed to on a daily basis. Secondly, all chapters are rooted in specific geographical contexts (cities in Europe and North America), which the authors depict and describe: we believe that the meaning of discourses and representations provided by the media on gentrification should be investigated in the light of local issues and situations. Thirdly, each contribution aims to show how corpora of media outputs can be analysed by specialists from multidisciplinary backgrounds other than media studies who draw from frameworks used in their own disciplines or fields. In doing so, contributions pay heed to the methodological and theoretical implications that arise when one approaches gentrification through media representations and discourses.

A common feature of the contributions is an engagement with and an analysis of discourse. All authors, regardless of their background, provide

insights into the various ways in which media construct and disseminate discourses about gentrification. Several contributors specifically borrow theoretical and methodological frameworks from critical discourse analysis. Thus, Baron refers to Fairclough (1992) (2010); Montaner to Van Dijk (1999); Girardin to Bardin (2013). Notwithstanding this use of significant publications in the field, the various chapters also highlight the benefits of cross-fertilizing theories and methods. Girardin and Renoir rely on frameworks designed in critical urban studies. As a planner, Sadoux suggests that media discourses on gentrification should pay attention to the visual language of media discourses as much as to the written text. Whilst all chapters primarily rely on the analysis of a corpus of media-based primary sources, some contributions also draw from interviews carried out with a range of stakeholders which allow them to shed light on the construction of discourses. This edited volume therefore deliberately turns the usual hierarchy of sources inherent to gentrification studies on its head.

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Part 1

Comparing and Contrasting Discourses on Gentrification

2. The Local and International Press and the Gentrification of Western Leipzig (Germany): Between Promotional Narratives of Social Transformations and Late Discovery of the Negatives Consequences of Gentrification

Antonin Girardin

Abstract: Based on two corpora of articles from the local and international press between 2006 and 2018, this chapter shows how the press has accompanied the social transformations of Leipzig through the construction of a promotional narrative. This narrative legitimizes the process of gentrification in an incomplete and paradoxical way. On the one hand, it glorifies the actions of the creative population and the first symbolic entrepreneurs until the mid-2010s. On the other, it is much more critical of the real estate intensification that is currently taking place in the western districts, which is presented as undermining the cultural exceptionalism that has been built up since the early 2000s.

Keywords: narrative, creative city, accumulation of capital

Introduction

The city of Leipzig has long been regarded as a model of a shrinking city in Europe (Bontje 2004). After the German reunification and with a loss of 87,000 industrial jobs between 1985 and 1998 and about 100,000 residents (18 per cent of the population), the city experienced a period of deep decline. In the 1990s and 2000s, Leipzig's landscape was characterized by industrial

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brownfield and a high proportion of non-decent and abandoned housing, to the extent that the city was referred to as the capital of housing vacancy in Europe (Haase and Rink 2015). However, Leipzig has regained almost 156,000 residents since 1999, an increase of 38 per cent, and has one of the most dynamic housing markets in Germany with an increase of almost 6 per cent in the number of dwellings since 2006. For almost ten years, Leipzig has also seen an increase in tourist flows.

The western districts and in particular the Plagwitz district have played a particular role in the symbolic reaffirmation of Leipzig on the national and European scene since the German reunification. Considered one of the poorest districts of the city in the 1990s (Garcia-Zamor 2014), the sociology of Plagwitz gradually transformed with the successive arrival of groups of artists, cultural workers, and of higher social categories. The European URBACT programmes favoured these arrivals by financing and implementing numerous urban projects, to the extent that pressure on land in Plagwitz has become one of the most significant in Leipzig. While the redevelopment of the district in the 2000s was largely based on a strategy of partnership management of the stigma of decline (Bernt 2009), marked by a significant recourse to social experimentation (intermediate uses, squats, negotiated appropriation of space, etc.), the district is today marked by debates and tensions around a phenomenon of gentrification that could put an end to this period of partnership governance and negate its legacy.

Local, national, and international media narratives have accompanied and structured the process of economic transition and change in the image of the western districts and the city of Leipzig over the long term. Analysing these narratives (Box 1) allows for a reconstruction of the coherence of this apparent opposition of logic between these two periods of development. The gentrification of the western districts has indeed long been accompanied and justified by narratives of glorification of the urban transformations, the social consequences of which have only been tackled belatedly and timidly since 2015.

Box 1: Construction of the Press Corpora and Methodology

In order to reconstruct these media narratives and their evolution, I conducted a textual and thematic analysis (Négura 2006) on two scales on two press corpora.

A thematic analysis of corpora of local and regional press titles in order to characterize the dominant representations that accompany the transformations of Plagwitz locally. By examining the online archives of the most important local and regional press titles, I selected all the articles that refer to the Plagwitz district were selected. The dominant lexical field of articles (see table 2.1) was then quantified, ac-

cording to the verbatim and expressions used to describe the district or the places that make it up, to characterize the dominant representations. The places mentioned in these articles were identified in order to understand the facilities or spaces that play an important role in the media presentation of the district to the outside world. The same method was used to quantify the actors and institutions that are most frequently mentioned in the articles, and which thus appear to symbolically dominate urban production in Plagwitz. The corpus thus consists of forty-one articles published between 06/06/2010 and 16/11/2018 for a total of 123 treatable verbatims, eighty-three places mentioned and forty-six actors and institutions.

A second analysis was then carried out at the city scale, drawing from the national and international general press, to question the way in which Leipzig is perceived externally—what are the images and places that characterize the city?—the degree of internationalization of these representations and the place occupied by the western districts in these processes. All the articles published between 2005 and 2017 in general newspapers in French, German, or English that include the name "Leipzig" in their title or subtitle were collected, using the Europresse database. These results were filtered by searching for the keyword "urban" and all its derivatives[1], including its English and German equivalents, to focus our search on the perception of urban transformations and to eliminate articles on news, cultural events, or sports. The limitation of this research to a French source, Europresse, introduces a bias of over-representation of French newspapers. This results in a low representation of articles from the German press, which is only partially covered by Europresse.

The corpus thus consists of thirty-two articles published between January 2006 and September 2018 for a total of 339 verbatim and 256 quotations of places that can be used for this analysis.

Table 2.1. Table of Representations of Leipzig in the National and International Press

Type, Orientation of Representations (Number of Occurrences)	Main Related Verbatim (Number of Occurrences)	Percentage of the Corpus
Trendy, fashionable city. (44)	"Hypezig" (14) "The place to be in Germany" (4) "…"	13
A city that was devastated at the time of reunification. (42)	"Sinister by unemployment and depopulation" (7) "Sad and polluted city" (4) "…"	12.4

1 The research was carried out automatically on Europresse by searching for the following entries: "urba*" (all three languages) and "Stadt*" (German).

Type, Orientation of Representations (Number of Occurrences)	**Main Related Verbatim (Number of Occurrences)**	**Percentage of the Corpus**
Creative city, attractive for young people, artists and "creative" entrepreneurs. (41)	"Cheap" (11) "Attracts creative entrepreneurs, artists and musicians (5) "…"	12.1
City of contemporary culture (painting, music). (35)	"City of Contemporary Painting" (14) "An exciting art scene" (4) "…"	10.3
City of ancient classical culture: (music, publishing, fairs…). (33)	"City known for its fairs and printing works" (6) "The city of Bach and Mendelssohn" (4) "…"	9.7
Comparison with the creative and alternative Berlin of the 1990s. (24)	"The new Berlin" (11) "Like Berlin but better" (6) "…"	7.1
Tolerant city, open to the world and alternative lifestyles. (21)	"Alternative lifestyles" (6) "City of Freedom" (5) "…"	6.2
Growth, attractiveness, economic and demographic dynamism. (21)	"Growing city" (5) "Fastest growing in the country" (2) "…"	6.2
Underground and alternative city. (20)	"Alternative City" (12) "City of underground culture" (2) "…"	5.9
A city historically at the forefront of collective emancipation movements and political innovation. (19)	"City of the peaceful revolution" (12) "Once a pioneer in worker's struggles" (2) "…"	5.6
A city in the middle of a gentrification process, in which social inequalities are increasing. (16)	"In the midst of gentrification" (11) "Growing social inequalities" (2) "…"	4.7
Pleasant living environment and urban atmosphere. (12)	"Plenty of space available" (7) "Ideal quality of life" (3) "…"	3.5
Other. (6)	"City in debt" (2) "A little Paris" (1) "…"	1.8
City that rises from its ashes. (5)	"Renaissance" or "Resurrection" (3) "Metamorphosed" (1) "…"	1.5

I present the results of this work in three parts. First, I review the urban and social transformations experienced by the western districts of Leipzig since the 1990s. I show that the current phenomenon of gentrification is the result of an intense regeneration of former industrial brownfields carried out with the help of significant public and private resources. In the second part, I show that in contrast to these material realities, the press corpora present a narrative that attributes Leipzig's transformations to a spontaneous movement of re-appropriation of the western districts by creative populations. In the last part I show that the press corpus carries a more critical discourse of the real estate intensification currently experienced in the western districts which is presented as undermining the cultural exceptionalism built up since the early 2000s.

The Context of the Gentrification of the Western Districts of Leipzig

The Plagwitz district is emblematic of the urban decline of Leipzig. The loss of approximately 20,000 industrial jobs between 1989 and 1993 resulted in the creation of almost fifty hectares of brownfield, and in the decrease in population of 4,969 residents (38 per cent between 1990 and 2000). However, since the end of the 1990s, Plagwitz has seen an intense transformation of its urban and social landscape. This transformation was marked by significant mobilization of both public and private resources, and the successive arrival of new populations, which has transformed the dominant forms and uses.

Urban Transformations Driven by Massive Public and Private Capital Investments

Above all, these transformations take the form of a process of regeneration of industrial brownfields and transformation of the district's uses. The district has seen almost 120 new construction operations in almost thirty-eight hectares of industrial brownfield since 1990. Similarly, almost all the degraded housing stock was either refurbished or destroyed between 1994 and 2017. The 2000s saw a gradual transformation of the Plagwitz landscape with the provision of numerous public spaces that help erase the stigma of its decline during the previous decade. Funded by European programmes, the municipality heavily invested in the transformation of the district's economy by supporting a series of service sector business incubators focused on cultural, artistic, and new media and communication activities. This specialization of Leipzig's western districts in the cultural

economy constitutes the central counterpart of a strategy of economic reaffirmation of the city, which also involves the installation of Porsche and BMW car factories on the periphery of Leipzig, as well as Amazon and DHL logistics companies (Power and Herden 2016). This specialization will strongly determine the social and urban dynamics of Leipzig's western districts, which are now recognized as a "cultural quarter" beyond the German borders (Bain and Landau 2021).

With four successive URBACT programmes and the implementation of federal and municipal urban renewal schemes, the district is characterized by a rapid transformation of its urban morphology and a productive transformation. If this process is partly carried out in a partnership form linked to the large quantity of land and housing available at low cost, it is made possible by the mobilization of significant public and private financial resources, in ways that are far removed from a process of spontaneous re-appropriation of former industrial brownfields. Between 2006 and 2013, more than forty million euros were invested through URBACT programmes, including fifteen million euros for the creation and consolidation of creative and cultural industries. In 2009, the city estimated that this strategy had paved the way for more than 130 million euros in private investments in Plagwitz (Stadt Leipzig 2009).

The 2010s were marked by an amplification of these two phenomena of productive specialization and urban regeneration. This is reflected in the intensive construction of housing programmes to the east of the district and the transformation of old industrial buildings into luxury lofts to the west. The number of dwellings increased by 26 per cent between 2010 and 2018, correlating with a significant increase in the district's population (91 per cent between 1999 and 2017).

An Increasingly Exclusionary and Conflicting Gentrification

Since the mid-2000s, Plagwitz has become a peri-central district appropriated by young working people and middle classes. The statistics on the evolution of social profiles by level of qualification between 2008 and 2017 show a significant decrease in the proportion of semi-skilled workers and unskilled workers[2] and a very significant increase in the proportion of university graduates[3]. This increase does not correspond to the averages observed in the rest of the city of Leipzig, where the proportion of partially

2 31 per cent in 2017 compared to 42.5 per cent in 2008 for partially skilled workers and 4 per cent in 2017 compared to 14.9 per cent in 2008 for unskilled workers.

3 39 per cent in 2017 compared to 22.5 per cent in 2008.

qualified workers remains above 40 per cent and the proportion of university graduates below 20 per cent in 2017 (Stadt Leipzig, Amt für Statistik und Wählen, 2010 and 2018).

These social transformations are reflected first in renovated old housing, where selling prices per square metre have been rising continuously since 2003 (91 per cent increase between 2003 and 2016[4]). The pressure caused by the residential demand has furthermore led to an increase in rental prices, with the amount of basic rent (for all types of housing) increasing by 49.9 per cent[5] between 2006 and 2018 (Stadt Leipzig, Amt für Geoinformation und Bodenordnung, 2016).

This recent residential intensification and sharp increase in housing prices is perceived by different local actors (collectives for the safeguarding of creative places, academics, left-wing municipal representatives) as a process of gentrification. This could lead to the exclusion of populations that have been dwellers since the beginning of the 2000s; including artists and activist groups who appropriated vacant spaces at low cost or even for free during the period of decline. This gentrification would lead to a progressive destruction of the cultural and political identity of certain neighbourhoods, but also of the city as a whole. Over the last ten years, the situation has become conflictual and protest actions against the commodification of real estate and the privatization of cultural structures are multiplying. These range from the organization of scientific initiatives (such as the creation by academics in 2014 of the website https://www.einundleipzig.de/ to inform about the negative social consequences of gentrification in Leipzig) to violent action to sabotage building sites, as well as the creation of graffiti and the organization of creative demonstrations. The events are sometimes massively followed locally, suggesting a situation that is increasingly tense (Girardin 2019b), far from the image of creative and harmonious urban development that emerges from the analysis of the press corpora.

Plagwitz and the western districts of Leipzig have been a major focus of Leipzig's regeneration since the reunification and the urban crisis of the early 2000s. The redevelopment strategy has been partly reached through loose arrangements that facilitated the creative appropriation of the district by autonomous associations and collectives. It has also been largely supported by the mobilization of important economic and infrastructural resources that have allowed for the rapid regeneration and redevelopment of former industrial brownfields at higher density.

4 85 per cent for Leipzig over the same period.

5 For Leipzig, 24.5 per cent over the same period.

This combination has led to a significant increase in residential demand resulting in increasingly marked exclusion of the working classes and of the most precarious fractions of the creative populations who arrived in the district during the 2000s.

The Role of the Press in Building the Myth of the Creative City

However, the textual analysis of the press corpus reveals little coverage of these urban projects and developments and the social transformations linked to them. As was the case for the transformation of the SoHo district in New York (see Wallace in this volume), the planned and political character of the urban transformations are passed over in favour of the construction of a much more unifying narrative. It reveals the presentation of another narrative that highlights spaces that have not been the most funded by public and private developers. This narrative is that of a spontaneous re-appropriation of a degraded neighbourhood by a young and creative population, set up as heroes of the "rebirth" (*Télérama*, 2015/10) of Leipzig.

A Presentation of Creative and Spontaneous Urban Renewal in Local, National, and International Press

The concentration of creative and cultural activities in Plagwitz appears to be a dominant characteristic of the representations in local press (29.3 per cent of the representations). This dynamic is presented as the fundamental asset of a peaceful district in which cultural and economic logics coexist. It would be the basis of a certain form of freedom which, in addition to improving the living environment, plays a fundamental role in the current attractiveness of a district presented thirteen times as "creative." In the articles, this creative and cultural identity is presented as a specific feature of the district and an element of uniqueness and attractiveness "even beyond the German borders" (Mdr.de 2011). This identity, which is presented as independent of public urban projects, is widely praised in the local press as an element of singularity and dynamism.

In the same vein, the local press is characterized by a low representation of the role of public institutions in the transformations of Plagwitz (17.4 per cent of the actors cited). Associations, citizen's groups, and groups from the arts and cultural industries are the most frequently mentioned actors, accounting for 41.1 per cent of citations. The participation of these groups in the process of re-appropriation of Plagwitz is mainly approached from the point of view of glorification and legitimization. In a large part of the

articles, these populations often referred to as "artists" or "creatives" or through the places where their activities are fixed, are presented as the pioneers of the symbolic and functional re-appropriation of the district. They would be the bearers of an urban singularity inherent to the creative activities and the atmospheres they would be vectors of. In a similar logic to the enhancement of this mixed use between a pleasant living environment, cultural activities, and economic development, the manufacturing industries are highlighted (19.6 per cent of the actors cited) and are presented as actors of the contemporary attractiveness of the district.

This creative narrative appears to be even more structured on a European and international scale. From the mid-2000s, the city has been the subject of a major international staging process, which has resulted in the publication of press articles that multiply the favourable descriptions in French, American, English, Belgian, and Swiss newspapers. This promotional narrative, contributing to the creation of an international image of Leipzig, is a fundamental element for understanding Leipzig's reinsertion into the symbolic economy of contemporary European cities

The structure of the representations conveyed by the national and international press puts forward accounts of the regeneration of the former industrial districts, in the first place Plagwitz. It is characterized by the presentation of an opposition between negative images of the period of urban decline, and positive images of creativity and contemporary cultural activities. Thus, the phenomenon of decline in the 1990s, mainly seen here in terms of unemployment, demographic decline (seven occurrences) and pollution (four), is a widely highlighted representation (12.4 per cent of representations, in thirty out of thirty-three articles). It is systematically mobilized in the past tense, in order to emphasize the renaissance of a city that is now described as attractive and "fashionable" (13 per cent of representations, in twenty-nine out of thirty-three articles), even by journalistic hyperbolas such as "capital of coolness" (two occurrences) or "Hypezig"[6] (fourteen occurrences). This rhetorical construction of an opposition between two periods, a degraded "before" and a desirable "after," appears typical of the presentation of gentrification processes in the press (see Wallace in this volume). This stigmatization of the city in its industrial period at the end of the GDR regime and in the period of urban shrinking in the 1990s and 2000s is undoubtedly the main argument of the promoters

6 A play on words with "Hype" and Leipzig. A nickname often given to Leipzig for several years, to signify its residential and cultural attractiveness. The term is used positively by tourist promoters and the international press and negatively by the anti-gentrification movements.

of the urban transformations and the resulting gentrification process. The catastrophic images and reminders of the state of Plagwitz in the 1990s are thus very often invoked by the actors of urban planning to underline the success of urban policies. The international press reinforces the strength of this narrative by almost systematically staging this opposition between past and present. Furthermore, this reinforces the heroic narrative of pioneering creative appropriations which appears even less nuanced in the international press.

The contemporary attractiveness, both demographic and economic (6.2 per cent), is presented as the result of a specific urban atmosphere linked to the installation of young people from the creative arts in the broad sense. These installations are characterized by the emergence of an important music scene at the beginning of the 2000s and above all by that of a pictorial movement called "The New Leipzig School" that is presented as being at the origin of Leipzig's re-inscription on the contemporary cultural and urban scene (10.3 per cent of representations). The strong appreciation of these paintings by the American art world from the early 2000s was the subject of the first articles in the international press between 2005 and 2010. The British newspaper *The Guardian* even went so far as to describe the Baumwollspinnerei, where the painters of the "New Leipzig School" have their studios, as "the hottest place on Earth" (Burn 2007). Presented as pioneering, these cultural appropriations are thus considered to be the source of a particular urban image, that of an alternative city (5.9 per cent), a place of experimentation of new ways of life (6.2 per cent) using industrial brownfields as the main "playgrounds." The combination of all these factors contributes to the presentation of Leipzig as a culturally dynamic city, valued for its nightlife and its "free" atmosphere (four occurrences), compared to the Berlin of the 1990s (7.1 per cent of the representations describe Leipzig as the "New Berlin," or even the "better Berlin").

The Social Construction of Plagwitz's Creative Spaces as a Starting Point for the Spread of the Markers of Gentrification

The analysis of the presentation of the places cited in the local and international press reinforces an account of a spontaneous reconquest process that would pass through social appropriations and daily practices of places and streets rather than through urban planning. Private real estate operations represent only 10.8 per cent of the places cited in the local press and are concentrated in only five articles. Public developments similarly account for only 9.6 per cent of the locations cited, with eight occurrences in four

different locations, plus five references to the Sanierungsgebiete (the main area of redevelopment of old housing) in forty-one articles. The narrative focuses on artistic and cultural places and the urban ambiences they create. Former factories converted into galleries, artists' studios or screening rooms account for 36.2 per cent of the places mentioned and play a functional role of identification and landmark. They are not cited for the events that take place there, rather as places that participate in the generation of a specific identity and therefore of a symbolic value attached to them. This in turn supports the social construction of places (see Wallace in this volume) and a sacralized neighbourhood (Monnet 1998) and profoundly evacuates the political dimension of their effective appropriation. Streets such as Karl Heine Strasse and Zschochersche Strasse (22.9 per cent of the places cited) are highlighted as places that concentrate this symbolic value and as examples of the re-appropriation of a formerly "grey" and "degraded" urban structure.

This construction of Leipzig's image as a city of cultural innovation is even more pronounced in the international press where Plagwitz polarizes a major part of the representations. Of the thirty-two articles, twenty-seven explicitly mention the creative and alternative atmosphere of Plagwitz, citing the district or one or more of the places in it. The relative majority (48 per cent) of the places mentioned are located within the administrative boundaries of Plagwitz or in its immediate surroundings. The two most frequently mentioned places in the corpus are the Plagwitz district (twenty-five mentions) and the art complex Baumwollspinnerei (twenty-two). Outside the western districts, the Karl-Liebknecht Strasse axis to the south of the city centre, known for its nightlife and music scene, also appears to be valued, as it participates in the same narrative of the creative city (13.3 per cent of representations). On the other hand, the city centre where the majority of the old heritage monuments and main tourist attractions are located is relatively little mentioned (only 12.5 per cent of the places). On an international scale, with its creative and alternative identity, Plagwitz is seen as the main factor of Leipzig's attractiveness. This identity, which emerged in the early 2000s in limited areas of the west, is symbolically extended to the whole city, thereby distinguishing it for tourists and for potential residents and economic investors.

The analysis of the structure of the dominant representations of Leipzig and its western districts shows that the local as well as the national and international press has participated in an alternative social construction of the recent transformations of western Leipzig since the mid-2000s.

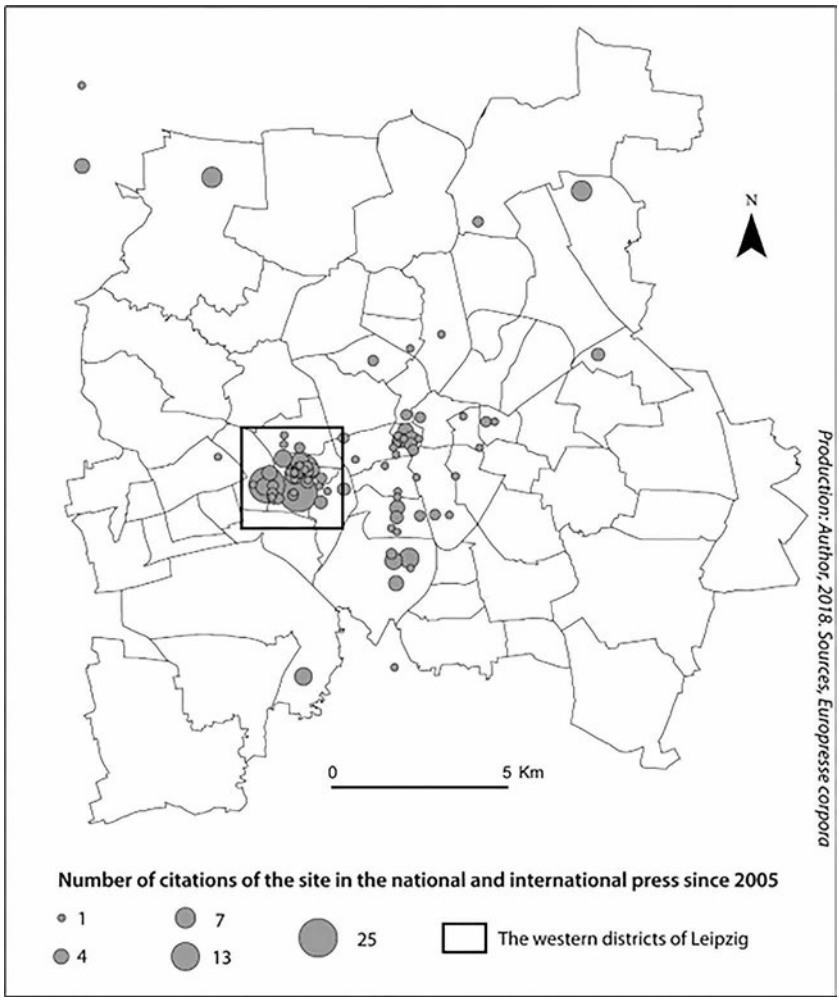

Figure 2.1. An Overvaluation of Western Leipzig in the National and International Press. Source: author.

The latter largely ignores the material and political dimensions of these transformations in favour of the construction of a creative identity (Girardin 2019a) whose promotional dimension is explicit, especially in the international press. Focusing on the symbolic construction of a place, this narrative obscures the processes of sociological transformation at work in western Leipzig. The press largely contributes to accentuating the phenomenon of gentrification by disseminating an idyllic image of the western districts that will serve as a promotional tool for the actors of urban development, both the municipality and real estate developers, throughout the 2010s.

Gentrification as a Threat to the Creative Myth: The Late Construction of a Selective Social Consciousness

In contrast to this glorification of creative transformations, since 2015 the local and international press has reported an opposition of appropriation logics between the desire for real estate profitability in the recent phase of urban development and the artistic and cultural appropriations presented as "pioneering" and founding the "identity" of Leipzig's western districts. The concern about what some press articles no longer hesitate to call gentrification follows the multiplication of social movements contesting the phenomenon of rising residential property prices and cultural spaces since the early 2010s.

Since 2017: Local Press on the Side of Maintaining Cultural and Industrial Uses Threatened by Gentrification

The local press is an important agent in the staging of this opposition. Out of forty-three articles, eleven (9.8 per cent of the representations) are critical of the contemporary transformations of Leipzig's western districts that are repeatedly presented as factors of "gentrification" or even of "loss of identity."

These articles, all published since 2017 during the intense development of protest movements against gentrification in the district, participate in the staging of a conflict in the logics of contemporary appropriations of the district. The new major real estate programmes and the financial logics they symbolize are embodied by private developers and managers who represent a significant proportion of the actors cited (21.7 per cent). The action of property developers is strongly criticized when it directly threatens the presence of the places glorified by the creative and post-industrial narrative of the previous period. However, most of the real estate activity in the west of Leipzig concerns the improvement of old housing and the construction of luxury projects on the banks of the district's waterways. The emergence of the figure of the developer, often identified in the Lipsian press as a financier, allows the strengthening of the legitimization process of associations and citizen and creative collectives. The latter are presented as the guarantors of a legitimate identity that would be challenged by the promoters carrying a logic of gentrification that predominates in a majority of the articles published since 2017.

The treatment of a social conflict that took place between October 2017 and September 2018 around the Siemens turbine production site is a perfect example of how the local press sets up creative populations as heroes of an urban redevelopment whose values are now threatened by commodification. In October 2017, 270 jobs were threatened in Plagwitz when the factory

was threatened with closure after a decision by the board of directors of the multinational company to merge the turbine production activities in Duisburg. In November and December 2017, the employees started a cycle of demonstrations and strikes that lasted more than three months and were supported by local residents and artists. In September 2018, after more than six months of social conflict, the management of the multinational company announced that the Plagwitz factory would remain open.

During this period, the Lipsian local press published numerous articles on the subject including a dozen mainly focused on the local fight against the closure of the Plagwitz site. If these articles relate the social struggle of the employees for the preservation of their jobs, the main angle adopted for the coverage of this conflict is original for a conflict of this kind. Most of these articles relate the creative side of the mobilization supported by artists and cultural structures. In this narrative, the Siemens factory and the industrial activity around it, is presented as a heritage element that contributes to the influence and the atmosphere of the district. The emphasis is on creative and citizen initiatives in support of the workers, in particular the production of numerous works of art in support of the factory and the visibility of the struggle through the composition of large-scale graffiti on the facades of the district by street artists. Indeed, the titles of these articles are clear: "The creative resistance of the metalworkers at the Siemens factory in Plagwitz to put pressure on the management" (*Leipziger Internetzeitung*, October 26, 2017) or "Hipsters protest against the imminent closure of the Siemens turbine factory" (*MitteldeutscheZeitung*, November 15, 2017). More than the employees' struggle, these articles point to the role of creativity as a determining factor, here embodied by a larger collective called "Siemens bleibt in Plagwitz,"[7] from which a slogan quickly emerges that reflects the identity character of this struggle "Plagwitz, Industrie+Kultur." This slogan became a visual symbol of the struggle against the closure of the factory and symbolically summarized the way in which the district of Plagwitz was presented in the entire corpus of the local press.

The example of the Siemens factory is not the only struggle of this type relayed by the local Lipsian press since 2015. In all cases, the tone of the articles suggests a certain sympathy from local journalists towards the activists against the gentrification of the western districts, whose speeches are increasingly relayed and who are presented as the guardians of a singular identity built during the previous decade. However, the structural causes of the denounced gentrification are never put into perspective. Presented as

7 "Siemens stays in Plagwitz"

the work of unscrupulous developers or financiers, the role of urban policies and specialization in the creative economy in the generation of the rent gap (Smith 1987) in the west of Leipzig is never questioned.

"Enjoy Leipzig before it's too late": The International Press "Discovers" the Gentrification of Leipzig

Unlike the local press, gentrification is not explicitly criticized in national and international press that never directly questions the role of real estate actors in the transformations of the district. It relays diffuse concerns and denounces the phenomenon through the testimony of certain actors, local elected officials, or artists who can no longer find places to carry out their activities in the face of what is presented as a recent drift in prices. The cumulative effect of these testimonies is to reverse the meaning of certain previously positive signifiers and to transform them into disguised criticisms of a city that is gradually falling in line with excessive gentrification, to the detriment of creative spaces for artists and creative people (4.7 per cent of the representations, mainly since 2015).

A good example of the reversal of these meanings is the increasing number of comparisons made in the international press between Leipzig and the "creative" Berlin of the 1990s. Originally based on the influence of places like the Baumwollspinnerei on certain social groups (art collectors, young artists and musicians, students, etc.), this comparison comes directly from certain titles of the international press that are highly prescriptive of fashion (*New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *Télérama*, etc.). At first, it was used in a laudatory way, to underline the alternative, even underground character of Leipzig. However, in recent times, this comparison has become a symbolic repellent for many artists and activists interviewed in the press who denounce, as was the case in Berlin, a gentrification that is harmful to independent creative practices. By relaying these testimonies, from the middle of the 2010s, the international press joined in the denunciation of an element of language that it had itself created, giving a voice to those in charge of cultural structures in Plagwitz who were seeking to distinguish themselves from the image of the capital. This refusal of the genealogy with Berlin is also relayed by the Mayor who declared to the *New York Times* in 2014 about the name "The new Berlin": "I don't like this nickname, we are not Berlin, we are Leipzig" (Engelhart 2014).

Here again, the criticism of the process of real estate and tourist gentrification appears to be an attempt to underline the singularity of Leipzig's identity, which would be threatened by this commodification, and not a social criticism of the logics of exclusion that were already in the making in the first urban revitalization policies of the mid-1990s. Similarly, the end

of the 2010s saw a proliferation of articles predicting the end of Leipzig's alternative fashion,[8] because it had lost the authenticity that made the city famous at the end of the 2000s. More than a social criticism of the gentrification phenomenon, these articles act rather as fashion prescribers, anticipating a circulation of symbolic values to other Eastern European cities. Indeed, these articles furiously echo others published at the end of the 2000s that predicted the same fate for Berlin, condemned to normalization by the rise in property prices, and that already announced Leipzig as the future fashionable place.[9] Sanctioning this change of fashion, no more articles about Leipzig have been written in international press titles since the end of 2018.

Like in the local press, the international press makes no mention of Leipzig's urbanization policies in the 2000s and presents gentrification as a consequence without a real cause, as a process of the unchanging normalization of contemporary cities after an exciting moment of increasing pioneering appropriation.

Since 2015 and the explosion of real estate construction, the press has been relaying a more critical discourse on the transformations taking place in the west of Leipzig. While it remains in the minority in the national and international press, which continues to relay an unbalanced discourse on the "miracle of Leipzig's rebirth," this discourse is becoming dominant in the local press, which reports with a certain benevolence on the numerous struggles led by independent artists and activists. These struggles, which began at the end of the 2000s, have highlighted the social and political stakes of Leipzig's urban transformations and have succeeded in imposing the debate on gentrification in the local public sphere to the point where the word is now used in almost half of the articles in our corpus since 2015. However, this awareness of the inegalitarian effects of Leipzig's transformations and their over-mediatization appears belated and incomplete because it never questions the foundations of the gentrification process, linked to the creative specialization that took place in the 2000s.

Conclusion

My analyses show that the press has been an objective facilitator of gentrification by participating in the generation and dissemination of a narrative of

8 "The contrasts of Leipzig, before it is too late," *La tribune de Genève*, 2018.

9 "Wie Berlin, nur besser," *Der Spiegel*, December 2012; "Berlin is over; Leipzig is the place to be," *Slate*, March 2014.

glorified reclamation of a declining neighbourhood that denies the political and conflicting dimension of the processes of reproduction of urban spaces. By reducing the processes of urban regeneration to the appropriation of Leipzig's western districts by creative groups, the local and national press has played a major role in the dissemination of a promotional and laudatory image of the city. Today, this narrative is the main advertising argument for urban planners (Mace and Volgmann 2018) and developers of large residential and hotel project. Their strategies of real estate intensification have led to price increases that threaten the residential positions of the working classes and the most precarious fractions of the creative population in the district, as well as the spontaneous and economically unprofitable uses developed by these populations. This narrative justifies the process of gentrification in an incomplete and paradoxical way by glorifying the action of the creative populations and the first symbolic entrepreneurs until the mid-2010s, while at the same time being much more critical of the real estate intensification currently at work in the western neighbourhoods, which is presented as undermining the cultural exceptionalism built up since the early 2000s.

Such a presentation of events shows a class orientation on the consequences of the upgrading of Leipzig's western districts, which the press accounts fantasized as idyllic and socially harmonious until recently. Indeed, while the destruction of the working class in Leipzig continued throughout the 1990s and the eviction of the lower classes from Leipzig's western districts has been underway since at least 2010, the criticism of the gentrification process by the local press appears late and only in defence of the creative uses glorified by the superior social categories. This also reveals that the press acts here as a social resource that can be mobilized by the main actors of contemporary protest movements, essentially artists and activists from the middle and high social categories, the first gentrifiers with significant social and symbolic capital because they are constructed and legitimized as the main characters in the narrative of the creative regeneration of the shrinking city.

Finally, this late imposition of the notion of gentrification in the Lipsian media debate reveals an incomplete understanding of a process with a complex temporality, including on the part of the activists and academics involved. Indeed, the fact that the term gentrification is only used to designate the recent movement of land pressure and development of real estate speculation prevents a perception of its causes. These are to be found directly in the urban policies of residential and cultural specialization of the district carried out in the 2000s and in the work of urban and symbolic revalorization carried out by the creative populations in the 2000s. In our

opinion, and as was already the case in certain Berlin neighbourhoods during the 1990s, these transformations are already part of an overall gentrification policy by representing a moment of accumulation of symbolic capital that complements a later phase of accumulation of economic capital (Vivant and Charmes 2008). As presented, by Wallace (in this volume) for the case of SoHo, the press also plays an important role in this transition from one phase to the other by inciting an idyllic image of Leipzig in the 2000s, which has had a determining effect on the generation of a rent gap (Smith 1987) beneficial to real estate actors in an overall urban logic driven by the objectives of capital accumulation (Harvey 2008).

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About the Author

Antonin Girardin holds a PhD in social and urban geography and urban planning from Université de Caen. His areas of interest are the neoliberal city, industrial districts, and urban space production.

3. Crime and Gentrification in News Reporting

Aurora Wallace

Abstract: Viewing gentrification through the lens of crime reporting, this chapter considers the long running chronicle of New York's most mediated missing child case. As the primary locus of Sharon Zukin's 1982 *Loft Living*, SoHo is central to narratives of gentrification and their formation in the press. Reading archival coverage of the crime over its 40-year span, during which the *New York Times* alone published more than 300 stories, this research reflects on the construction of place in news and advertising media, as the press simultaneously decries and promotes the transformation of the area. In so doing, both crime and gentrification are explored as phenomena of mediation in which prior coverage serves as the reference point for historical truth claims.

Keywords: mediation, SoHo (New York), lofts, missing children

Introduction

As a site for the investigation of gentrification, New York City and SoHo are well covered ground. As with London (where Ruth Glass first coined the term in 1964), there is a robust combination of media concentration, a paucity of affordable, centrally located, housing stock, and incomes from the financial sector that have seen real estate values soar, providing the key ingredients for neighbourhood transformation. Perhaps counterintuitively, these financial and cultural capitals are also considered loci of higher concentrations of crime, especially in their mediated fictional and

Sadoux, Stéphane, Marie-Pierre Vincent, David Fée, and Louise Dalingwater, eds. *Gentrification and the Media: Building and Propagating Discourses on Exclusive Urban Change*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2025.
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nonfictional representations.[1] In this chapter, the relationship between crime and gentrification is explored as a backdrop to how these narratives can become intertwined in daily crime reporting. From the large archive of the *New York Times* coverage of a bewildering 1979 disappearance of a young boy, the SoHo area of lower Manhattan is constructed as both a post-industrial zone of lawlessness and an emerging market of lucrative loft conversions.

If we take "gentrification" to mean, as Jason Hackworth does, "the production of space for progressively more affluent users," (Hackworth 2002, 815) then the *New York Times* and other establishment news outlets must cede to the demands of this market promotion. Given that advertising accounts for the largest source of revenue at the *New York Times*, it is in the paper's vested interest to foster a vibrant economy. As a prestige media outlet, the *New York Times* surpasses 1 billion US dollars a year in advertising, more than any other newspaper or magazine, and can adjust its rates to reflect its dominant position in reaching a "quality audience." The introduction in 1976 of a four-section paper with the addition of a Business section and new specialized topic areas including Science, Living, and Home allowed for more targeted advertising opportunities and increased readership accordingly. In 2004, the *Times* website refurbished four additional sections: Theatre, Travel, Personal Finance, and Real Estate, once again in order to create more desirable environments for advertisers. By 2004 real estate advertising accounted for 10 per cent of all advertising in the paper (New York Times Company 2004). Playing a part in maintaining a buoyant real estate market, in other words, is intrinsic to the overall success of the company. Insofar as the presence of crime in a city undermines the "production of space for progressively more affluent users," media outlets like the *New York Times* must negotiate the conflicting mandates of providing comprehensive coverage of both criminal activity and real estate promotion.

The field of academic study on the question of gentrification capaciously allows for interpretations of data that show both positive and negative correlations with crime. While some studies claim to demonstrate that as gentrification increases, so does crime, at least to a point (Kreager et al. 2011; Lee 2010), others have shown the moderating effect that gentrification has on crime over time (Smith 2014; Barton and Gruner 2016; Barton 2016). The

1 At the same time, these financial and cultural capitals sustain an economic engine much better able to absorb a higher degree of crime news than many other metropolitan areas. See (Wallace 2008).

latter interpretation has both empirical heft and anecdotal validity: gentrified neighbourhoods are often characterized by enhanced private security, higher street-level engagement of neighbours, greater police responsiveness, and other environmental features that render the spaces inhospitable to criminals. At the very least the availability of resources for responding to crime is increased (McDonald 1986). There is, however, some support for the view that concentrations of more affluent residents will promote burglary, even if the perpetrators have to "commute" to the area (Anderson 1992). At the same time, Ellen et al. (2019) have suggested that falling crime rates themselves might be a contributing factor to the process of gentrification. Countering the more common "urban frontier" narrative which sees the first residents in a formerly industrial area such as SoHo as pioneers who are willing to live without the comforts of certain neighbourhood amenities of security, more affluent residents may seek these encouraging quality of life signifiers before deciding to move to new areas.

Taken together, the literature offers a perplexing chicken and egg quandary. Neighbourhoods with less crime are more sought after by would-be gentrifiers, while the process of gentrification can also reduce the amount of crime. More recent scholarship in critical criminology suggests that the very framing of the question is ideologically slanted in favour of gentrification. Crime is narrowly construed as quantifiable threats to persons and property within a neo-liberal urbanism of low-level policing and order maintenance enacted on behalf of residents of gentrified areas (Collins et al. 2022; MacLeod 2002; Herbert et al. 2018; Beck 2020). Were white collar crime, equity, wage theft, displacement, air quality, and other environmental justice metrics considered, gentrification itself might be criminalized.

Central to this conundrum is the role of media in constructing both gentrification and perceptions of crime. This chapter seeks to explore the extent to which gentrification is substantively a phenomenon of media coverage, or merely a process exacerbated by media. As Zukin and others have shown, the role of the *New York Times* in the process of neighbourhood transformation cannot be overstated. Putting the word "neighbourhood" in quotes, "Far from being either an indigenous or a spontaneous artists' community, SoHo was really the creation of the investment climate" (Zukin 1982, 16). And this investment climate was very much cultivated in the pages of the *New York Times*. The *Times* was documenting the changes taking place in the city as well as being an active agent in them. With a large real estate portfolio in Times Square and beyond, the company benefits from the higher land values and local land use policies that favour corporate landowners (Wallace 2012). As Zukin argued in *Loft Living*,

> the leading Establishment paper, the *New York Times*, featured extremely favourable coverage of the loft market. This position reflected connections in existence for a long time between the *New York Times* and the Regional Plan Association, whose 1929 plan proposed to clear Manhattan of industrial uses. Between 1975 and 1977 the Sunday *Times* real estate section… issued a barrage of publicity in favour of loft development. (Zukin 1982, 11)

As will be demonstrated here, the role played by media coverage may also be somewhat *inadvertent*, as when reporting on one subject contributes to the narrative of another. Beyond the expected coverage in the real estate section of the paper, it is possible to detect indicators of neighbourhood transformation in metro news stories about crime.

New York Crime Scenes

There have been a handful of crimes in New York City that have become emblematic of their time and place: Kitty Genovese in Kew Gardens, David Berkowitz in Throggs Neck, Bernhard Goetz and Michael Stewart in the subway, the Central Park Five, and Katherine Cleary on the Upper West Side, whose story was the basis for the film *Looking for Mr. Goodbar*. Genovese's murder was told as a tale of heartless New Yorkers who failed to heed her screams and call the police, the Central Park Five as a "wilding" gang menacing hard-working investment bankers in the 1980s. Even though history has shown its own first draft in the news to have been overwhelmingly false in several of these cases, all crime stories serve to construct an image of the place where they occurred. They mark the territory as safe or dangerous, they influence the perception of risk by residents, and not least, they can have a considerable impact on the value of real estate.

One instance of such place construction occurred over a several decades-long story of a six-year-old boy who went missing in SoHo in 1979. As one of the city's most mediated crime stories, the news coverage of the disappearance is instructive for what it tells us about the relationship between media and gentrification; how these narratives are formed, how they change over time, and how self-referential the source material becomes as it constructs the known facts of a crime.

One of the longest-running chapters in New York's crime history, the disappearance of Etan Patz on his way to school in SoHo on the morning of May 25, 1979 is also one of the city's most emblematic. By late afternoon, a wide-scale search was underway, with neighbours and volunteers combing

lower Manhattan on foot, while helicopters surveyed from above. Posters with the boy's photograph appeared in store windows and on telephone poles, and he was soon one of the first missing children to have his photograph appear on the side of milk cartons. In addition to bloodhounds, there were harbour launches in both rivers, and transit and port authority personnel were mobilized, culminating in what was described at the time as the largest manhunt in living memory involving 500 members of the police (Kihss 1979; Goodman 1979).

The media coverage was extensive and long-lasting, covering new revelations and investigations that continued well into the twenty-first century (Goldstein and Rashbaum 2012; McFadden 2000; McKinley 2017).[2] From the very start, the Patz family were able to keep their son's disappearance in the spotlight by relying on media connections, making themselves available for interviews, never moving away from their SoHo home and never changing their phone number. Etan's image appeared on all the local news stations and the story became fodder for relentless print coverage in the daily press and long-form magazine features. The 1981 novel *Still Missing* was published by a neighbour of the Patzes and formed the basis of the 1983 film "Without a Trace" (Holloway 1998). President Reagan declared National Missing Children's Day on May 25, 1983 in Etan's honour, and in May 1985 his case was chosen as one of the first to appear on a Times Square screen twice every hour as part of a New York City Police Foundation campaign programme to find missing children (Dunlap 1985). To call the case "high profile" would be an understatement; the *New York Times* alone has published over 300 stories on it. Beyond the *Times*, features also ran in *The Washington Post*, *New York Magazine*, and *Vanity Fair* magazine. This coverage has produced an extensive archive from which to understand a neighbourhood in transition, providing a lens through which to view gentrification as reporters struggled to describe and define the setting for the disappearance.

The Meaning of SoHo

One of the so-called "pioneering" families to live in SoHo, neither the Patzes nor their neighbourhood were easily pigeon-holed in early media reports. The

2 It took thirty-eight years to get a conviction in the case, in April 2017, and although two different men were charged at different times, rumours still circulate about what really happened, and no body has ever been found.

place name was an empty signifier. Unlike Chinatown or Greenwich Village, it was unclear what SoHo *meant* at that time: what sort of people lived there, and what could or could not be expected to happen. As the *New York Times Magazine* stated in 1980, a year after Patz's disappearance, the Patz family loft on Prince Street was a few blocks from where "27,000 day labourers – blacks and Hispanics mostly – who work in SoHo's factories [emerge] from the Spring Street stop of the Lexington Avenue line" (Cantwell 1980). SoHo was an undefined space between other places: a "43-block area of factories and truck-clotted streets between Greenwich Village and Little Italy-Chinatown."

The same story claimed that "SoHo is not a small town in the sense that Greenwich Village is a small town. The Village, one of the oldest residential enclaves in Manhattan, has always had, despite its legendary Bohemian overlay, a solidly middle-class substructure, and is studded with schools, supermarkets and churches. SoHo has none of these" (Cantwell 1980).

So, when it came to reporting on the disappearance of Etan Patz in 1979, the typical news frames were imprecise. There was no "there" yet, the neighbourhood's image had yet to be sufficiently mediated. But it was a neighbourhood, despite the paper's frequent references to it as a "section," (Raab 1979, 1989) "area," (*New York Times* 1979) or a "district" (Goodman 1979; Smart 1985) of the city. It was in fact a well-organized, close knit, and protective artistic community, housed in open-plan, airy industrial buildings. Such spaces were praised for their light as well as their edginess, although perhaps not as much, according to journalists at the time, for their suitability for families. Some reporting was at pains to point out that, in spite of where he lived, "Etan was not the child of uncaring parents" (Wadler 1982).

Etan's father Stanley was a commercial photographer who worked out of the loft at Prince and Greene Streets, and Etan's mother Julie ran a daycare and play space there. Passers-by commented on how often they would see Julie Patz and her kids on the fire escape of the building, surveying the streets, making them safer (McKinley 2015b). The early "artists' colony" of neighbours helping neighbours in unconventional loft spaces (McKinley 2015a) and promoting street safety through informal networks was a living example of the prescription for safer, more liveable cities advocated by Jane Jacobs in her 1961 book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (Jacobs 1961).

This version of the neighbourhood was rarely seen in media coverage, especially in the many retrospectives of the case that has kept it newsworthy for decades. A 1991 *Vanity Fair* article claimed that "In those days SoHo, the forty-square-block area of cast iron factories and clogged side streets bounded by Greenwich Village, Little Italy, and Chinatown, was a not-so-safe urban outpost for the artsy and the transient.... Today [Edward Klein

writes, in 1991], a loft in Stanley Patz's building fetches $700,000, and SoHo is to Manhattan what the Left Bank is to Paris or Trastevere to Rome – a mecca of galleries, shops, and restaurants for the young and trendy" (Klein 1991). Traffic-clogged streets and factories are used to denote the gritty *before*, whilst galleries, shops, and restaurants—Sharon Zukin's ABCs of gentrification[3]—define the present (Zukin et al. 2015). As ever, the New York-centric media revels in the escalation in the value of the real estate: Stanley Patz had only paid $7,500 to buy his loft in 1971.

While the disappearance of Etan Patz continued as a police investigation for decades, the story reemerged in the news in 2001, when his parents sought to have him declared legally dead in order to file a wrongful death suit against suspect Jose Ramos. From the vantage point of 2001, *The Washington Post* wrote: "It was an age of innocence. May 25, 1979, represented the *death* of innocence of New York" (Powell 2001). The paper claimed that "Etan's case tapped into other fears as well: of cities, of strangers and of societal decay in the wake of the 1960s. It is difficult now, as one walks the gilded streets of SoHo, to cast back to the late 1970s, when it was an unlovely factory district only vaguely chic. The streetlights often didn't work; the walls of the narrow streets were dusted grey from truck exhaust and factory chimneys. Crime was rising, drug use arched steadily upward and New York, like many cities, was on its heels" (Powell 2001). The reporter Michael Powell compares this with 2001 SoHo, where "now, there's a Metropolitan Museum of Art shopping outlet and a restaurant where $75 buys you lunch."

To read coverage of the case in 2016 and 2017, when Pedro Hernandez was brought to trial for the murder of Etan Patz, is to enter a different SoHo altogether. News reports easily claim SoHo as a neighbourhood, which was perhaps less true in 2017 than when it was not called one in 1979. Lofts are occupied by celebrities and bodegas have been replaced by flagship stores of global luxury brands. The crime reporter Michael Wilson urges the reader to "stand across the street and squint, blocking out the glitter of the jewellery box that the neighbourhood has since become" (Wilson 2017)

Before and After

The "before" of New York City is often invoked with a string of gritty urban films: *Taxi Driver*, *Midnight Cowboy*, *Escape From New York*, *Death Wish*,

3 Sharon Zukin's shorthand for identifying the elements of gentrification—her ABCs—are Art Galleries, Boutiques, and Cafes.

The Warriors, *Panic in Needle Park*, and *Fort Apache The Bronx* that show the lawlessness of what many see as pre-Giuliani New York (Klein 1991). In a piece lamenting the ugliness of New York, the *Times* singled out SoHo specifically: "Areas inhabited by artists and other creative people, people presumably sensitive to their surroundings, are often no better. The filthy streets of SoHo, in New York City" (Merritt 1980). With the city seemingly out of control, rational people left and visitors were warned not to go out at night in a 1975 brochure distributed by the Council for Public Safety called "Welcome to Fear City" (Baker 2015).

But viewing the Patz disappearance as a kind of fulcrum point for the shift from dangerous to safe, or from gritty to glamorous, is a convenient but misguided conceit on the part of the press. Prior to the 1970s, SoHo was zoned for industry and light manufacturing, including garment factories, millinery, machine shops, and printers. In 1971, the City Planning Commission rezoned the area to allow residence by artists, and the designation as "SoHo" became official. After 1976 there was a zoning amendment that increased the number of buildings that could be used as joint live-work spaces for certified artists, making many of the illegally occupied lofts legal, and opening up the residential real estate market. As the *Times* wrote in 1980, "Galleries and restaurants sprouted; new settlers started arriving; chic bloomed" (Cantwell 1980).

This narrative, too, misses why the city undertook these conversions, which was in no way an attempt to appease artists or to make their live/work arrangements more manageable. It was done in order to make up for the astronomical budget deficits the city faced when it was unable to pay the interest coming due on a series of municipal bonds. The reason families like the Patzes were living where they were in 1979 is that the sweep of cast iron loft conversions from industrial to residential was deemed to be more lucrative for a city desperate to find revenue wherever it could. The urban disinvestment, abandonment, and neglect of factories in SoHo was turned into an opportunity for municipally supported gentrification. And it is in the context of this massive fiscal crisis after the near bankruptcy of New York in 1975 that this crime story is best understood. Not least because among the city services that were cut in New York's new austerity measures—including fire, police, and sanitation—were education and bussing. The cutbacks at public schools left classrooms overcrowded, eliminated crossing guards, and led to the bus drivers' strike that immediately preceded Etan Patz's disappearance. As was noted by several contemporaneous reports, the person driving the school bus on May 25, 1979, following a three-week strike, was new and did not notice that Etan had not boarded.

Place in Crime Reporting

Crime reporting is ideological to the degree that its framing serves to support the goals and imperatives of the criminal justice system and consumer capitalism more than not. Crime coverage in the US is written from the point of view that private property is to be protected and defended by its owners, and that the rights of homeowners outweigh the rights of those on the street. Curfew, graffiti, and noise ordinances reflect the interests of official stakeholders, and are enforced at the expense of those with less political capital, as Mark Fishman and others have amply demonstrated (Fishman 1978).

But the cues we are given about place in crime reporting are equally so. Crime reporting performs the spatial equivalent of racial profiling—laying out the *sine qua non* of events and their mutually reinforcing justifications—it happened there because that's where those things happen. In affluent areas, crime stories are written which cast the event as a disruption to an otherwise peaceful, happy, safe or serene location, regardless of actual empirical rates of crime. The orientation of crime stories written in *poorer* areas meanwhile, serve up place descriptors that highlight the markers of poverty: apartment-style living, multi-family housing units, shared common space, proximity to busy thoroughfares, traffic pollution, or industrial areas, as though such features of the built environment make the crime anticipated, expected, or even deserved. Such is the subtext for *The Washington Post*'s reflection on SoHo in the 1970s and the Patz case: it was an "unlovely factory district," "streetlights often didn't work," and "crime was rising," as though these were factors in the disappearance (Powell 2001).

This inherent anti-urbanism in crime news was identified by media sociologist Herbert Gans in 1979 as "Small Town Pastoralism": a news bias that favours rural areas. Small towns were understood to provide a reprieve from the corrupting influences of cities and were seen as the repositories of good family and community values (Gans 1979). Over the twentieth century, the process of suburbanization largely eclipsed rural settlement patterns, although suburbs too are meant to be free from city problems. Much of the idyllic construction of these areas as safe takes place in the news, especially in crime reporting. Crime is either seen as a naturally occurring phenomenon, or as a disruption, depending on where it happens (Wallace 2008).

The media treatment of the Patz disappearance is complicated by conflicting news imperatives, and these logics can be seen to shift over time. From

dangerous post-industrial landscape made up of squatters and transients, to luxury jewel box, the meaning of SoHo has changed radically over the more than forty years of coverage. The before and after story constructions never fail to marvel at how much more expensive the area has become in the intervening years. In every historical description, readers are gently reminded of how seedy it *used* to be, as though this offers some explanation for the crime. The media, especially the *New York Times*, had to navigate this terrain carefully, as a primary conduit for the promotion of real estate and the processes of gentrification.

At the same time as it was chronicling the extensive search for a missing boy, the *Times* also began to extol the virtues of the area as a great place to shop, see art, and explore architecture and design, as in a feature in the Style section from June 1979, "Fashion as Art, the Clothes Shops of SoHo," published one month after Etan's disappearance: "The artists came first, finding the lofts in the neglected factory buildings spacious enough for their needs and the rents cheap. They were followed by the galleries that showed their work. As the art lovers came to gallery hop, the food places and the clothing shops opened.... Some residents compare the atmosphere to that of the artists' areas of Paris early in the century" (Morris 1979).

The tonal register of the art, style, and real estate coverage is thus distinct from that of the paper's crime reportage, but the loft is their point of intersection. When fashion designer Irene Maxwell was stabbed to death one night in SoHo in December 1978, the *Times* noted that "the dingy, cobble-stoned neighbourhood where the murder occurred is crowded with textile exporting concerns and electrical supply companies garbed in subdued tones of brown, gray, and brick red." Such a description of decrepitude would not have found its way into the real estate section of the same paper, a point seized on by a friend of Maxwell's in the story who blamed such coverage for the crime, such as "newspaper and magazine articles about redoing lofts and how chic much of lower Manhattan had become. A lot of people have moved to the neighbourhood, she said, 'and now people know that there's money here'" (Evans 1978).

By 1980, the fiscal crisis having concluded in favour of the financial elite, the *New York Times* was sanguine about the transformation: "Once upon a time SoHo had an ambiguous reputation. It was a ramshackle sort of place, where galleries were here today and gone tomorrow, and residents ranked one notch above squatters. It is still often precarious, from the point of view of real estate, but in other respects it is getting to be just like everywhere else" (Russell 1980).

The *New York Times* had to straddle a number of conflicting mandates here; to find a balance between crime coverage that is accurate and thorough, and to keep real estate speculation buoyant despite these apparent dangers. In *How to Kill a City*, Peter Moskowitz argues that Stage 0 of gentrification is often a crisis, in New Orleans it was Hurricane Katrina, in Detroit, the 2013 declaration of bankruptcy, and arguably New York's 1975 near bankruptcy laid the groundwork for the gentrification that followed in areas like SoHo (Moskowitz 2017). While the news framed the Patz disappearance as a loss of innocence or existential threat to the city, it was perhaps not crime that was the threat that needed fearing most, but the insecurity and insolvency of the city itself that made daily life precarious. Yet despite the stark decline in social services brought about by the budget crisis of the mid-1970s, hundreds of police were mobilized to find a single child. As one of the city's most mediated crime stories, the daily news coverage of the disappearance cannot hope to reconcile these contradictions, but taken together, and with the benefit of hindsight, it is now possible to see how the discourses of neighbourhood transition, gentrification, crime, and real estate are both mutually constitutive and at times quite at odds.

While it might be tempting to view the over 300 stories on Etan Patz published by the *Times* as a kind of moral panic or sensationalist overkill, it is important to remember that the coverage of the disappearance was also competing with a much more celebratory version of SoHo being proffered in the style and real estate pages. In over forty years of coverage, the narratives of place-making have nevertheless remained remarkably consistent in delineating the transformation of SoHo from a gritty, industrial quagmire into a shimmering landscape of global luxury brands. Media coverage of the area, whether reporting crime, arts, entertainment, or real estate, played no small role in conjuring the change.

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About the Author

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4. Part 1: Discussion

Martine DROZDZ

Understanding the Public Life of Gentrification in the Press

In 1964, Ruth Glass, a sociologist at the University College London, coined the term gentrification. Since then, it has enjoyed a successful life well beyond Britain and well beyond the walls of today's academic institutions. Now a generalized keyword in the vocabulary of urban sociology, gentrification often refers to the residential arrival of affluent social groups in historic working-class neighbourhoods. But the term has also become part of the vocabulary of mainstream media across the world and, through this shift, has taken on a surprising variety of meanings (Werth and Marienthal 2016).

As early as 1977, an article in the *New York Times* used the term to evoke London's resistance to the phenomenon (Hershey Jr 1977). The article dramatized a class struggle that, its author suggested, had also become a struggle for place. As the title of the piece proclaimed: "Working class in London resists incursion by the gentry." Gentrification is often understood to be a set of physical transformations—for example, as a process of "production of space for progressively more affluent users" (Hackworth 2002, 815, quoted in Wallace, this volume). However, as the papers in this section attest, these physical transformations are framed by a whole set of discourses put in place by the use of the concept of gentrification itself.

In this sense, how gentrification is described in the media offers a discursive framing of a phenomenon, that both criticizes and, surprisingly, sometimes celebrates the process it sets out to describe, when gentrification is perceived as a successful result of urban public policies. Such discourses concerning gentrification, particularly in the media, contest—and, at times, contribute to—the transformation of these gentrifying neighbourhoods into a more desirable place for a new class of residents.

The two chapters presented here reflect on how the press participates in the construction of a "public space of reference" (Drozdz 2016) through

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which the scholarly concept of gentrification is put into motion as a more widely circulating narrative of urban change. Here, the stakes are high: such framing of social phenomena influence the way public problems emerge, how they are discursively framed and, therefore, how they are acted upon (Baumgartner and Jones 2005; Gusfield 1981).

These chapters take a complementary approach to how the media treats this particular form of the social, physical, and economic transformation of urban space. Aurora Wallace's chapter, "Crime and Gentrification in News Reporting" in New York, analyses the media coverage of a news story over a period of forty years, from the late 1970s to the 2010s. Antonin Girardin's "The Local and International Press and the Gentrification of Western Leipzig (Germany)" offers a multiscalar analysis of the media's representation of the "miracle" of Leipzig, an eastern German city which, after a period of economic and demographic decline, has undergone a renaissance sometimes compared to that of Berlin. In both chapters, the authors show that the media discourse accompanying gentrification were both thematically and spatially selective. In doing so, they clearly demonstrate how the press contributes to ossifying the representations of the "success" of neighbourhoods that have become attractive to real estate actors. But they also clearly demonstrate how such narratives contribute to making certain groups of actors, especially public ones, invisible.

The term gentrification has come to designate an extraordinary diversity of social and spatial situations. So, in this preamble to these two contributions, it is useful to offer a brief review of what I will call here the "academic career" of gentrification. The aim of charting out this concept's career is to reveal how, in Wallace and Girardin's detailed portraits of the public life of this concept, it has appeared quite differently. In these analyses, the authors mobilize a corpus of data on the media representations of gentrification in New York and Leipzig. This data demonstrates how the press has, far from simply restating the academic arguments about gentrification in the public sphere, selected certain aspects of the phenomenon in order to construct a singular narrative about urban change, often in the service of different and, at times, disjunctive objectives.

From the Academic Career to the Public Life of a Concept of Multiple Meanings

The academic career and the public life of the term gentrification have thus taken quite divergent paths. Initially, the expression "gentrification"

did not have a negative connotation. Instead, it described the effort of members of a destitute gentry to make a certain kind of neighbourhood "acceptable" to their peers, neighbourhoods historically avoided by the middle classes and in economic decline. In London, Ruth Glass's work thus aimed to understand the spatial selectivity of the "sweat equity" invested by a part of the middle and upper classes who in working class neighbourhoods deserted as a result of suburbanization. As Sharon Zukin's work on New York City has shown, gentrification is an effort to "bring up to standard" a bourgeois real estate market of properties with little quality or that have been de-qualified in the residential markets (quoted by Wallace in this volume). Drawing on the archives of the *New York Times*, Wallace's historical research reveals how, prior to the 1970s, the neighbourhood of SoHo did not exist in the local residential geography. But by the end of the decade, the media contributed to the construction of this urban area as both a "zone of lawlessness" and an emerging real estate market of "loft conversions." Thus, as Wallace underlines, even if the press is not the initiator of gentrification, media coverage can exacerbate it.

In the wake of this pioneering research, a transatlantic dialogue has become global. And it has gone on to document the variety of social and spatial situations that are today gathered up under the wide umbrella of the notion of gentrification, including its most recent forms. Following the path brilliantly opened by Ruth Glass and Sharon Zukin, a whole line of sociologists and geographers have continued the work begun by their predecessors, documenting the forms and nuances of the gentrification trajectories of places that have been de-qualified and then "put back on the market." But what does the press have to say about this? As Wallace and Girardin observe, the nuances of the effects of gentrification are rarely discussed, and the work of academics is rarely cited, except to amplify some of the catchier concepts. The notion of "super-gentrification" proposed by Loretta Lees in 2003 (Lees 2003), based on her survey conducted in the Brooklyn Heights neighbourhood of New York, is thus taken up in 2010 by *The Economist* to explain the new social geography of the UK capital and its political implications. The relative success of this term in the media feeds both an economy of fascination for the hyper-rich elites who read such publications and the associated effects it may have on real estate markets. It illustrates quite well the media selectivity towards the most spectacular forms of contemporary gentrification. With super-gentrification, a new cycle of urban transformation begins. Similar to the one SoHo experienced, but this time under the influence of the activities of an excessively wealthy social group. A city for the 1 per cent one might say. In the American media,

it came to embody a form of extreme realization of gentrification, which took the form of vertical colonization of the city by a plutocratic elite. Picked up by the *New York Times*, the term is used to describe the emergence of a new residential real estate market that replaced the loft conversions of the 1980s and 1990s: the super-thin, super-tall luxury residential tower, sold and marketed on a global market, where each floor consists of a single apartment. This is the New York embodiment of super-gentrification. This time, unlike in Wallace's case of SoHo, this micro-market is not the result of an investment climate created, in part, by the *New York Times*. These media narratives followed the emergence of the phenomenon, with the same mixture of fascination and doubts about the virtues of an urbanism so disconnected from the rest of the city. So, unlike the case of SoHo, where Wallace notes that "media coverage played no small role in conjuring the change," in this more recent phase of urbanization, media coverage reflects rather than accompanies this urban change.

In the coverage of gentrification and of its more spectacular form, super-gentrification, the media has focused on the role and influence of social micro-groups that are defined in relation to their unprecedented accumulation of wealth. Such a focus attenuates the diversity of social situations that make up the gentrification of urban neighbourhoods, and the geographical diversity of the phenomenon, which is not limited to the activities of these hyper-privileged groups. The focus on these actors feeds an economy of fascination in which the political and social aspects of gentrification are erased. Yet these aspects are a necessary component of urban politics. They provide nuanced information of the phenomenon at hand which could potentially feed public debates, rather than simply being reduced to chronicle the extravagances of extreme wealth. As in the case of SoHo, this discourse ignores more discrete but common forms of gentrification and erases the analysis of the drivers and effects of the transformation of urban spaces into housing markets. For example, one of the salient conclusions of gentrification studies has been to show the importance of how small, middle-class households are investing in real estate to protect their savings and offer a sense of financial security. This argument is essential for a debate on the political regulation of gentrification (Should it be encouraged or limited? Should the public authorities accompany or try to curb the phenomenon, and with what means?).

Another example that appears in the two chapters from Wallace and Girardin is the question of the role of real estate actors, and how they operate at the international level. This has been the subject of an enormous amount of scholarly research, which has rarely been picked up by local or

international press. In this research, what was previously described as the result of the activity of a particular social group, be it the destitute bohemian gentry in the 1960s, or the contemporary deterritorialized elites, has in fact become a global strategy of urban development on the one hand, in the service of a real estate market that has become one of the key elements in the constitution and contemporary reproduction of social groups (Lees et al. 2013). This global market includes a whole set of actors, promoters, builders, real estate agents, who contribute to the "landing" of these global urban projects of gentrification, but whose action remains invisible in most press articles that deal with the phenomenon.

Girardin's text about Leipzig illustrates this reframing of the recent history of gentrification by the local media. In this case, the media "attributes Leipzig's transformations to a spontaneous movement of re-appropriation of the western districts by creative populations." With these conclusions, it joins the line of research, which, for the last twenty years, has analysed the central role of public authorities in the support, or, on the contrary, the slowing down, of such urban transformations. This research no longer understood gentrification as the sole result of the activity of a few pioneers and innovative real estate actors, it became a public policy issue. In particular, research has focused on the gradual politicization of the term, understood both as a "category of practice" for public authorities as well as for the local social movements debating these public policies (Drozdz 2016; Rousseau 2009).

Faced with the consequences of these social transformations on urban lives and landscapes—in particular, evictions—the term has become loaded with negative values in academic debates. However, scholars have observed that the gentrification of an area does not necessarily result in displacement of the existing communities. The longitudinal analysis of statistical data concerning displacement, for example, animated scientific controversies about its measurement and whether gentrification in declining and post-industrial areas actually displaces existing communities (Preis et al. 2021). But these scholarly qualifications about the link between gentrification and displacement have not appeared in the media. Instead, the media has dramatized evictions as direct and often inevitable consequence of gentrification.

The Public Life of Gentrification in New York and Leipzig

The two chapters focus on this gap between the multiple realities of gentrification and its narration. Antonin Girardin constituted a corpus

of date at both the local and national levels to demonstrate how Leipzig, over a period of fifteen years, is exemplary of such media selectivity. The author observes the urban and economic policies that have governed urban transformation and offers a detailed analysis of the groups of actors who participated in the transformation of the city that led to a resumption of demographic growth. This process was largely accompanied by the public authorities and supported by several rounds of European funding and, in the end, it resulted in the reconstruction of a residential real estate market for the middle classes and an upmarket residential and commercial offer, to the point of threatening to displace the most modest gentrifying groups and the pioneers who had benefited from the experimental measures of the early 2000s. After managing the negative image of decline, local authorities then moved on to the active management of urban growth, even if it came at the cost of redefining the conditions of building occupation and land distribution, which were different from those of the early 2000s. This differs quite strongly from the New York case mentioned by Aurora Wallace, where it was less the action of the public authorities than the action of the City's creditors that, during its bankruptcy, accelerated the transformation of New York's geography.

The case of Leipzig, which has become emblematic of shrinking post-industrial cities, continues to be a fascinating case for those interested in urban alternatives to the entrepreneurship and widespread privatization programmes that seem to have inevitably accompanied the urbanism of the 2000s. The urban crisis in the post-industrial spaces of the 2000s, particularly in Europe where subsidy programmes are dedicated to them, offers a favourable context in which to build what could be called new "urban social contracts." These contracts would be between local authorities and actors, artists, and activists who, by their presence, make it possible to manage the stigma and consequences of degrowth. In contrast to the negative image that these alternative practices might have in more entrepreneurial contexts, the occupation of spaces, and alternative economies are, on the contrary, perceived in Leipzig as assets to fight against the deleterious effects of urban decline. Girardin's familiarity with his case, and in particular his detailed knowledge of the local and European policies that accompanied the "renaissance" of this former industrial city, allows him to analyse precisely the discrepancies and omissions of press articles when they construct the "urban legend" of Leipzig. This narration, against the material realities of urban changes and their origins, relies on "a narrative that attributes Leipzig's transformations to a spontaneous movement of re-appropriation of the western districts by creative populations." Such a framing makes it

impossible to follow how the reorientation of urban policies leads, in the end, to forms of displacement and exclusion of populations that, initially actors of gentrification and beneficiaries of urban policies, find themselves excluded from the new real estate programmes, and pay the price of the reorientation of public funding.

When reading the trajectory of Leipzig, which is fascinating because of the contrasts it presents, the reader often wonders whether he or she is seeing an urban future developing in the future ruins of capitalism or an urban singularity. The answer is certainly somewhere in between, and the urban imagination certainly benefits from the case Antonin Girardin offers in this chapter.

Aurora Wallace's text deals with a distinct ideal type of gentrification, but nevertheless has striking resonances with the case of Leipzig. Both cases invite us to think of gentrification as a political issue, and therefore as a debatable and governable object, and not only as an inescapable and depoliticized fate. The case of Leipzig also illustrates the forms of injustice that affect populations whose occupancy rights are highly dependent on the state of the real estate market. But without media coverage of these issues, how can we create a framework for gentrification that would illustrate these moral dilemmas and make it possible to think of instruments for public action that could remedy them?

By taking a critical look at urban policies and their representation in the media, these two chapters are in line with numerous studies which—while dealing with very different geographical, urban, and political contexts—agree in showing that few local authorities have made gentrification an issue to address. Urban governments are fairly unanimous in perceiving the process of gentrification, which is closely associated with a neo-hygienist discourse evoking the regeneration of urban fabrics (Campkin 2012), as a form of repair of the city damaged by industrial decline. The presence of new social groups is meant to facilitate this social and economic regeneration in order to push forward a new and virtuous urban growth synonymous with new tax revenues, a new image of the city, and the signing of new partnerships. Leipzig became a laboratory of this style of urban regeneration and, far from being the singular result of private initiatives, it was largely supported by public funding. Accompanying the reflections of the 2010s on the role of public authorities in governing this phenomenon, the chapter on Leipzig shows that the city's "rebirth" cannot be understood without an archaeology of public funding, particularly European, that have made it possible to initiate a genuine urban policy aimed at transforming the uses and inhabitants of the neighbourhoods most affected by industrial

decline. Leipzig is a particularly symptomatic case of this policy, which takes gentrification as a desirable aim, but whose benefits are available only to select residents.

Both texts illustrate the importance of thinking about gentrification policies and not only about social change in formerly poor areas of the city. The attention given by local authorities to new residents shows by contrast the sometimes scant attention given to the inhabitants already there and their recurrent invisibility in programmes to combat urban decline. Although they are less and less numerous in the speeches, programmes and, ultimately, in the media that discuss the transformation of the city, these invisible inhabitants constitute a blind spot in the reflection on gentrification. Their political invisibilization is reinforced by an invisibilization in the media, the motives of which deserve further analysis: do journalists tend to only mention the difficulties of a population with which they are regularly in contact, to the detriment of a population that is ultimately less present in their professional socialization spaces? Do journalists focus on the role of young creative professionals in urban gentrification because it is a social group to which they understand themselves to belong? While urban social movements are trying to form alliances with workers, these coalitions do not seem to find their way into the media discourse on gentrification, however critical they may be.

In its critical versions, in Leipzig or in New York, the media discourse on gentrification ends up embodying an ideal-typical figure of a contemporary evil, a negative externality of the entrepreneurial and creative city, excluding even the pioneers who had contributed to the successful transformation of these stigmatized spaces. In doing so, as the two chapters clearly show, such a discourse leads to the invisibilization of the issues and demands of those who lived in these neighbourhoods before the gentrification process began, and whose needs, particularly in terms of training or security, are often quite different from those of the new arrivals.

In the case of gentrification in New York and Leipzig, the analysis of the media corpus shows that the media construction of public problems is not only thematically oriented, it is also spatially and politically selective. In both cases, the investigations show that the press narrative constitutes a discourse and as such, it can be critically examined to show its trade-offs with other discourses, particularly academic ones. The two cases present two examples of the public life of the term gentrification, which follows a trajectory quite different from its trajectory in academic circles. Whatever the audience, the scale, and the targeted public, the media discourse proposes a rather routinized discourse, even when it is critical.

Future Research Directions

Media information is a valuable resource for the study of gentrification and press archives can be used as a source of information in the service of a socio-historical reconstruction, capturing the emergence of a public problem (Earl et al. 2004). Press sources not only participate in making certain public problems visible, they also influence the way they are discussed by proposing specific modes of narration and framing. Analysing gentrification from the perspective of its media treatment is far from anecdotal work and this approach has, as these two chapters show, many contributions.

First of all, such an approach makes it possible to extend the rich and abundant literature that addresses this question by using an original angle, leading to questioning the media framing of the process. In the end, the analysis of the discourses, put in perspective with the knowledge of the phenomenon available to the researchers, allows us to understand how the media frames the phenomenon, which leads us to question the invisibilization of the term in the public debate or, on the contrary, its constitution as a public problem. The issue is not anecdotal, since gentrification has now become a watchword that brings together a vast constellation of opposing opinions. However, it is not these consequences, nor the effects on historic working-class communities, that are highlighted in the media. Instead, the media highlights the deleterious effects on certain social groups, particularly those who benefited from the first programmes set up by the public authorities. The latter celebrate, quite understandably, the successes of these programmes, and gentrification appears as an element of this success.

If the two texts undoubtedly show the importance of a media approach to gentrification, several directions of research can be pursued, on the one hand in the observation of the reactions of the multiple actors of gentrification, whether they benefit from it or undergo it, on the other hand on the side of public authorities.

The extraordinary development of the press, online media, blogs and, from now on, platforms for the production and exchange of content via social networks, have multiplied the spaces for observing media content beyond the mainstream press. It is now possible to observe how activist groups that contest or support gentrification develop media strategies to influence the framing of the issue and make it emerge (or not) as a public problem. In the interviews I was able to conduct in London with local activists engaged in a contestation of regeneration, they developed all sorts of alternative media sources, notably blogs, aiming at offering counter-discourses to the framing by the local authorities. They circulated press releases to local

and national newspapers and implemented a strategy of conservation of the history of the movements, aimed at other activist groups engaged in similar approaches.

If the public life of gentrification is undoubtedly an essential contribution to understanding of the politicization of gentrification, this analysis can be extended to examine activist responses to these necessarily partial framing. Media framing often responds to a political justification and the study of the public authorities' response is undoubtedly an interesting discourse to analyse. How does gentrification as a public policy resist its critics? We are now probably entering a moment in which gentrification as a public policy is once again being tested. In this new moment, how the press frames the problem of gentrification will, of course, play a central role in how cities develop a collective response to it.

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About the Author

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Part 2

Place-Making Through Evolving Narratives

5. Gentrification as Entertainment: New Orleans as Seen on HGTV

Ella Howard

Abstract: This chapter analyses the depiction of the New Orleans real estate market in the first season of the HGTV show *Selling the Big Easy*. Like many shelter media productions, the programme anonymizes the city, presenting bland interiors and few glimpses of the properties' surroundings. Drawing on US census data and popular and scholarly literature about the effects of Hurricane Katrina and the subsequent recovery efforts in New Orleans, the chapter argues that the programme obscures the harsh realities of gentrification and social inequality that structure life in the city, cultivating instead a fantasy of consumer pleasure devoid of consequences. In so doing, the show participates in the neo-liberal remaking of the city to further the interests of incoming wealthy elites and corporations.

Keywords: Hurricane Katrina, rebuilding, displacement, television

Introduction

Many viewers know that so-called reality television is not real, in that it does not offer a candid and unfiltered depiction of events. Viewers of some popular real estate shows comment that prospective buyers already have a home under contract before filming begins. Despite such fictions, these programmes reveal truths about American society, beyond shedding light on design trends such as stainless-steel appliances and granite counter-tops. The Home and Garden Television channel programme *Selling the Big Easy* reveals stark truths about the ongoing process of recovery and gentrification in post-Katrina New Orleans, although its greatest revelations remain

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unspoken. Gentrification, once an obscure academic term, is now widely used in popular media (Slater 2002, 132). Despite awareness of the subject, media spaces like property television can still remain silent on the topic, even as they further its development.

Critical study of television began in the era when stations broadcast programmes into viewers' homes according to a fixed schedule. As Brunsdon (2008, 131) has observed, the decline of this regimented structure was accompanied by a shift away from blockbuster shows like *Dallas* and *Dynasty* that served as cultural touchstones. In a world of fragmented viewership across streaming media services, reality programming reflects one of the major television genres of the contemporary era.

Home shows operate on multiple levels. Shimpach (2012, 517) has identified three key areas in which the HGTV network is embedded in neoliberal capitalism: the economic, the ideological, and the disciplinary. HGTV thus focuses on profitability and celebrates and normalizes the role of self-interest while training viewers to participate appropriately in a consumerist environment.

Methodology

Selling the Big Easy debuted in 2020 and has aired for two seasons. This chapter originated in analysis of the first fourteen-episode season of the show. All episodes were analysed, with careful attention paid to the real estate listings displayed, each of which was researched online. Most properties proved recognizable from recent listings and transaction records in the public domain. Focus for this chapter was placed on the relevant properties located within neighbourhoods that have seen dramatic changes since Hurricane Katrina.

This chapter situates the programme within the relevant context of economic and social development, using the methodological tools of the disciplines of History and American Studies to clarify the meaning of the narrative presented on television. The tension between the historical realities of New Orleans and the constructed reality presented on *Selling the Big Easy* lends insight into "pervasive attitudes" in American culture (Marx 1969, 84). The meaning of a property lot is made and remade by successive generations of users, who operate within the structures and processes created by governments, architects, and financiers (Gottdiener 1993). New Orleans offers a rapid cycling of these changes due to the scale of rebuilding after Hurricane Katrina. The presence and absence of highly-recognisable

symbols of New Orleans life add nuance to this story (Gotham 2005). This chapter contrasts the findings from content analysis with relevant census data and information about shifting real estate markets to explain the socioeconomic contextual reality outside the frame of the show.

HGTV

Home and Garden Television was conceptualized in 1992 by broadcast executive Ken Lowe, who drew on his background in construction and film-making. Over time the network evolved into its current format, which draws a high proportion of television viewers, especially middle-class, college-educated women between the ages of twenty-five and fifty-four. The network streams to more than eighty-six million US households and over one hundred million people in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, while their website draws over ten million visitors per month (M2 Presswire 2020; Szalai 2020).

Many of the network's flagship shows, including *House Hunters* and *House Hunters International*, focus on the journey of prospective homebuyers. The typical structure introduces the realtor and clients, then previews a series of homes, focusing narrowly on the purchase decision (M. White 2017). Scholars have tied the predictable structure of such programmes to the neo-liberal capitalist order, as they posit consumption and marketability as absolutes. Buyers don't express regret after purchasing a home, nor do they find themselves over their head with debt as is often the case in reality (Shimpach 2012, 530). Although the actual process of buying or renovating a home is typically stressful, these programmes offer light escapism. The repetitive narrative structure, formulaic deployment of dramatic tension, and inevitably happy ending have led some to compare home programmes to other forms of melodramatic entertainment (Druick 2017).

Many of the interiors featured on HGTV programmes employ a design aesthetic carefully developed to be non-threatening and anonymous, signalling unobtrusive modernity (Clifford Rosenberg 2008). The network shapes taste in the US and abroad, yet HGTV shows do not draw upon touchstones of professional architectural legitimacy. As McCowan noted, "What's especially noticeable throughout HGTV is how rarely "high design" comes into play. There's hardly a reference to Mies van der Rohe, Marcel Breuer, or any of the rest of the Modernist pantheon, let alone well-known current practitioners" (Dodd 2016, 55). Long scorned by professional architects and designers, the network promotes bland, non-challenging home trends popular with current buyers.

The language used to describe homes is also crafted for the intended audience. In contrast to the technically descriptive, professional terminology used in architecture magazines, HGTV shows use emotive language, such as "precious" and "fabulous" (Hill and Matthews 2007, 52). Such language is traditionally associated with women and queer men, marking the space as stereo-typically feminine while also ensuring non-specialists feel welcome (52).

Many HGTV shows occur in a sanitized, anonymous environment. When an HGTV show is grounded in a single location, it draws on specific popular themes associated with that place and its residents to connect with viewers. Most famously, Chip and Joanna Gaines's popular show *Fixer Upper* foregrounded Waco, Texas through carefully curated B-roll footage and regular placements of local tourist culture (Potts 2021, 190).

Scholars have argued that even those shows that depict specific locales, such as *House Hunters International*, omit discussion of race, class, or gender (Celeste 2016). Celeste (2016, 528) argues that "The ideal mobility thus appears to be the capacity to live in a place, but not be of that place, consuming some aspects of that society without dealing with its material conditions." This blurring of details and omission of realities is designed to foster a pleasant and consumer-oriented experience. Shelter media offers homes as a utopian sanctuary from the pressures of everyday life. In Jacobs's words, homes here are "oases of self-indulgence" (2019, 437).

Despite such idyllic aspirations, HGTV and its viewers both participate in and shape economic realities. Undoubtedly property television fuels desire for home ownership. HGTV was also maligned after the subprime mortgage crisis of 2008, when pundits insisted that foolish home buyers had overextended themselves financially while trying to meet the standards of broadcast media. Scholars pushed back against such criticism, arguing that the network primarily raised buyers' expectations in terms of home staging and educated them about the market value of home features and renovations (Shimpach 2012).

More significantly, scholars have critiqued programmes such as *Pawn Stars*, *Storage Wars*, and the shows focusing on house flipping for inviting viewers to celebrate the prospect of profiting from someone else's misfortune (Ouellette 2017). In a recent monograph, *Renovating Value: HGTV and the Spectacle of Gentrification*, sociologist Robert Goldman (2021) explores the ways in which HGTV deployed concepts of value in the years following the 2008 financial crisis. Focusing on programmes featuring house flipping, Goldman traces the framing of salvage value in the great recession, as viewers were encouraged to envision a future in which they used elbow grease and

an eye for design to turn a meagre investment into a substantial profit. This model is typical of that followed by pioneer gentrifiers. Even in this context, Goldman notes, the phrase "gentrification" is almost never used. HGTV is thus deeply invested in the individual's search for financial profit and material comfort, but committed to avoiding reference to economic and social realities that might cause viewers to question their own ethics or motives. Nacima Baron's chapter in this volume similarly examines the role of *The Washington Post* as indirectly furthering gentrification. In that case, gentrification is discussed, but framed so as to favour the interests of real estate developers.

Selling the Big Easy

A typical episode of *Selling the Big Easy* opens with realtor Brittany Picolo-Ramos walking down a lush New Orleans street introducing herself and describing her love of helping buyers find the home of their dreams. A montage of grand houses is interspersed with scenes of her making jokes, demonstrating her quirky sense of humour and gregarious personality. Scenes of jazz bands, a paddle-boat on the Mississippi, and piles of crawfish are shown while she declares the city her hometown and extols its food, music, nightlife, and welcoming culture. Viewers learn little else about New Orleans following this introduction, as the programme shifts quickly to a tight focus on Picolo-Ramos, her staff, and prospective buyers as they assess the relative merits of various, in their words, "high-end, luxury properties." Sociologist Tressie McMillan Cottom observed, "There's a lot of competition for the title, but Selling the Big Easy might be the most gentrifyingly egregious of the show genre" (2020).

The programme offers a tour of New Orleans' "hot" real estate markets as Picolo-Ramos drives clients and her staff to many of the city's well-known neighbourhoods. In episode one, Holly, Sajal, and their baby are relocating to New Orleans to run their pharmacy in Metairie. Like most homebuyers profiled on the programme, they represent an upper middle-class lifestyle. Most buyers featured are white, with occupations including business owners and executives, but the backstories are often left vague. Such programmes often use fictionalized home buyers, sometimes by having those who have recently purchased a home re-enact a version of their decision process, and at other times purely scripting the scenario (Kaminsky 2019).

Enjoying coffee and beignets under the familiar awning of Café du Monde, the couple explain that she prefers historic houses while he prefers modern

ones. They tour a $1.5 million 5-bedroom home in the Garden District featuring 14-foot ceilings and crown mouldings. They also visit a large home in Lakeview and a 7,400-square foot mansion in Madisonville. They choose the Madisonville mansion, opting to submit a lowball offer of $1.1 million. Bonus footage features Picolo-Ramos staging a property for sale, sharing tips on how to attract the attention of buyers perusing listing photos.

Each episode follows this structure, with a mixture of renovated homes and new construction on view. In episode twelve, clients emergency room doctor Lewis and 5th-grade teacher Aimée are starting a family and have a house budget of $650,000. Picolo-Ramos shows them an Uptown neoclassical home priced just under $600,000, new construction in Bywater priced at $630,000, and a Garden District home that was redone in 2017, priced at $639,000. The clients choose the property in trendy Bywater, which has been called the "gentrification ground zero neighborhood" (Wilkinson 2018, 32).

These luxury homes are far beyond the price range of most New Orleans residents and even most of the city's new residents and gentrifiers. After Katrina, many volunteers came to the region through nonprofit organizations to assist in rebuilding efforts, then chose to relocate to the city. More recently, the New Orleans metro area's population shrank slightly since the COVID-19 pandemic began, but those migrating to the region in recent years come from a wide range of areas, including Texas, New York, Georgia, Mississippi, California, Asia, Central America, and Europe (US Census Bureau, n.d.). In February 2022, the median listing price in Bywater was $450,000, up 13 per cent from the prior year. In Uptown, the median listing price was $577,000, up 20 per cent from the year before, while in the Garden District the median listing price was $637,000, down 9 per cent from the prior year. New Orleans overall had a median listing price of just $359,000, which was up 9 per cent from the year before (Realtor.com). The map, "Change of Median Value from 2015 to 2020" shows the dramatic shifts that have occurred in many areas of New Orleans. Key neighbourhoods highlighted in this chapter are labelled on the map (Figure 5.1).

The third episode offers a glimpse into the complex patterns of post-Katrina recovery and gentrification. Viewers are shown a white heterosexual couple with two daughters seeking a large family-sized home near the French Quarter. With a budget of up to $950,000 and conforming to the gendered roles frequently spotlighted on such programmes, he needs a home office while she requests access to green space and a white kitchen where she can see the children (M. White 2013).

The first of two homes they are shown is on Ursulines Avenue in Tremé. A colourful area mural depicts peace symbols and music notes and a

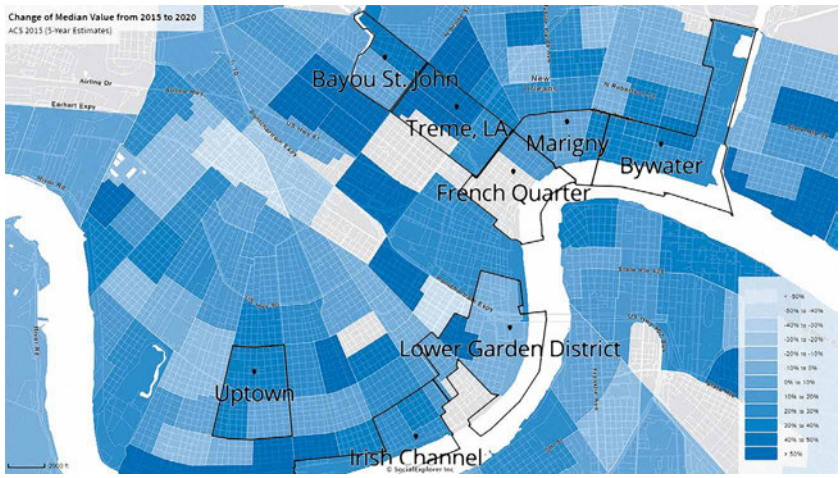

Figure 5.1. New Orleans Change of Median Value from 2015 to 2020. Source: Median Value, 2015. Social Explorer, (based on data from U.S. Census Bureau. Accessed March 11, 2024 at 13:15:54 GMT-4).

montage features the Petit Jazz Museum and a group of white people on bicycles, quite likely visitors enjoying one of the area tours common since the popularity of the HBO series *Tremé*. The home, over 3,000 square feet, contains four bedrooms, four-and-a-half bathrooms, tall ceilings, stained glass, and a courtyard with a pergola and a water feature. Picolo-Ramos informs them and the viewers that the home was originally a double that has been converted to a single-family.

Other double-to-single conversions are also featured on the show, such as a Lower Garden District unit in episode one valued at over $1 million. Such conversions from double-to-single have long been popular in New Orleans, especially involving the shotgun style house. First built in the region in the early nineteenth century, small shotgun homes range from 800 to 1,000 square feet (Edwards 2009). While some feature rooms along a hallway, many are in a railroad formation, requiring one to pass through each room to get to the next. Scholars posit that the house type evolved from Haitian architectural traditions in the context of the very narrow property lots of New Orleans. Constructed on elevated piers, the wood and frame homes enjoy cooling air flow. Some estimate that shotgun style houses made up as much as 60 per cent of the housing stock of Orleans Parish by the turn of the twenty-first century. The historic preservation community of New Orleans has held regular celebrations and tours of shotgun houses for decades, often presenting them as especially suited to conversion from a double to a single (Allen 2019). Realtors praise shotguns as an ideal house type for first-time investors, who might choose to live on one side of the

house and rent out the other until they have amassed the capital to convert the entire building to a single-family home (Craig 2017). This approach is also suggested on episodes of *Selling the Big Easy*.

Through the property listings and staging sites featured in season one, twenty-two neighbourhoods are visited. The neighbourhoods featured on *Selling the Big Easy* season one most often were Lakeview (six appearances), Covington (six), Uptown (six), Metairie (three), Garden District (three), Lower Garden District (two), Tremé (two), Audobon Park (two), and Madisonville (two). Due to the diverse effects of Hurricane Katrina and the ensuing recovery and redevelopment process, each neighbourhood in New Orleans has a distinct history. While watching *Selling the Big Easy*, it appears as if fate has created an array of lovely homes for contemporary buyers. To understand how these properties became available for renovation or these lots were cleared for building, it is helpful to consider gentrification and its measures in New Orleans.

Measuring Gentrification in Post-Katrina New Orleans

Gentrification had begun to take place in New Orleans prior to Hurricane Katrina. Geographer Richard Campanella (2013) discussed proto-gentrification in New Orleans with regard to the settlement of artists and writers in the French Quarter by the 1930s and described the Quarter as "largely gentrified" by the 1970s. Before the storm, scholars noted that the French Quarter had experienced "tourism gentrification," a process by which middle-class neighbourhoods become exclusive due to the incursion of tourism-based businesses. In New Orleans, by the 1990s, commercial and residential development required many low-wage workers in the service sector, but few resources and spaces were provided for their use (Gotham 2005, 114).

In the aftermath of the storm, amidst the tragedy some saw opportunity. Between August 2005 and March 2012, 6,296 new construction permits were filed (Campanella and Rosen 2016, 3). Early plans to redevelop the area included the infamous "green dot" map that suggested abandoning several of the city's neighbourhoods (Uberti 2015). Ultimately, no neighbourhoods were completely abandoned, but the city lost over 1,000 residents to the storm and another fifth of its population to displacement (Ehrenfeucht and Nelson 2020, 440). The city would be rebuilt unevenly, with less comprehensive planning and many pockets of investment. Between 2009 and 2014, public and private investment in the city totalled over $7 billion. Much of that

development took place in the Central Business District, but many residential neighbourhoods saw investment as well, as areas like Lakeview and Tremé attracted new attention.

HGTV and ABC came to New Orleans in the early days after the storm. *Extreme Makeover Home Edition* focused on the effects of Hurricane Katrina for five episodes in 2005 and 2006. The episodes featuring New Orleans depicted emotionally gripping narratives of loss and renewal, portraying a ruined landscape being revitalized by corporate and individual sponsors, aligning with the neoliberal framework (McMurria 2008, 305–6, 324–26).

Residents with privilege and money were able to return to New Orleans while low-income families, overwhelmingly Black, were not. Within a decade, many scholars would agree that large-scale gentrification had taken place, as former communities were demolished and new, upscale neighbourhoods took root. The Ninth Ward famously suffered catastrophic flooding and many of the area's predominantly Black residents lacked the resources to return. Most gentrification occurred in a more piecemeal fashion, as waves of privileged transplants settled in the city's desirable areas on higher ground outside the flood zone.

The challenge of quantifying something as complex as gentrification is highlighted by the approaches advocated by various academic disciplines. (Easton et al. 2020). Geographer Neil Smith's "rent-gap thesis" posited that investors are motivated to upgrade properties only when there is potential to realize a higher profit through elevated rental prices, thus paving the way for gentrification (Smith 1987). Some studies show that increasing numbers of groceries, cafes, restaurants, and bars can be a sign of gentrification (Glaeser et al. 2018). Real estate economists often use a hedonic pricing method analysing nine housing characteristics: square footage, lot size, age, bedrooms, bathrooms, garage, swimming pool, fireplace, and air conditioning (although the effects of all but bedrooms, garage, and fireplace vary significantly by region) (Sirmans et al. 2006).

When assessing gentrification in the United States, scholars tend to add demographic variables drawn from the US Census such as average household income, average home price, population per square mile, per cent of adults who are college graduates, per cent of population living in poverty, per cent Black and per cent Hispanic (Kahn 2007). David Ley argued here that education and occupation serve as a proxy for class, while Smith insisted that income and rent offered a better metric (Ley 1987; Smith 1987). Some gentrification scholars have argued that the American "middle class" is no longer a socioeconomic class but a status, further complicating such analyses (Redfern 2003).

Scholars have long observed that gentrification occurs in distinct phases. In New York City, Smith and DeFilippis (1999) outlined three waves of gentrification on the Lower East Side, the first occurring before the fiscal crisis of the 1970s, the second in the 1980s, and the third after 1994. Each wave differed not only in context, but in scope, with the third representing "super-gentrification" in areas like Brooklyn Heights, where townhouse prices doubled in a few short years (Lees 2000).

Applying these measures of gentrification to New Orleans or any city that has undergone a catastrophic event proves difficult. Shortly after Katrina, Andrés Duany, co-author of a radical city plan stated bluntly, "The Gulf Coast offers the rare opportunity to start over from scratch, potentially with quick results …. For a city to become a city that's planned, it has to destroy itself; the city literally has to moult. Usually this takes twenty years, but after a hurricane it takes five years" (Slater 2008, 220).

The timeline for marking phases of gentrification is complex, yet parallels emerge between New Orleans and other cities. By 2008, Gladstone and Préau observed phases in process, "… the displacement process is largely complete in the French Quarter and the surrounding neighbourhoods of Algiers Point, Marigny, and the Warehouse District; it is well underway in Bywater and the Lower Garden District, but only beginning in Tremé" (2008, 158).

More broadly, using Freeman's framework of gentrification analysis, van Holm and Wyczalkowski (2019) identified massive gentrification in New Orleans. To be eligible for gentrification in this model, a census tract must have a central city location and older housing stock. It must begin with a relatively low median income, then experience a substantial increase in housing values and proportion of residents who are college graduates (2019, 2772). Of the 504 tracts in the metropolitan statistical area of New Orleans, they found 101 met the eligibility criteria and that sixty-two of those tracts had gentrified by 2015 (2019, 2770).

Because so much of the city had gentrified, no single feature describes each gentrified neighbourhood. Van Holm and Wyczalkowski found that census tracts that had experienced higher levels of property damage "positively predict gentrification." Other areas that had gentrified by 2015 were those that had suffered minimal damage from Hurricane Katrina, including the area called the "sliver by the river" running from Uptown through the Irish Channel, the Garden District, and Bywater. Others include the broad central swath starting in Mid-City and reaching the edge of the Lower Ninth Ward, passing through the Seventh Ward (2019, 2772).

The areas featured on the show that have experienced the most dramatic demographic change are summarized in table 5.1 ("The Data Center Analysis" 2021).

Table 5.1. Neighbourhoods Represented on Season One of *Selling the Big Easy* Experiencing Dramatic Gentrification

Neighbourhood	% White 2000	% White 2020	Owner Occupied 2000	Owner Occupied 2020	People living in poverty 2000	People living in poverty 2020	College graduates 2000	College graduates 2020
Orleans Parish	26.6	30.7	46.5	48.3	27.9	23.7	23.1	34.7
Bayou St. John	26.7	64.0	35.0	47.5	32.0	15.4	20.6	63.2
Bywater	32.4	63.6	38.1	46.8	38.6	19.1	17.8	44.7
French Quarter	89.8	87.7	24.6	48.5	10.8	12.8	51.3	58.2
Irish Channel	26.0	67.4	37.4	52.4	41.1	11.2	22.8	58.3
Lower Garden District	55.4	68.8	24.8	34.5	28.5	14.7	39.9	65.9
Marigny	72.6	76.6	32.9	52.1	24.1	14.2	32.2	59.6
Tremé	4.9	35.6	21.8	29.1	56.9	33.6	7.5	30.5
Uptown	57.8	77.6	43.4	55.5	23.9	12.5	50.3	68.3

Changes have occurred in racial demographics, as many Black residents never returned to New Orleans, leading to an overall city population that is made up of approximately 4 per cent more white residents than before the storm. Specific neighbourhoods have seen far more dramatic shifts in this regard, with white residents comprising 13 per cent more of the Lower Garden District, 20 per cent more of Uptown, 30 per cent more of Tremé and Bywater, nearly 40 per cent more of Bayou St. John and over 40 per cent more of the Irish Channel.

The Irish Channel has seen change in many census categories, as it is now far more owner occupied than it was before the storm. The percentage of neighbourhood residents living in poverty has fallen 30 per cent and the percentage of college graduates has risen 35 per cent. With a prime location near the central city, older housing stock, and a relatively low-income population prior to Hurricane Katrina, the Irish Channel was poised for gentrification. As an area of high ground that did not flood during the storm, it is not surprising that gentrification occurred following Freeman's framework.

The Tremé also lost Black residents at a high rate while attracting white residents, as noted by Gladstone and Préau (2008, 163–64). Owner-occupancy rates have increased as poverty rates have declined and the percentage of area residents with a college degree has increased dramatically. The gentrification of the Tremé has attracted popular attention, given its role as the heart of New Orleans' historic Black community (Perkins 2019). As the neighbourhood has become home to many short-term rentals and an increasing number of white guests and homeowners,

tensions have emerged. Researchers have documented a lowered sense of belonging among longtime area residents (Parekh 2015). Valued cultural traditions, such as the second-line parades long customary in the city, are also at risk as newcomers distrustful of public gatherings file noise complaints.

Overly prosperous before Hurricane Katrina to be eligible for gentrification after the storm, the Lakeview neighbourhood nonetheless underwent dramatic destruction and renewal. Its history demonstrates the role of white privilege in the history of New Orleans. The neighbourhood is frequently featured in season one of *Selling the Big Easy*, including episode four, when a family of four from San Diego with a $1.7 million budget is looking for a house with two offices, a pool, and a gym. While they visit a 5,300 square foot Lakeview home, viewers hear the only nod in season one to the storm that facilitated much of the gentrification silently featured on the show. Picolo-Ramos tells the couple, "During Katrina when the levees broke the area was highly affected. The positive aspect of it was that the area came back with a vengeance." With that, she returns to touring them through the especially ostentatious home, the backyard of which emulates the French Quarter.

Lakeview owed both its origin and its demise to regional technologies. Early in the twentieth century, large expanses of the marshlands adjacent to Lake Ponchartrain were drained and a seawall was added, creating newly habitable land for several residential neighbourhoods such as Lakeview (Colten 2006, 732; Verderber 2010, 112). After World War I, many German-Americans who had been concentrated in central urban districts including "Little Saxony," moved to suburbs including Lakeview (Campanella 2006, 254–59). They were joined by Sicilian-American residents of the French Quarter's "Little Palermo" who moved to the new areas of Gentilly and Lakeview as they gained wealth (Campanella 2006, 332).

Lakeview limited homeownership to white residents through restrictive racial covenants which held through mid-century (Colten 2006, 733; Campanella 2006, 17). An almost exclusively white community prior to Katrina, Lakeview was considered one of New Orleans' most desirable neighbourhoods (Verderber 2010, 112).

During Hurricane Katrina, the 17th Street Canal levee was breached, sending floodwaters into Lakeview (Campanella 2006, 388). At the height of the storm, Lakeview homes had 6 to 15 feet of standing water (Campanella 2006, 399) (Figure 5.2).

Hurricane Katrina affected both predominantly Black and white low-lying neighbourhoods. Flooding in the Lower Ninth Ward, home primarily to

Figure 5.2. View of the 17th Street Breach, Lakeview on the left. US Army photograph in the public domain. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:New_Orleans_17th_Street_Canal_filling.JPG

low-income Black residents, led to massive death and human suffering. As Colten notes, the low rates of car ownership in low-income areas left thousands stranded in the dysfunctional post-Katrina city (Colten 2006, 733). By contrast, middle-class white Lakewood residents owned vehicles and had the resources and personal networks necessary to evacuate (Elliott et al. 2010).

Due to the flooding and standing water, many Lakeview homes were demolished. Of the initial wave of post-Katrina demolitions carried out by the US Army Corps of Engineers, 256, the largest number, were carried out in Lakeview (Hatcher et al. 2012, 183). After the storm, Lakeview was aggressively rebuilt. Some owners repaired existing structures, while others opted to demolish their home and replace it with a "Katrina mansion." These homes were more grand, supported by a garage or covered patio (Verderber 2010, 112).

A Lakeview home showcased in episode seven tells this common story. Two doctors with three children seeking a large home with the trending white kitchen and open living area are shown a 2,400 square foot home with four bedrooms, a large porch and a charming balcony. Just three years old and listed as "nearly new in Lakeview," the home is one of the so-called Katrina mansions built in the area after the storm. Elevated on a brick

level to protect the house in case of flooding, the home towers over others in the area.

As Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor (2019) has powerfully argued, racist social policies have led to home ownership being a high-risk and low-reward undertaking for Black Americans. Even homes of similar size and quality would be valued differently based on the demographics of their neighbourhood. Homes in Lakeview benefited from these factors, receiving higher assessed values than comparable homes in nearby Black areas. The recovery Road Home grants that funded rebuilding were calculated based on prior home values. Combined with more expensive insurance and other advantages middle-income white Lakeview residents had securing additional financing, they were better positioned for rebuilding and are now profiting from these luxury home sales (E. J. White 2012, 199–200).

Conclusion

Scholars have long criticized the tourist-focused economy of New Orleans for creating an entertainment zone in the French Quarter while ignoring much of the rest of the city. Referring to the "Disneyfication of New Orleans," historian Mark Souther (2007) noted the artificial image of the French Quarter that had been created then grafted back onto the city. Tourists crowding onto Bourbon Street during Mardi Gras seeking a "real New Orleans experience" embody Baudrillard's theory of the simulacra as the narrative becomes reality, encouraging the city to twist toward an imagined truth. Furthering this image of the city, the vast majority of homes constructed since the storm have been in a pastiche of historic styles. In many cases this reflects the desire of newcomers to the city to embrace the region's distinctive history and architectural traditions. The styles have been adopted for public housing as well. As Campanella and Rosen observe, "Indeed, some streets in the redeveloped projects look more "New Orleans" than New Orleans" (2016, 6). The neo-historic styles outnumber modern styles fourteen to one. The demolition of public housing that had begun before Katrina accelerated afterwards as four large public housing projects were replaced by new, mixed-income developments. (Arena 2012, 89–91) Prior to Katrina, the city was home to 5,000 units of low-income public housing, while ten years later the city had less than 2,000 (Fessler 2015). The new version of the city's built environment relies on traditional architectural styles to mask ongoing social inequality (Kaminsky 2019).

Even this constructed narrative of the city is largely absent from *Selling the Big Easy*. Picolo-Ramos tours clients and viewers through seemingly endless available homes, most of whose white walls, expensive kitchens, and nondescript interiors could be located anywhere in the United States. Just outside, New Orleans continues to be plagued by very real and urgent problems as longtime residents struggle to maintain a foothold in the city due to skyrocketing property values and rents, which have been exacerbated by the rise of short-term rentals (Robertson et al. 2020).

Analysing New Orleans, political scientist Cedric Johnson cautions against an overemphasis on consumption in the form of individual tastes as agents of gentrification, calling instead for inquiries into production through study of the systems and processes that allow and encourage gentrification to occur (Johnson 2015). Drawing on the work of geographer Neil Smith, pioneer of the rent-gap thesis, Johnson describes major corporate investors and holding companies as "forces of capital" that drive gentrification and advocates enhanced housing market regulations such as rent control.

In the aftermath of the storm, the city's focus was on growth and development. Only in 2015 did New Orleans incentivize affordable housing in new construction. The Housing for a Resilient New Orleans plan and zoning ordinance favouring density, seeking to fight gentrification and displacement (Ehrenfeucht and Nelson 2020, 441). Ehrenfeucht (2020, 441) argues such changes came too late, as by 2016 housing costs took more than one-third of the income of 51 per cent of city residents.

Current New Orleans Mayor, LaToya Cantrell, has labelled the city's situation a housing crisis and her administration has begun a study of housing affordability exploring the feasibility of building accessory structures and redeveloping blighted and vacant properties for residential use, introducing the fashionable so-called tiny houses, and limiting the removal of residential units from doubles and multi-family houses through conversions.

Selling the Big Easy serves as a form of advertisement for the city and will surely attract more visitors and home buyers. As Baron argues elsewhere in this volume, the media can play an active role in shaping urban development. In this equation, HGTV and its parent company Discovery are literally forces of capital driving gentrification. In a city that has long privileged funding and maintenance of the tourist districts, the show highlights specific neighbourhoods that are highly desirable to investors. The programme portrays a city undergoing dramatic changes as a slate of opportunities for privileged elites. It offers an unbridled celebration of gentrification, which goes unremarked and unquestioned. Not only is gentrification itself not discussed, no conversations in season

one cover the ways in which neighbourhoods have changed since Hurricane Katrina. The city is portrayed as an abstraction and a tabula rasa for the imagination of the viewer, presumed to be a city tourist who fantasizes about someday moving to New Orleans. By keeping the dream of a fictionalized New Orleans regularly on television, the programme encourages tourism, and thus deepens the inequality brought about by tourism gentrification.

Media coverage of the horrific and dramatic events of Hurricane Katrina laid bare the gross inequality of American urban life. While watching the sensationalized coverage of human suffering, many viewers realized that the city they loved to visit was one they did not really know. Limited to the highly constructed tourist districts, most tourists had never noticed the poverty and segregation that had long characterized the city. *Selling the Big Easy* offers a completely different perspective on the city. In this version, New Orleans is once again a tourist and residential paradise. Viewers are invited to envision themselves participating in the gentrification currently displacing many New Orleans residents without feeling the guilt that social context might inspire.

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6. Shaping and Diverting Public Space Regulation: Newspaper Coverage of an Eviction in a Business Improvement District, Washington, DC

Nacima Baron

Abstract: This chapter focuses on microtransit-induced gentrification through the NoMa Business Improvement District (BID) in Washington, DC. The presence of homeless populations has been seen to jeopardize the narrative of the BID as a vibrant place and a happy community. How does *The Washington Post* cover this problem of coexistence in public space? Argumentative analysis and narrative discourse study are applied to the corpus. This chapter explores how the media orchestrate the public debate, reframe responsibilities and finally cause the search for the structural causes of the crisis to be diverted towards a happy conclusion. The newspaper delivers a tactical and processual perspective on gentrification.

Keywords: urbanism; homeless eviction; argumentative discourse analysis; *The Washington Post*

Introduction

In what way do the dominant print media shape public debate around urban gentrification in the United States? After reviewing several press titles, Brown-Saracino and Rumpf (2011) concluded that pro, anti, and neutral attitudes coexist and fluctuate, recommending that the editorial strategy of each newspaper and the facts covered be examined more closely.

In their investigation of this issue in Washington, DC, Modan and Wells (2015) turn the question from an attitudinal to a processual one. They capture

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how the media "reflect, promote, reframe particular values and sets of power" (Modan and Wells 2011, 316). Crises are pivotal moments of truth in the media coverage of gentrification. Distinct narratives clash with one another during critical episodes, such as forced evictions. Newspapers report facts and provide arguments to readers, who shape their own opinion. Crises offer opportunities to explore the role of the media in decoding events, uncovering—or not—the racial and social divides that polarize US society, and recoding them into stories that encourage readers to buy newspapers daily.

The social life of public space and the sphere of public opinion constantly interact in the media coverage of gentrification. Yet Williamson and Rumming (2017, 428) claim that "dialogue through paper press media between citizens, planning agencies, representatives of neo-liberal stakeholders is rarely captured and analysed." This chapter aims to address this dialogue in a dynamic and dialectic way. Micro-level discourse analysis is used to analyse *The Washington Post*'s coverage of the recurring and violent evictions from a homeless encampment in one of Washington, DC's most privileged, central locales. The following research questions are raised: how do journalists address social, racial, and economic marginality and inequalities? How do they orchestrate and enact a local controversy? How do they finally integrate some of their readers' opinions and resolve them—at least discursively—through a positive story?

The first section of the chapter highlights how applying urban social theories in a local context sheds light on the confrontation between great poverty and the renewal of public space in a Business Improvement District (BID) in Washington, DC. The second introduces the methodology and presents *The Washington Post*'s reporting on and shaping of an eviction narrative. The third part derives lessons from the empirical inquiry and suggests a typology of the methods employed by this newspaper to neutralize the political and ideological aspects of the event.

The Nexus of Gentrification and Mobility in Planning and in Media Discourse

Washington, DC has been a locus for research on gentrification for almost two decades. Its centre was primarily home to lower income Black communities but was repopulated with white, young, educated newcomers from the late 1980s to the 2010s (Hutson 2015; Hyra and Prince 2016). Its central districts have received increased public investment and have seen

growth in office and residential constructions on brownfield land, resulting in skyrocketing property prices (Schaller 2019 provides a comparative analysis and places downtown Washington, DC just behind New York in terms of financial attractivity). Prince (2014) and Hutson (2016) insist that the impact of BIDs in the capital, in terms of residential displacement, has entirely altered its central districts, especially with respect to their social and ethnic balance.

An important element in the urban reconquest of downtown DC is the linking of public and private capital through BIDs. In DC, these are non-profit organizations authorized by the city to augment public policies and provide additional sanitation and public space maintenance services (e.g., street furniture, lighting, cleaning, and landscaping). Furthermore, they constantly strive to change the district's internal and external image. Schaller (2019) has critically and extensively examined the strategies of various BIDs, which aim to shape local identity and contribute to place-making, while Oluwafemi's work (2017) has specifically focused on the BID used as a case study for this chapter. Both conclude that the BID's official narrative continuously celebrates the city's redevelopment, as exemplified by trendy restaurants or yoga studios. Both also note that the BID's actions in sustaining urban regeneration and new construction contribute to the displacement and replacement of the local community as well as the erasure of the former identity of places.

The "north of Massachusetts Avenue" BID (abbreviated to "NoMa," echoing New York's SoHo), was created in 2007. It covers thirty-five blocks in DC's Golden Triangle, directly north and west of the White House. This BID is emblematic of new-build gentrification, consisting of "luxury apartment complexes or townhouses [...] built on reclaimed brownfield land" (Davidson and Lees 2010, 395). It therefore differs from the classic process of residential migration by middle-class intellectuals and progressives that began in the 1970s; by contrast, new-build gentrification is mainly driven by public and private investors. The reason for this lies in the area's urban morphology and land use. NoMa stretches along and backs onto the railway lines of Union Station. It mainly covers very large plots, made up of a mix of vacant land, old industries and coal yards, parking lots, a few streets of dilapidated terraces, and some large federal offices such as the Government Accountability Office, spanning approximately 2 million square feet. These plots were gradually bought up by real estate companies and some administrative buildings were sold to private bodies for refurbishment and leasing. Local journalists witnessed social and physical change, which was in particular reflected in the proliferation of offices with glass facades and luxury condos. Today,

NoMa is home to almost 30,000 inhabitants and "no longer belongs to the wrong side of the tracks" (Hoffer 2015). Its reputation as a dirty, vacant, and poor district is gradually being replaced by the image of a regenerated, even lively weekend destination for tourists and DC residents. As early as 2013, *The Washington Post* labelled the place "DC's Sim City of Gentrification" (Yates 2013). This article connects the social and architectural evolution of NoMa and highlights the accelerated rhythm of change.

BIDs are bodies designed to improve basic urban services such as green space provision and maintenance and public transport (Schaller 2019) but rapidly became platforms for furthering financial and real estate interests. It is therefore worth questioning how these institutions attempt to strike a balance between the mere maintenance of public space and the active role they appear to play in gentrification processes. This issue has long been debated. Before looking at the media coverage of the BID's activities and public discourse, it must be acknowledged that ambiguity and contradictions are to be found throughout the long history of relationships between BIDs and the District Government. Wolf has argued that "the BIDs" professional staff, particularly the executive directors, seem to eschew any close identification with the District or other governmental institutions. Most see themselves as part of the private sector and not part of government" (2006, 70). He further explains that, although BIDs were created and are supported by the DC government, they adopt an entrepreneurial profile and communication profile. BIDs claim to protect the interests of residents and frequently refer to the "BID community." Yet the infrastructures and services that they press the public authorities to deliver to residents raise the value of urban projects and serve the highly active local pro-growth coalition. BID directors constantly urge municipal authorities to route public money towards the best public infrastructure for the BID so they can match this new amenity with so-called "community projects." These can include street art initiatives, environmental upgrades, the provision of children's playgrounds (Howell 2018) or street furniture, the organization of street festivals (Thompson Summers and Howell 2019) and, increasingly, the provision of mobility infrastructure such as cycle lanes.

The Gentrification Mobility Fix and its Exclusionary Effects

Transport and mobility planning is a good example of the NoMa BID directors' capacity to put pressure on the city administration and pool public

money. In particular, the BID urged DC officials to develop transit and microtransit facilities in the early and late 2010s respectively.

In 2012, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority invested $25 million into the refurbishment of the NoMa/Gallaudet subway station north of Union Central (Nasri and Zhang 2014). The station appears to officially sanction the NoMa moniker, but the name was actually given to the area in 2007 by the BID; a journalist has argued that locals still find it rather odd (Hedgpeth 2011). The celebration of the metro station's "rebirth" contributed to the erasure of the district's former Black identity and memory. Few older people remained aware that this place was the site of the 1960s racial struggles in DC and the national headquarters of the Urban League (Rusk 2017). The metro station project can be considered a case of transit-induced gentrification (Dawkins and Moeckel 2016); public transport was funded and planned in the central area that private investors were redeveloping and the investment was made at the time of the redevelopment. In turn, real estate businesses found it easier to attract clients as offices became easily accessible to white suburbanites. This process was followed in NoMa; the DC municipality transferred certain important administrative services to the area shortly after the metro station reopened. During the second phase of the transformation (2014–2020), NoMa developers built luxury condos as well as offices, and the BID asked the public authorities to resurface the roads and sidewalks and provide new microtransit infrastructure. This process can be referred to as "microtransit-induced gentrification." During this period, the metro station was less useful because the district began to turn into an enclave populated by affluent, white workers and residents. It is nevertheless carefully maintained and still considered as a key facility and resource, in contrast with other areas. A "residential dissonance" gradually developed; the number of commuters decreased and the metro station became less busy—European observers would most likely say quite empty—yet it was still maintained through public resources and the contributions of taxpayers across the entire metropolis (Kumar et al. 2018).

Following the celebration of the station's rebirth and, consequently, of the NoMa district, the BID paid great heed to cycling and walking infrastructures in the late 2010s. Speaking at a public meeting held with the District Department of Transportation, the BID President said: "Feet in the streets, then heads in the beds, and retail follows" (Urban Land Institute, 2019). From this moment on, the NoMa BID developed a constant and intensive communication strategy to highlight its excellent walking and cycling scores, which were shaped by real estate professionals and consultants (Hall and Ram 2018). On the one hand, these scores reflect the transformation of

public space; on the other, they are part of place-making and place-branding strategies. They measure the possibility for pedestrians and cyclists to move safely, comfortably and more or less directly to a number of BID destinations for work, shopping, or leisure. Since the early 2010s, the district has carried out schemes to upgrade its street layout and to resurface a number of roads: First Street NE, then New York Avenue Bridge, then L, M, and N Streets. More space was allocated to buses, bike lanes, and sidewalks at the expense of cars. BID services immediately planted flowers and trees, added street signage, new lighting and BID flags throughout the area. Over the same period, the metropolitan cycle branch trail opened and the NoMa BID developed a number of community projects along this corridor, such as murals, dog parks, and green parklets. In 2019, the BID foundation also completed a green corridor running through three consecutive blocks to facilitate local trips. NoMa walk and cycle scores are constantly on the rise and are part of the BID's communication strategy. It is therefore unsurprising that *The Washington Post*'s discourse around NoMa emphasizes the considerable changes that have occurred in the area in less than two decades (Hoffer 2015; Lerner 2020). Over the past twenty years, the newspaper has documented the connection between the transformation of public space and the investment in mobility infrastructure and urban redevelopment. Observers sometimes refer to NoMa as a transit-oriented neighbourhood, and sometimes as a microtransit village. The former refers to a residential cluster which is dependent on public transport (here, the refurbished metro station and nearby Union Station), the latter to a centric urban area offering dense sustainable mobility facilities (cycling and walking facilities) and numerous retail units.

There is one final holdout in the BID's physical recapture of the transport infrastructure and reconquest of the urban realm—the section where K and L streets cross the Union Station railway lines. Two underpasses are the only means for cars to cross the railway, but both are frequently blocked by traffic. They are also often occupied by the homeless in both summer and winter. The transformation of these tunnels therefore encapsulates the tensions and ambiguities between the social impact of gentrification (poverty, eviction) and mobility policies (their adaptation for transit and microtransit practices). Cresswell (2010, 26) argues that BIDs have acted as a "new point of friction" in twenty-first-century urban mobility policies throughout America, (cited by Rink and Gamedze 2016, 644). Along with Sheller (2019), Cresswell contends that planning decisions that aim to foster the mobility transition are not only made in order to address traffic problems or improve air quality; they are also used by business interests to accelerate the gentrification process. Moreover, Cresswell shows that it is through the

capacity to dictate who is mobile, how they are mobile, and what the reasons are behind this that the mandate to gentrify is enforced in every space and place in a city. DC researchers had already raised the social and ethnic dimension of new mobility conflicts, especially during Adrian Fenty's term as mayor (Gibson 2013). From this perspective, the evictions from the tunnels are important in that they represent one of the last acts in the gentrification of NoMa's public space. The question is whether or not the media make the connection between active mobility planning and homelessness.

How Newspapers Do (or Don't) Connect Mobility and Social Trends in Gentrified Areas

It is widely acknowledged that the rise of digital media and the restructuring of the newspaper industry has led to local print media in the US facing a series of major shocks and challenges since the turn of the century. Even dominant titles such as *The Washington Post* have been under constant financial pressure for decades. The paper shed staff and cut its budgets in the 1990s and the 2000s, and eventually fell into the hands of Amazon boss Jeff Bezos in 2013. This event is not unique—many newspapers have been bought in these decades—yet it has raised concern about the capacity of this media outlet to maintain its tradition of "watchdog journalism."

Knobel (2018) has investigated the long-term transformation of journalism's political economy and the evolution of editorial style, norms, and values. He identified two main drivers that explain the evolution of *The Washington Post*. The first is technology; because of the emergence of the internet and smartphones, the newspaper has been forced to provide a preview of its content in an attempt to sell every article, achieve good metrics, and maximize clicks. These goals are of course critical for the media advertising business model. The second links to trends in demand for information. The emergence of social media and the rise of opinionated cable news have led to a saturation of the communications sphere. As a matter of survival, the *Post*, like other famous US titles such as the *New York Times*, aims to distinguish itself from other news outlets. It seeks to protect its credibility and brand by distributing so-called high-quality journalism. In order to achieve this, journalists need to dedicate enough time to their work, carry out lengthy research and explore multiple facets of an investigation in order to obtain a deeper understanding of any current affairs issue. However, journalists have been faced with a reduction in reporting capacity and have had to reframe the way they handle local news and the local readership.

Moreover, *The Washington Post* is an international, national, and local newspaper. Its journalists talk to the world as much as they address residents on street corners across the federal capital. There are many advantages to a local approach for a newspaper that is also a national and international media outlet; not least, the fabric of information is cheaper and the potential relationship with its readership is denser. To cut costs, *The Washington Post* produces simple, original, and meaningful stories that do not require substantive archival research and take only a few hours or days to complete. Journalists can rely on interviews and straightforward reporting techniques. Still, the "high-quality journalism" label zealously defended by *The Washington Post* means that even local affairs are treated with caution. The controversial issues raised, the construction of narratives, and their organization into serial stories distinguish *The Washington Post*'s stories from other local media reports, which simply repeat information that is easily found elsewhere. This kind of editorial work aims to hold up a mirror to the daily life of DC residents, to nurture identity and local pride, to win hearts and minds—that is to say, to combine rational factual reporting with emotional handling of information so as to retain the loyalty of local readers and their subscriptions (McChesney 2016). Another important point for journalists (especially those working for local media) is to include street-level citizens as contributors to the reporting activity, in order to instil loyalty towards "their" media.

The NoMa tunnel affair raises issues for *The Washington Post* for several reasons. Some relate to how the question of homelessness connects with others and undermines the harmonization of discursive lines. The depiction of poverty and homelessness is visible in the positive coverage of NoMa's metamorphosis. The local paper very frequently features NoMa in its Saturday leisure pages, presenting it as a place offering great dining opportunities and other leisure activities (cinemas, beer festivals, etc.). The presence of homeless people in this area generated a degree of perplexity among journalists and, for some months, a kind of discursive polyphony with the coexistence of various narratives of the tunnel affair.

A second set of reasons stems from the growing difficulty the media face in their attempt to cover homelessness in US cities in general and more specifically in DC. Buck and Toro (2004) have stated that media coverage of the homeless issue in the US is becoming less and less empathic and is not relying on public policies to solve the problem. Consequently, the problem of homelessness is dealt with from a policy perspective to an ever-diminishing extent. Lugo-Ocando (2019) has claimed that readers lose interest when the media frequently cover the inefficient eviction of homeless people who

return a few days later. Tsai et al. (2017) have shown that homelessness is a risky issue for the media since it is hard for journalists to measure whether or not the editorial line meshes with public opinion, which is increasingly polarized. Feelings of care and feelings of blame around the issue of homelessness may be unevenly balanced, and journalists fear what they refer to as readers' "compassion fatigue" (Barrett et al. 2016). That is why *The Washington Post* journalists open up new avenues and pose questions that evolve over time.

Public Space for Pedestrians or for the Homeless? The Orchestration of a Local Controversy

Content analysis, critical discourse analysis (CDA), argumentative analysis, semiotics, and functional linguistics all reflect a linguistic and discursive turn in urban studies. Critical discourse analysis helps social scientists uncover the dominant discourse encoded in texts and has gained significant momentum since the 1990s. It has been deployed as a methodology to understand the urban policy implementation process and, in particular, the ways in which key actors exercise power. Much of the discourse-based research in urban policy has drawn on the writings of Norman Fairclough (Fairclough 1995) and seeks to provide critical scrutiny of texts with the methodological assumption that the political sphere is an arena in which different interest groups (including media businesses) seek to establish a particular narrative or version of events as a means to pursue political objectives. However, I follow Reisigl (2020), who has argued that social scientists occasionally use the term "discourse" somewhat superficially, often confusing two sub-disciplines.

One of the paths that CDA can take is narratological study, which seeks to understand how the communicative outcomes of storytelling are achieved. Storylines are a concrete instance of discourse, one which Hajer has described as "a condensed statement summarizing complex narratives, used by people as shorthand in discussions" (2006, 69). Storylines sit at a higher level of aggregation than individual texts, but a lower level than broad cultural repertoires. Hajer showed how a storyline selectively mobilized aspects of reality and embodied narratives, symbols and metaphors to shape meanings and influence coalition-building in the environmental policy agenda-setting process. This concept has been used with broad effect. Newspapers create stories to inform and entertain their readers, with these stories also making it easier for readers to shape their own opinions and

construct their personal and social identities. Of course, private-focused bodies (such as BIDs) and local authorities also create stories and storylines, all of which circulate, echo, and sometimes conflict with one another. The analysis of the media coverage of gentrification can hence be summed up as the exploration of the extent to which the media duplicate, replicate, or reframe other stories (Brown-Saracino and Rumpf 2011).

Another line of research in CDA consists of an investigation of the semiotics of media texts, which can rely on a linguistic approach. Breaking texts down into grammatical and semiotic sequences helps us to understand how journalists write their articles and how they develop meaning-making with the resources of language. Social scientists and linguists have also employed this approach as an attempt to critically deconstruct media discourses, for example during migrant evictions (Serafis et al. 2020), in order to study sustainable mobility policies (Kiernan 2018) or when exploring urban models (Kennedy 2016). I have also used this method and demonstrated its capacity to shed light on the discursive strategy of a local politician seeking to "over-politicize" his cycling agenda (Baron 2019).

In this chapter, I combine both approaches. I will first deconstruct articles published by the *Post* into argumentative components, separating their values and ethical/political elements from their goals or desired futures, circumstances or spatio-temporal information. I will also delineate the sequences into descriptive, explanatory, and instructive elements. This will facilitate an understanding of the performative dimensions of the discourse and how the identity of the BID community and of DC residents is reframed through the media's "storyfication" of homelessness in the NoMa tunnel.

The literature review carried out for this research highlighted papers and online documentation about the NoMa district, its history, and the BID, as well as maps and grey literature produced by the District of Columbia Department of Planning and Transport. A search in the Factiva, Europresse, and NewsLibrary databases using advanced research features (#NoMa, #BID NoMa, #NoMa DC …) enabled me to gather 150 articles (45,000 words) published in *The Washington Post* from 2007 to the end of 2021. The literature survey included paper and online editions as well as blog entries and reader comments. A three-step protocol was then implemented to limit the amount of information and streamline the texts submitted to the CDA.

The first step consisted of developing a typology of article genres and removing descriptive articles, mainly corresponding to brief news updates, miscellaneous articles, real estate information and dining-out recommendations; ninety-seven such articles were filtered out. In the second step, a list of thematic in-depth articles concerning NoMa transformation was drawn

up. Seven main themes were identified: public space improvement, art and the environment; transport and mobility infrastructures and services; socio-demographic change and local community initiatives; local conflicts and security; brownfield redevelopment and new residential development; retail and public services; and a group of "other" themes. The issue of homeless people's presence concerned thirty-eight articles encompassing four of the six themes, which demonstrated the transversal nature of the question at hand. Careful analysis was performed on twenty-one of these thirty-eight articles. They are opinion papers, interviews, or open letters published by *The Washington Post* which provide coverage of the tunnel controversy, plus representative thematic articles. This shortlist represents the final corpus of this research project.

A BID vs DC Government Clash Revisited

The public debate orchestrated by the media over the presence of homeless people in this area began at the end of the summer of 2019, with two lines of news appearing in the *Post* in the spring of that year. One concerned the BID board of directors urging the District Department of Transportation to calm car traffic in NoMa. The main idea discussed in the article was that the BID had asked the DC municipality to complete the street schemes and to accelerate the provision of a continuous bike lane in NoMa. The second line of news concerned the efforts of the NoMa BID to transform the public realm. The *Post* reported on the BID street art projects and the conversion of one of the tunnels into an art gallery. Several articles referred to the international design competition launched by the BID and the design of an art installation named "Rain Light" in one of the tunnels. The newspaper published short articles on these topics in its "transport and mobility planning" section or in its "weekend opportunities" section (e.g., Lewis 2019) but did not connect the two subjects. At this time, any scholar in urban studies could link and integrate both stories into an overarching BID strategy that consists of upgrading the public space, regaining control over the streets, and facilitating the search for investors in residential projects. The street art project is typical of an exclusionary implicit design act disguised as an aesthetic initiative (Lindner and Sandoval 2021). Then, during the hottest days of that summer, the *Post* published eight articles focusing on homeless encampments, the threat of police evictions, and several attempts at vacating the area. At this time, no connection was made between the former themes and this information.

After an eviction, the BID set up barriers with its logo to block access to K street sidewalks in order to stop the homeless from returning. At the same time, the BID President published a lengthy open letter in *The Washington Post* (Jasper 2019, removed from the journal archives and from the BID website, yet cited by Moyer 2019) to justify the zoning restriction. She called all of the underpasses "unsafe and unsanitary environments" and urged that "something be done to recognize and protect the right of DC residents, workers, and visitors to safely use and pass through public space in NoMa." The letter revolved around a particular focal point; NoMa was presented as a very fast-growing district where public space was already in short supply. NoMa residents' rising smart mobility practices (walking and biking) were put forward as reasons to clear the sidewalks of tents. Hence, tents might have been tolerated in the past but no longer were (although the so-called problem actually dates back to the construction of the centrally located Union Station). NoMa has run out of capacity for homeless people. NoMa residents were presented as victims of the homeless and the BID President argued for their right to safe roads and pedestrian comfort. The letter directly targeted the deficiencies of DC police and portrayed the inhabitants of the tunnel as a dangerous group of drunks and drug dealers, typically intertwining race- and class-based fear of the other with ideas about personal security and traffic safety.

The Washington Post nurtured the controversy and orchestrated the public debate for about six months with various types of articles. The newspaper alternated between ground-level reports on the precarious nature of homeless life, opinion pieces about the encampment as a public problem and even recommendations to official stakeholders. Its columnist Dvorak (2019) wrote a piece titled "Artpark *vs* tent cities," in which he contrasted the long-term efforts at reconquering the public space with the crude reality of DC's structural poverty. Consistent with its long tradition of "watchdog" journalism on local government policies and practices (Knobel 2018), the *Post* criticized the failure of DC social housing policies (Jamison 2019), but opened its pages to a municipal reply to the BID President's letter. The head of the Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless placed the responsibility for the homeless problem on real estate developers (and, by extension, BID officials), whose speculation contributed to the continuous rise of housing prices. Meanwhile, the situation had come to a head; the BID barriers had been removed and the homeless were once again blocking the sidewalks. *The Washington Post* called for peaceful negotiation—"To solve DC's homeless problem, the city must talk to those affected" (Young 2019)—but, as time went by and with winter looming, the newspaper lamented the failure of an

institutional response: "Getting rid of the homeless won't make homelessness go away" (Dvorak 2020).

The Arrival of a Good Samaritan (Discursively) Resolves an Insuperable Public Problem

The cold winter months brought more tents into the tunnel and the question remained the same: is there room for the homeless on the sidewalks of a gentrified district? After journalists Heim and Moyer published an article warning of an imminent new police clearance (January 10, 2020), the debate suddenly took a new turn. On January 14, 2020, *The Washington Post* published a letter from a street-level NoMa resident in her thirties, who lived one block from the tunnel and worked for the Sierra Club. This lady took a diametrically-opposed position to the approaches and arguments previously mentioned. Under the title "There is room enough in NoMa for all," she denounced the violent eviction she witnessed and expressed her bitterness, anger, and dismay with the following words: "It is important that we who live in NoMa acknowledge that there is a severe shortage of affordable housing in the District and that the gentrification of this neighbourhood and others like it has made that problem worse. Those of us fortunate enough to be able to live in fancy new apartment buildings have an obligation to advocate for real solutions. My ideal NoMa neighbourhood is not a picture-perfect corporate utopia but rather a community that is inclusive, accessible and welcoming to all." For her, neither policing nor justifications for the design of an exclusionary public space should be undertaken in the name of NoMa's residents. She argued that the homeless did not occupy the entire space and that the movement of pedestrians and the presence of tents were easily compatible. The homeless had been present for so long that the insecurity argument put forward by the BID President was not an issue; the homeless were citizens, residents, and part of the community.

This open letter added a new layer to the manifold perspectives that *The Washington Post* had been navigating for several months, helping the media to transcend the institutional confrontation that did not offer a particularly attractive journalistic angle. Compassion and good sentiments were more likely to "sell" this affair, and this reflects the findings of a long-term analysis of how the *Post* has covered the urban crisis in America (Parisi 1998). As the Christmas period arrived, the media coverage of the tent battle changed its tone. "Don't believe the haters. Friendly neighbors are everywhere" argued *The Washington Post* journalists as they reported on spontaneous food

distributions organized by students (Heim and Guskin 2019). The open letter offered the media a good Samaritan story and, forgetting about the painful situation suffered by the homeless, *The Washington Post* celebrated the civic identity, social consciousness, and generosity of DC residents (and readers). In so doing, and from a semiotic perspective, it converted a painful social event into a beautiful—but perhaps overused—moral parable.

The Ambivalent and Equivocal Strategies of the Media Coverage of Gentrification

Two findings can be derived from this research. The first concerns the media coverage of urban crises in gentrified neighbourhoods and the traps associated with this. This relates to the newspaper's capacity to focus on a recurring event (here, the evictions and social tensions they create) and to position it within an intricate web of policy problems (housing, transport, security…) that involve institutional competencies, power relations and structural questions of racism, segregation, and injustice. This case study first highlights a "silo" approach of themes and the difficulty that journalists have with articulating such themes. This causes the media to express a sort of polyphony (various journalists taking diverse positions) and to adopt a flexible, or even a sinuous, position. Nevertheless, and from a temporal perspective, one can acknowledge that *The Washington Post* constructs a complete editorial sequence with an opening dilemma (art or tents?), then a kind of trial (adversarial interpretations of facts and comparison of possible solutions expressed by the actors of this drama), followed by a happy ending (generosity wins).

A second finding lies in the understanding of this coverage as an orchestration, that is to say, a semiologic and temporal ordering of ideas and affect. During all three stages, various types of editorial coverage are proposed. The media therefore play a variety of functional roles and create a range of narratives in the local debate (e.g., the successive police clean-ups, the blocking of pedestrian access to the tunnel, the reporting on food distribution). However, unlike social media and local free online press, *The Washington Post* uses this controversy to position itself as an upper-level media outlet capable of delivering more than repetitive street-level reports of police violence and boring explanations of insufficient housing services. The media behaves as a stakeholder in this local affair, as it moderates an indirect institutional exchange between the DC municipality (and police) and the board of BID directors. The media also creates events, as it selects

and publishes three open letters in its paper editions (one from the BID President, one from municipal services, and one from a resident). This strategy of publishing open letters and referencing such letters in editorials allows the newspaper to display a kaleidoscope of multiple subjectivities without appearing to support one side of the political spectrum. Hence, the reality of racialized and class-based eviction in a rich enclave is diffracted into a profusion of interpretations and discourses. This is in line with the perception of specialists in homeless media coverage, who insist on the way the question is being institutionalized and depoliticized by the media. In this case, this delegates the task of interpretation and argumentation to the voices it cautiously selects.

Third, this strategy also connects to the *Post*'s construction of one of its main symbolic resources: its roots and its localness. The editors act as an echo chamber, mirroring diverse representations of reality and experiences among individuals from different social and institutional groups. The open letters convey arguments, but also beliefs, values, normative, and ethical claims, and perhaps most importantly, positive emotions. Christmas (as is perceptible in the selection of local news and in the overall tone of the newspaper) is a time when the *Post* prioritizes stories with a happy ending and disseminates positive ideas among local readership. This is when the newspaper decided to put an end to the institutional perspective (a dialogue of the deaf) and to the sad perspective that presents DC as a divided and unjust society. While reporting on a food distribution event, the newspaper's last article on this affair praised a local student's generosity toward homeless people.

A critical discourse analysis of arguments and narrative choices makes it possible to understand how the question of the atmosphere of DC BID streets, which Bratman (2022) has argued often resemble the streets of a "third world" city, is obscured. This method allows us to capture how a media outlet recodes a singular event, reframes the question it may raise, and semiotically solves it by (re)producing unity from a fragmented and polarized public sphere.

The second main finding concerns how the media neglect the role that mobility plays in social equality. The finding lies in the response to the question raised in the opening of the chapter: do the media capture the notion of microtransit-induced gentrification? Are they able to address the design of public space through its neo-liberal rationales and to connect the topic with demographic replacement and with class and ethnic conflicts, as scholars have done with respect to bike schemes? (Hoffmann 2016; Stehlin 2019)

This research shows that leading DC institutions, *The Washington Post* included, still adopt an excessively functionalist approach to questions of transport and mobility. Although the newspaper presents the BID President's perspectives in its columns, it does devolve into caricature. It even allowed her to present arguments that led to her decline; the President who was appointed in 2011 was abruptly fired after the tunnel affair and replaced by the DC's former director of transportation and infrastructure on the Federal City Council. Such a choice hints at the pivotal role of mobility in the NoMa BID strategy. But, in this matter, *The Washington Post* lost an opportunity to connect its analysis of downtown public space regeneration to its role in denouncing social and ethnic issues. The newspaper allowed a resident to describe a relational and inclusive vision of public space and mobility in her letter. This vision considers public space as a shared space in which mobile subjects (pedestrians, cyclists, drivers…) and less mobile or non-mobile people (baby strollers, youngsters, old and disabled people, homeless and other ancillary or marginal groups) are all members of the community. This vision draws attention to an important characteristic of active mobilities (biking and walking). Sustainable mobilities provide a much better opportunity to benefit from the social diversity of public space and to develop social relations, which, in turn, produces local cohesion and harmony.

The newspaper did not dwell on the social consequences of NoMa's changing mobility practices. This may be due to the ambivalent discourse of residents who belong to the gentrifier class. The coexistence of strangers and poor people, when they belong to the community, can be part of the gentrifiers' aspirations of diversity and is in itself a demonstration of the "last steps of gentrification" (Morris 2019). This may be one of the reasons why the newspaper overlooked parts of the resident's letter, namely those dealing with an inclusive mobility narrative, and why the following articles in the Christmas period exposed a depoliticized community narrative (Biehl et al. 2019).

Conclusion

Three conceptual points formed the basis of this chapter dealing with mobility, media, and gentrification. Gentrification was introduced within the context of the rapid transformation of public space and of the changing mobility model in Washington, DC. The paper developed the notion of microtransit-induced gentrification. The role of the leading newspaper in

the Washington, DC area was explored in the light of a very competitive local media market.

The empirical study was undertaken using a corpus of *The Washington Post* articles covering the evictions of homeless populations within a BID. Analysis of the arguments and narrative resources was conducted to capture the media strategy employed to reach three goals:

- keeping the audience throughout the affair,
- avoiding the delivery of repetitive information,
- escaping the stagnation in the face of a seemingly apparently insoluble institutional question. Orchestration, moderation, subjectivization, and narrativization (or creation of storylines) were the four main media strategies employed to reach these objectives, together with a constant pursuit of a strong connection with the feelings and values of readers.

The response to the research question is that, in this specific episode, *The Washington Post* can be clearly considered an indirect agent of gentrification. The newspaper evidently did not erase the social problem of rich enclaves in the city. On the contrary, it dedicated a long series of articles to the city's social emergency. Nor does the newspaper present itself as an adherent to the BID argument that the microtransit mobility of insiders should be prioritized at the expense of outsiders' needs. However, the newspaper sides with the interests of the coalition of real estate developers as columnists "depoliticize" the public debate and shift the attention toward the praising of local solidarity and the virtues of DC residents. By focusing on the community's perceptions, needs, and values, *The Washington Post* nurtured the BID's discourse of NoMa as a vibrant, unique, and attractive district, which sustained the growth machine and the broader processes underpinning change in NoMa.

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7. Part 2: Discussion

Japonica Brown-Saracino

Chapters by Ella Howard and Nacima Baron raise pertinent questions about how those of us who study media coverage of gentrification operationalize "gentrification," and, at the same time, about how the media represents and deploys "gentrification." Together, the two chapters gesture to possible pathways for our future research on this subject, and implicitly engage enduring debates in gentrification studies about what "gentrification" is and how it relates to a set of proximate urban processes and dynamics.

I will begin by engaging with Ella Howard's chapter on the repackaging of post-Katrina New Orleans in the HGTV television series, "Selling the Big Easy." The series presents post-Katrina New Orleans as a sterile (if charming) playground for the affluent. As presented by HGTV, New Orleans is constituted by houses, rather than people and the communities that residents compose. Indeed, nearly every street scene is devoid of people. The first episode of the series's initial season reveals a renovated home, complete with open concept kitchen and a pool, in an eerily quiet French Quarter. It also introduces an historic home in a Garden District that is oddly devoid of locals and the bands of tourists who, in reality, frequently wind their way through the neighbourhood.

Howard contends that the series "reveals many truths about American society". On the one hand, this is unarguably true. The show certainly lays bare the extreme inequities that characterize places like New Orleans and our broader society, as well as successful efforts to minimize and even forget climate disaster and the renewal efforts that follow disasters such as Katrina. Indeed, the series normalizes disaster and displacement, presenting their signature outcome—expensive, remodelled homes—in shiny packaging that the newcomers featured on the series revel in, and that the viewer can dream of.

At the same time, the series focuses so much on upscale New Orleans and on architecture that it misses certain other truths, not only about

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New Orleans, but even about gentrification itself. Consider that the show omits "ordinary" gentrifiers (read: gentrifiers who participate in earlier stages of the process), who might rely on their own labour to renovate a French Quarter fixer-upper, or decorate the halls of a Garden District home that has seen better days with their own artwork. For the purposes of the show, New Orleans contains only wealthy businesspeople shopping for a four or five-bedroom home, or doctors searching for an upscale home for their family. This masks the messy complexities of gentrification as they play out on the ground, such as the Black, queer artist I interviewed for a recent study who worried that their presence in the Lower 9th Ward would invite further speculation, despite their limited income (Brown-Saracino 2021). As an artist, a queer person, and a graduate of an elite college, they worried that they would serve as a symbol of what the neighbourhood might become. Indeed, they were concerned enough to relocate to an already-gentrified neighbourhood. That type of early-stage gentrifier is entirely absent from the New Orleans that the series presents. Thus, *Selling the Big Easy* erases not only longtime, working class residents, but even some less (economically) privileged gentrifiers, too. In so doing, the complexities of gentrification are lost in favour of what Howard rightly characterizes as high gloss gentrification.

Howard notes that gentrification is now used frequently in the media (see also Slater 2008). This is undeniably true, but at the same time part of what is fascinating about Howard's account of *Selling the Big Easy* is the absence of *talk* of gentrification in the series. This silence about gentrification is notable in episodes in which gentrification is the only reason people are searching for homes in specific neighbourhoods, or have such upscale, lavish homes to choose from in a specific area.

This suggests that while there is certainly a media discourse about gentrification, the discourse is characterized as much by absences or silences as by overt engagement with the concept. This is a reminder that we must consider not only the histories that are left unspoken in such media representations, such as about Hurricane Katrina, which the author attends to, but also more general silences and omissions pertaining to gentrification. In other words, what does the media communicate about gentrification by representing it without calling it by name, or by only presenting the final, most upscale version of gentrification? What understanding of gentrification does this present to viewers?

Howard's analysis raises an implicit set of questions about audience reception. Do viewers understand New Orleans as gentrified? If they do, what does gentrification mean to them? What do they expect it to look like?

Related to the question of how to define gentrification, Howard's chapter indicates that the geographic landscape that the series presents is somewhat broad, with some suburbs and even a town an hour outside of New Orleans (on the opposite shore of Lake Pontchartrain) depicted in an episode, and, in another episode, a home in Lakeview, a neighbourhood that has long been a predominately White and upper-middle class neighbourhood. Of course, this does not erase the fact that much of the rest of the series is about urban gentrification, but it does raise the question of how those of us who study media coverage of gentrification ought to approach representations that test the boundaries of what scholars typically conceive of as gentrification.

Should we analyse only media representations that fit scholarly definitions? Should we use media representations to change our (academic) definitions? I think that it is premature to try to answer these questions, particularly given that media coverage of gentrification is a newly growing object of academic study. However, as this line of scholarship develops such questions will be worthy of our time and attention. At the very least, when the media does overtly label something as "gentrification," should we trace the geographic and demographic attributes of the places labelled thusly? Put differently, it seems worth noting when the media extends the label "gentrification" to contexts outside of those which scholars typically study.

If, as Howard's title suggests, gentrification is entertainment, *which* gentrification are we to be entertained by, and why? What latitude might the media take with the concept, and of what consequence might that latitude be for public opinion, and even more concretely, for whether the viewer recognizes that a series like *Selling the Big Easy* is, in fact, selling gentrification?

A related set of themes and issues are apparent in Baron's, "Shaping and Diverting Public Space Regulation: Newspaper Coverage of an Eviction in a Business Improvement District, Washington, DC ." Baron profiles *Washington Post* coverage of eviction in a D.C. Business Improvement District (BID). Baron's analysis suggests that, in her terms, "the media…. derivates the search for the structural causes of the crisis towards a happy ending parable." While Howard does not frame their findings in precisely those terms, the theme is nonetheless constant across both chapters. In their own way, each reveals how, in very different venues and in distinct ways, the media looks away from structural explanations for gentrification, in favour of a gleaming, carefully packaged final outcome.

Baron's essay reveals the complex representations the *Washington Post* offers of the gentrification of a BID, focusing on reporting about unhoused individuals in that area. Different *Post* articles and journalists take different

positions, and gentrification is engaged directly. The articles, their authors, and those whose opinions the articles report, oscillate between expressing empathy for the unhoused, and expressing frustration about how their presence complicates efforts to revitalize the business district. Baron ultimately suggests that the *Washington Post* emphasizes the community building capacity of the impacted neighbourhood and tries to repair some of the fissures revealed in the conflict over the unhoused. In other words, relying on claims about the desirability of community, taken together, the articles advocate for moving past conflict about how to reconcile the needs of the unhoused with the goals of a BID.

Baron's attention to a BID mirrors scholarly attention to how BIDs can support or even accelerate gentrification (Hackworth & Reckers 2005; Ward 2007; Jackson 2010; Hubbard 2018). That is, BIDs can operate to bolster the appearance and functioning of commercial districts, thus supporting or attracting other infusions of capital (ibid). Yet, echoing the questions I raised above about whether viewers will recognize that *Selling the Big Easy* is about gentrification, it is notable that, as presented by Baron, the *Washington Post* articles rarely explicitly label the BID as an agent of gentrification. Moreover, the articles—as rendered by Baron—do not seem to present a story of longtime residents priced out of a neighbourhood, but, instead, of unhoused individuals being uprooted. Here, again, readers may be uncertain about the precise relationship between gentrification and the displacement of unhoused individuals from public space.

Baron's chapter reveals the value of examining media coverage of mechanisms that support gentrification and of gentrification-adjacent processes. After all, to truly know how the media covers "gentrification" we may have to consider representations that are not, ostensibly, of gentrification per se—or that, at least, may not use the term explicitly.

More than a decade ago, my own work on gentrification newspaper coverage was predicated on the presence of the term "gentrification" or related terms (e.g., "gentrifier") in newspaper reports (Brown-Saracino and Rumpf 2011). Baron's chapter productively calls us to consider what is gained and lost by limiting our analysis to media representations that explicitly identify their subject as "gentrification"?

On the other hand, Baron's chapter, together with Howard's, serves as a reminder that those of us who study media coverage of gentrification may need to wrestle with the parameters of what we consider to be gentrification media coverage. Indeed, we may even need to revisit some longstanding scholarly debates about how one ought to define gentrification (Rose 1984; Beauregard 1986; Brown-Saracino 2017). Do we need to have a clearly

set definition of gentrification to analyse media representations? Which media discourses might we advance or omit via our own definitions? Do our categories of analysis shape—for better or worse—what we consider to be "gentrification" media coverage? If so, does this risk the possibility that we will analyse coverage that media consumers might not recognize as gentrification coverage? Is that a strength or a weakness of our work?

Put in conversation with one another, Baron and Howard gesture to some of the possible futures of research on media representations of gentrification. As that coverage becomes increasingly prolific, it may also become somewhat less tangible, which will call scholars to make decisions about what *is* coverage of gentrification, and of how coverage of related issues constitutes part of the broader field of representations of gentrification.

I can imagine a future in which gentrification media studies covers a range of urban issues that bear on gentrification. Indeed, maybe attention to media representations of gentrification ought to usher in the broader study of media coverage of a whole host of urban processes and dynamics. Mapping how coverage and themes intersect will be fruitful and productive and will advance awareness in urban studies of how ideas about cities and cities themselves interact and reflect one another.

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Part 3

Fuelling and Orchestrating Gentrification

8. The Eviction of Ethnicity and Class in the Media Coverage of Commercial Gentrification in the 18th Arrondissement of Paris[1]

Pierre Joffre

Abstract: Through the analysis of press articles and observations conducted around *Barbès/Ornano* boulevard, this chapter questions the media analysis of three objects representative of gentrification processes. The creation of new retail spaces will be the point of entry of our analysis: we present the press coverage about two restaurants considered as gentrification emblems, La REcyclerie and Brasserie Barbès. After a general analysis of the media coverage regarding the publishing newspapers, the articles' title, and their tone, we will show that two places which can be seen as producing gentrification by the academia might not be considered the same way by journalists. While digging into the articles' content, the question of social relations of class and race will be at the core of the analysis.

Keywords: retail space, ethnicity, public space, Barbès / Goutte d'Or / Château Rouge (Paris)

Introduction

The 18th arrondissement of Paris—particularly the Barbès–Goutte d'Or–Château Rouge neighbourhood, located below the hill of Montmartre—often receives significant but mostly negative media coverage of drug

1 Translated from the French by Angela Krieger.

Sadoux, Stéphane, Marie-Pierre Vincent, David Fée, and Louise Dalingwater, eds. *Gentrification and the Media: Building and Propagating Discourses on Exclusive Urban Change*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2025.
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trafficking, prostitution, communalism, and praying in the street, to cite just a few of the recurring themes. This very area saw the opening of the Tati[2] department store in the 1950s (Lallement 2005), the revival of the Louxor arthouse cinema (Lallement 2014), and the establishment of the Institute for Islamic Culture and the contemporary music venue Centre FGO-Barbara. It has also been the subject of relatively recent academic studies analysing the area from various perspectives (Bacqué and Fijalkow 2006; Chabrol 2014; Clerval 2016; Lallement 2005; Palumbo 2014). It has often been described as "multi-ethnic," "multicultural," and a "commercial immigrant hub" allowing for the emergence of specific activities (Rives 2010). Historically known as an immigrant neighbourhood, the Goutte d'Or initially attracted people from the French provinces in the nineteenth century and, more recently, predominantly from North and sub-Saharan Africa. Over the past few years, however, the area has undergone considerable change and a symbolic re-evaluation as part of major public intervention efforts to combat unsanitary housing conditions (Chabrol et al. 2016; Barthélémy, Michelangeli, and Trannoy 2007). What receives less focus are the relatively new institutions established there, like restaurants, which are becoming increasingly noticeable, as evidenced by the following customer reactions:

"I wish I was still in Paris paying €9 for my small beer…throwing peanuts at the poor people in the Brasserie Barbès," reads a humorous Twitter post by Emmyrtille, a former Parisian and self-described "eco-friendly, ethical, zero-waste, well-meaning guilt inducer, bobo feminist with vegetarian tendencies," dated May 9, 2015. She was referring to a then-recently opened restaurant in the neighbourhood. A few months later, VéDS, who calls herself an "urban Tinkerbell working for participation [and] participatory democracy," praised "a sustainable, eco-friendly outreach project creating a social space" on Twitter (May 21, 2016). Another social media user described "a new cultural space for sharing and collaborating" (May 19, 2014). Both posts discussed another restaurant, La REcyclerie, located not far from the first. Although both restaurants opened a few hundred meters and a few months apart, they aroused opposite reactions, necessitating a deeper understanding of what is at stake.

This chapter examines a field study on the gentrification process conducted in this arrondissement and focuses on these two restaurants through their media coverage. While academic work about the 18th arrondissement has not focused on specific retail locations, with the notable exception of

2 Tati, a well-known discount department store, which closed down in 2021.

a study of wine merchants in the 11th and 18th arrondissements (Delamarre 2013), research on other districts in Paris (Corbillé 2013) and processes related to commercial gentrification (Zukin et al. 2009; Chabrol 2011) will inform this analysis.

The concept of gentrification has only recently been applied in France. Traditionally, the bourgeoisie and the working classes have often lived side by side in most of France's urban centres, even cohabiting in the same block of flats. The urban renewal process that Ruth Glass observed in 1960s London, for instance, began in Paris much later, partly because the bourgeoisie never left the city and its affluent western neighbourhoods (Préteceille 2007). Furthermore, it is important to recognize that every city and neighbourhood manifests its own specific configurations of the gentrification phenomenon (Chabrol et al. 2016), despite the presence of common capitalist evolution elements like the rent-gap theory (Smith 1987).

Studies examining the relationship between the media and gentrification remain relatively rare in France, unlike in the United States, where such research is more common (Brown-Saracino and Rumpf 2011; Lavy, Dascher, and Hagelman 2016; Rucks-Ahidiana 2018). Although gentrification is a widely discussed research theme in social sciences, few scientific studies have analysed how the media addresses this process. The limited research available on this theme often quantifies the use of the term "bobo"—which they identify as a symbol of gentrification—in the press (Collet and Rivière 2018). Collet and Rivière (2018) highlight the frequency of this term in the media (six references), particularly within electoral contexts. Tissot's (2018) analysis in the same volume shows the importance of the press in popularizing the concept introduced by Brooks in 2000.

Moreover, the media's significant influence in shaping public debate (Dunning, Murphy, and Williams 1986) and its role in people's perceptions of social phenomena are also known (Logan and Molotch 1987; Schudson cited by Rucks-Ahidiana 2018). Therefore, the scant academic interest in media coverage of gentrification is worth noting. To help fill this void, this chapter will focus on the press and commercial gentrification—the transformation of local businesses that are usually ethnic or affordable into "trendy cafés, restaurants, pop-ups, art galleries, etc." (Sakızlıoğlu and Lees 2020). By examining two bar-restaurants, typical of commercial gentrification (Zukin et al. 2009) and situated near each other on the Boulevard Barbès/Ornano, this study explores the role of press representations regarding commercial gentrification processes. The boulevard is known for its "working-class occupation of the street" (Clerval 2011), which includes peanut and corn vendors, cigarette sellers, and beggars, alongside heavy pedestrian traffic,

customers of the many ethnic stores, and a strong police presence. Many interviewees described the Boulevard Barbès/Ornano as a "border" between a socially valued space in the west and a less valued one in the east. As part of a more general study of the 18th arrondissement in Paris, I conducted ethnographic work in the area and engaged with some residents to understand their experience of otherness in this evolving multi-ethnic space.

This chapter will examine how the media has reported on these restaurant openings and the resulting social relationships. After presenting the methodology, it will set out a general analysis of the editorial stance in the featured articles. The focus will then shift to two aspects of the media coverage of the restaurant openings. The final section will reflect on the roles of these businesses in the broader gentrification process.

Method of Corpus Analysis

This chapter analyses fourteen articles (table 8.1). Instead of employing a quantitative approach as seen in some studies (Brown-Saracino and Rumpf 2011), the goal is to provide a localized analysis guided by fieldwork (Lavy, Dascher, and Hagelman 2016) and enriched by a four-year study of the arrondissement initiated in 2017.[3] This research continued through the supervision of several student groups in an ethnography course in 2020.

The articles, sourced from the Europresse database, comprise both print and online press publications. Eight of these articles focus on the Brasserie Barbès and six on La REcyclerie, restaurants that opened in 2015 and 2014, respectively. As these venues did not receive extensive long-term media coverage (most articles appeared when they opened), I examined all articles published during my initial 2017 study.

Journalists varied in their topic presentation, and my content analysis identified different themes covered in these articles. These themes were categorized according to the lexical fields of the terms used:

- neighbourhood
- insecurity, illegality
- social relationships, gentrification
- ethnicity, multiculturalism, race
- specificity of the project
- values, representations

3 Mostly conducted through in-depth interviews with inhabitants and observations.

In the initial phase of textual analysis, it was necessary to filter out articles, pronouns, and other commonly occurring words that did not align with the selected themes.[4] Once this task was completed, the remaining words in the articles were categorized based on their frequency of use.[5]

Contrasting Media Coverage

My first observation of the articles analysed is the disparity in length. Articles on the Brasserie Barbès are longer, averaging 945 words compared with 650 for those about La REcyclerie. The Brasserie Barbès articles generally offer more in-depth analyses. While the brasserie's opening generated heavy media coverage in 2015, this interest waned over time. Conversely, La REcyclerie received less coverage in 2014 but was featured in several articles in subsequent years. The articles published when the brasserie opened, which were mostly brief and neutral or even positive, lacked detailed investigation and focus on newsworthiness, while those published in the following weeks were far more substantive and provided a more critical take on the restaurant by using a more investigative approach. The tone of the article is often reflected in the title.

Across all of the newspapers, the articles about La REcyclerie are generally neutral or positive in tone, receiving attention from diverse publications. *Bio à la Une* described it as an "urban farm" (Labracherie 2017), while *Le Figaro* highlighted its "on-track concept" (De Santis 2014). *L'Humanité* praised the establishment as one that "cultivates the fertile path of conviviality" (Barbezat 2016) by allowing Parisian "peasants" (Schaub 2016) to "garden and sunbathe" (Oihana 2014). *Bio à la Une* is an online platform that "provides daily news to those who want to adopt a healthier lifestyle," specifically covering the areas of health and the environment. *Le Figaro*, a paid national daily, is traditionally seen as liberal-right wing, whereas *Libération* and *L'Humanité*, both paid national dailies, are considered left-wing. *Libération*, co-founded by Jean-Paul Sartre, has ties to left-wing intellectuals, while *L'Humanité* has long been associated with the Communist Party. The free daily *20 minutes*, as described by its president,

4 Given the qualitative approach and based on the different types of materials, the limited number of articles covered only required the use of an online tool (Lexicool: text analyzer and word counter) and a spreadsheet.

5 Detailed tables are available upon request.

aims to provide unbiased "hard news" without political leanings.[6] Despite their varied political stances, all of these news outlets provided relatively similar coverage of La REcyclerie's opening, praising an innovative project while not addressing the potential urban impact of such a place in these neighbourhoods.

By contrast, the Brasserie Barbès elicited more divided opinions. *Libération*, for example, mentioned the "stigma of gentrification." (*Libération* 2015), and *Les Inrockuptibles*, a left-leaning paid monthly focused on culture, referred to it as a "weapon of mass gentrification" in a strongly worded article (Camu 2015). However, *Marie France*, a politically-neutral paid women's monthly, featured the brasserie among its "Recommended Places" for going out (Bézard 2015), and *Télérama*, a left-wing paid weekly on culture, painted a flattering picture, dismissing any fears of gentrification. The magazine recounted a journalist's anticipation of a "new hipster gentrifying submarine" but noted a pleasantly diverse clientele (*Télérama* 2015). In a particularly in-depth and balanced article, Slate.fr, a website labelled as left-wing, the French counterpart of the American slate.com, created in part by the former director of *Le Monde*[7], raised the issue of the "trial" of this phenomenon (Cassely 2015), suggesting that the establishment was facing scrutiny due to other similar places.

Political affiliations undoubtedly play a role in media coverage of certain topics. However, the specific section in which these articles were published also influenced their tone. The articles in the "Going Out" and "Art of Living" sections typically portrayed these new places favourably, whereas the "Society" section tended to feature much more sceptical and even critical articles. While the positive press coverage of La REcyclerie extends from 2014 to 2017, it is worth noting criticisms of Brasserie Barbès were only published around its grand opening. Journalists seem to have forgotten about this "weapon of mass gentrification" (Camu 2015). Although the two restaurants offer different experiences, an analysis of these press articles reveals how journalists partially overlook the subtlety of the gentrification process. The following section aims to demonstrate how the media contributes to the (in)visibility of gentrification, either by highlighting or ignoring it as a subject of public debate.

6 Jean-Pierre Bozo, President of 20 Minutes France was questioned by the French Senate at a hearing in 2007: https://www.senat.fr/rap/r07-013/r07-0133.html

7 *Le Monde* is the most widely read French daily, considered to be the benchmark for the general press.

Table 8.1 Corpus of Articles Used in the Research

Title	Newspaper	Date of Publication	Section of Publication	Tone of the Article	Words
La REcyclerie					
La Recyclerie, un concept sur les rails	*Le Figaro*	06/03/2014	Art of Living – Going Out in Paris	Neutral / (positive)	393
Paris: Réparer, jardiner et bronzer à la Recyclerie	*20 minutes*	06/13/2014	Urbanism	Neutral / (positive)	555
Recyclerie. Les paysans de Paris	*Libération*	09/23/2016	Europe	Positive	1,028
La Recyclerie cultive la voie fertile de la convivialité à Paris	*L'Humanité*	11/08/2016	Social-Ecology Social and Solidarity Economy	Positive	943
Ferme urbaine: La Recyclerie en circuit fermé	*Le Figaro*	03/31/2017	Art of Living – Going Out in Paris	Neutral	407
La Recyclerie: Une ferme urbaine en plein cœur de Paris	*Bio à la Une*	04/19/2017	Environment-Agriculture	Neutral / (positive)	576
Brasserie Barbès					
La Brasserie Barbès appartient à tout le monde et à personne	*20 minutes*	04/28/2015	Society	Neutral	617
Paris: La "no go zone" de Barbès va accueillir une brasserie branchée	*Le Point* (AFP)	04/29/2015	Society	Neutral	735
Plein soleil à la Brasserie Barbès	*Marie France*	05/08/2015	Cuisine –Recommended Places	Positive	237
Brasserie Barbès, arme de gentrification massive?	*Les Inrockuptibles*	05/21/2015	Current Events	Negative	1,715
Brasserie Barbès: Véritable repaire de bobos ou restaurant populaire?	*Télérama*	05/23/2015	Going Out – Restaurants & Gastronomy	Positive	660
Paris: Barbès se laisse pousser la moustache	*Libération*	11/13/2015	Lifestyle	Negative	1,057
Comment la Brasserie Barbès a ouvert le procès de la gentrification parisienne	Slate.fr	06/01/2015	France	Neutral	2,276
Sephora ou brasserie Barbès, quels stigmates pour la gentrification parisienne?	*Libération*	06/03/2015	Society	Negative	261

Gentrification at Work in Businesses: Two Registers of Media Analysis

Restaurants and businesses are major indicators of the atmosphere in a specific neighbourhood or public space (Simon 1997). Their transformation or renewal can provide insights into urban gentrification (Van Criekingen and Fleury 2006; Zukin et al. 2009). Government authorities, often supportive of these changes, recognize this influence, and the City of Paris is no exception. SEMAEST, a semi-public company,[8] and the municipality's strong arm when handling commercial issues, has implemented policies to "quash" commercial specialization in certain streets. This approach frequently targets working-class and/or immigrant neighbourhoods, where ethnic commercial specialization is disfavoured by gentrifiers. City Hall often encourages and even actively supports "new" businesses in areas with foreign populations, participating in certain strategic projects. Various articles have discussed the City of Paris's active role in fostering such projects.

La REcyclerie: Positive Media Coverage Focused on the Project

The redevelopment of the former Ornano railway station into La REcyclerie involved the City of Paris hiring project leaders with previous experience in this type of redevelopment, in a partnership encouraging gentrification (Correia 2018). The establishment positioned itself as a "third space," emphasizing local production, recycling, and ecology. Outside, typical street scenes of multi-ethnic neighbourhoods unfold (Simon 1997), with neighbouring streets and a metro exit predominantly frequented by men of North African or sub-Saharan African descent. Among them, a fruit and vegetable seller works alongside vendors of counterfeit wallets and belts, and fast-food chains like McDonalds and KFC, as well as local fast-food shops, are prominent.

The restaurant interior features eclectic decor centred around recycled and repurposed objects of all kinds, creating an "authentic" atmosphere appreciated by gentrifiers (Corbillé 2013; Zukin 2008). The entrance area is spacious, with few tables near the street and most located beyond the

8 Dalloz provides the following definition: "a semi-public company is a legal entity under private law, constituted as a public limited company under commercial law with the particularity of having capital owned by both public and private shareholders." https://www.dalloz.fr/documentation/Document?id=DZ%2FOASIS%2F000937

centrally placed bar. The space does not open directly onto the street, and there is no outdoor seating since the station platforms are accessible from the rear of the building. The dining area is somewhat insulated from outside activity and noise. Service takes place at the bar, and signs warn of potential pickpockets. The menu is unique, with prices moderately higher than the neighbourhood average. Staff wear their own clothes, complemented by a green apron with a logo. The clientele is predominantly young and white, with a variety of unconventional dress styles. A report by local radio station *France Bleu*, which was not included in the corpus, described La REcyclerie's customers as "students from the neighbouring Paris Sorbonne university campus, bargain hunters from the nearby *Puces de Saint-Ouen* (flea market), and locals from the neighbourhood and elsewhere meet, talk, exchange, and share" (*France Bleu* 2018), further exemplifying the diversity attributed to the establishment.

I would now like to focus on the media coverage of the restaurant. Several academic studies mentioning La REcyclerie (Leglize 2016) are worth briefly mentioning, specifically one that looks at the urban agricultural project (Delgado 2018) and others that discuss the redevelopment of what was formerly an urban wasteland (Desgoutte 2019; Watine 2020). Newspaper articles predominantly highlight the project's background, emphasizing the historical significance of the former railway station, the urban farm, the cafeteria, and the repair workshop for members of the association located there. While articles in *Libération*, *L'Humanité*, and *20 minutes* touch on the restaurant's appeal to "bobos," they quickly shift to its role as a place of exchange and interaction. The term "bobo" carries negative connotations in France and is often criticized in academic studies (Tissot 2018).

My textual analysis corroborates these findings, showing that most (64 per cent) of the terms used by journalists refer to the project's specifics, such as recycling and sorting, animals, agriculture, plants, compost, DIY workshops, and so on. Following this, with much less frequency, neighbourhood aspects are mentioned (16 per cent), along with values and representations associated with the project (15.7 per cent). Discussions about the neighbourhood primarily refer to the working-class 18th arrondissement or "northeast" Paris, which occasionally touches on themes of ethnicity and race, as well as multiculturalism (1.5 per cent), but mainly focuses on the urban renewal the project brings to this type of neighbourhood. All articles analysed mention the redevelopment of the former Ornano railway station, which I have classified as a reference to the neighbourhood rather than the project. This redevelopment is often portrayed from an architectural and heritage standpoint, rather than in connection with the urban farm project. In the

articles, descriptions of the building's previous uses (as a railway station, restaurant, and even a bank) are common, and two articles by the same author refer to it as a "vestige of urban Parisian heritage" (De Santis 2014). Values and representations are discussed in terms of ecology, exchange, conviviality, solidarity, sharing, learning, ethics, and diversity. Social relationships and gentrification, while not explicitly mentioned (2.8 per cent of the words used), are indirectly present through the "bobo" narrative. Issues like disorderly conduct, cleanliness, lack of safety, and illegality are entirely absent from the pieces studied for this research.

Thus, the articles provide general descriptions of the project. By focusing on the establishment's creators and employees, they marvel at a space that brings nature right into the city. The projects created by this "third space" are the centre of attention. *Le Figaro* describes the place as "ultrabobo" twice (De Santis 2014; 2017), a term frequently echoed in my interviews. However, it notes that this concern vanishes as soon as one enters the establishment, particularly thanks to the collaborative activities on offer. Nevertheless, observations and interviews indicate that, despite the project's intention to remain open to the community and its goal of diversity, the establishment perpetuates internal social hierarchies, mostly targets non-local customers (and even tourists through social media), and contributes to gentrification (Bergeron and Jolivet 2020). The neighbourhood is particularly multicultural, with immigrants comprising 27 per cent of the population, rising to 30 per cent in the area east of the Boulevard Barbès/Ornano—compared with 23.4 per cent for the arrondissement and 20.4 per cent for Paris.[9] However, the majority of the clientele is white, despite the neighbourhood's substantial North African and sub-Saharan African immigrant population (Pinçon and Pinçon-Charlot 2008). The values and representations conveyed by this place, which appear prominently in the articles, match what is promoted by this venue and align closely with what gentrifiers seek, emphasizing social and cultural diversity (Tissot 2015). Nonetheless, media coverage mostly focuses on La REcyclerie's direct stakeholders, adopting a promotional tone and overlooking deeper issues of social relationships or the perspectives of customers. Conversely, media coverage of the other restaurant largely focuses on social relationships and the impact of its opening on the still relatively working-class neighbourhood.[10]

9 The figures are from a census conducted by the INSEE for the year 2013.

10 The following figures illustrate this: employees and manual workers represent 21.2 per cent of the neighbourhood's inhabitants (23.7 per cent for the eastern part of the boulevard) compared to 19.1 per cent of the arrondissement and 15.1 per cent of Paris in 2013 (source INSEE, census).

The Brasserie Barbès: Social Relationships in Media Coverage of a "Trendy" Restaurant

The Brasserie Barbès was selected by the City of Paris over a KFC proposal, signifying a desire to "upgrade" the neighbourhood (Cassely 2015). It replaced a former discount clothing and fabric store, one of the neighbourhood's main specialities, which had burned down in 2011. The site was previously home to a brasserie in the 1950s, a story that the new brasserie's creators have leveraged to promote a "return to its roots." The brasserie is located at the crossroads of the Barbès and de la Chapelle boulevards. It faces the now-closed discount store Tati and is near the Barbès-Rochechouart metro station, surrounded by fast-food outlets and phone stores. The brasserie features an enclosed patio with one-and-a-half-meter-high glass panels, clearly separating it from the street. Thick velvet drapes cover each door and are kept closed in the winter, which highlights the contrast when one enters. Inside, the atmosphere is calm, sharply contrasting with the bustling street outside. The menu, available on the brasserie's website, offers slightly updated traditional dishes. While not fully aligned with the neighbourhood's pricing, where it is still possible to have an espresso at the counter for less than €1, the prices are reasonable for this type of restaurant.[11] Here, the servers and bartenders are in uniform. This is not the laid-back atmosphere of La REcyclerie, with its part-time staff of students. These are professional restaurant workers. There is also a clear divide between those "outside" and those "inside" the brasserie, although the latter are a diverse group. The patrons' style of clothing is classic yet distinguished, with most men in suits. The flow of people passing by the brasserie is extremely busy, most likely following the rhythm of the nearby metro station and the only partially-obeyed traffic lights. The cacophony of cars, sirens, and honking horns is a constant for passers-by. Street vendors line the sidewalks, selling anything from drinks and popcorn to chestnuts, corn, and even packs of cigarettes from their shopping carts. Interactions between these vendors and passers-by suggest that their presence serves a social purpose, with the negotiation of prices acting as a catalyst for starting a conversation in an atmosphere of relative familiarity or *coveillance*, "looking out for each other" (Simon 1997). This concept implies a form of light social monitoring within the context of acquaintanceship, which keeps the public space pacified and makes it possible to quickly resolve any potential conflicts. While the

11 Despite changes to the menu, the prices themselves have not changed much since it opened.

space is mostly frequented by men, women are also present but tend not to stay very long.

Media coverage of the brasserie was very different from that of the other establishments, echoing academic studies on the gentrification of the La Chapelle neighbourhood (Goreau-Ponceaud 2018). The titles of articles frequently reference gentrification, often accompanied by relatively harsh criticism. My textual analysis shows that social class relationships are a prevalent theme in the brasserie's coverage (26.4 per cent), focusing primarily on the local characteristics of this multicultural neighbourhood (40.8 per cent of the words used). Discussions about the neighbourhood often concern its history and notable landmarks like the internationally recognized Tati (Lallement 2005), as well as the area's working-class atmosphere. Media coverage of the Brasserie Barbès often refers to gentrification and social class relationships, not only through direct references to gentrification but also through related topics, such as symbolic social groups (e.g., the bourgeois, bobos, and intellectual professionals versus the poor, the precariously employed, and manual workers), as well as issues like segregation and price hikes. Ethnicity and race are also mentioned (3.7 per cent of the words used), with terms like diversity, African, North African, Muslim, and immigration. However, the connection to gentrification is firstly an observation involving the social relationship of class, which echoes other studies (Fallon 2021). The brasserie's particularities are also mentioned (16.4 per cent of the words used), focusing primarily on its offering, decor, and menu. The representations and values associated with the brasseries (8 per cent of the words used) highlight its novelty, chicness, and trendiness—or perceived pretentiousness. This portrayal is influenced by the sections in which the articles appear, as those printed in the "Going Out" and "Society" sections do not provide the same type of analysis, with descriptive words varying based on whether the brasserie is praised or criticized. The targeted clientele is often depicted through "symbolic figures," such as hipsters with facial hair and wearing plaid shirts and Stan Smith sneakers.

The issue of social relationships is covered in most of the articles. In his Slate.fr article, Jean-Laurent Cassely offers an analysis replete with academic references to gentrification, including Clerval, Atkinson, and Zukin. The division between some journalists who present the opening positively and others who criticize it echoes the paradoxes identified by social science researchers studying gentrification phenomena. These include creators of such places, beneficiaries of openings, those anticipating change, and those who fear exclusion from the neighbourhood. The diverging views of the various people involved in this—be they residents, business owners,

or customers—are apparent. When French journalists recognize the gentrification phenomena, they approach the topic much like their American counterparts (Rucks-Ahidiana 2018). However, discussions on the social relationships of race, a topic much less explored in France (Blum and Guérin-Pace cited by Fallon 2021), are absent. Specifically, French academic studies have not extensively examined social relations of race within the context of gentrification. While this chapter touches on a few ways of thinking about race relations, the analysis is too brief to expand beyond what existing academic studies have explored. This is partly because race is conceived as a stable trait in this chapter, with racialization determined by the researcher, journalist, or public statistics, rather than a fluid trait (Fallon 2021), which would consider how individuals self-identify racially. The articles refer to the Goutte d'Or as a "land of immigration" with the presence of North African and later sub-Saharan African populations, and its link to the local business network (Chabrol 2014). Slate.fr mentions the "disconnect between the affluent white clientele inside and the local immigrants excluded from the festivities, if not by the bouncer then by the prices or at least the overriding atmosphere." *Les Inrockuptibles* highlights a similar division: "inside are the predominantly white professionals. Outside is the diverse crowd of one of the poorest neighbourhoods in Paris" (Camu 2015). Apart from a few quick observations, social relationships of race do not figure much here but do form an important link to the social relationships of class. These two excerpts are also notable because they racialize white people, who are less used to thinking of themselves in racial terms (Jounin 2014).

The identity of Barbès, a quintessential working-class and immigrant neighbourhood, seems to be threatened by this new restaurant, highlighting what journalists see as widespread phenomena occurring throughout the city and effecting lasting change. Elements related to insecurity and illegality (4.6 per cent of the words used) underscore local specificity, like cigarette trafficking, illegal curb side selling, drugs, police presence, etc. These factors contribute to Barbès's reputation and starkly contrast with the practices of the brasserie's targeted clientele.

Cassely (2015) notes that the "classic scenario of a progressive, step-by-step gentrification is not being respected," criticizing the speed of the process rather than the appropriation of the neighbourhood. This concept of stages in gentrification, a standard in gentrification studies, may reference academic works like Bidou-Zachariasen and Poltorak (2008). The sudden arrival of this establishment was too conspicuous in a neighbourhood already undergoing substantial social changes since the 1990s, despite local authorities' efforts to preserve public housing (Bacqué and Fijalkow 2006).

Two Registers of Analysis for Two Stages in the Gentrification Process?

Both projects are based on different concepts and likely attract clientele from diverse social segments. While La REcyclerie probably draws what Bourdieu calls the "new petite bourgeoisie" (Bourdieu 1979), identified by their high, left-leaning position in the social space largely due to considerable cultural capital, the Brasserie Barbès likely appeals more to executives and those in liberal professions, positioned high but right-leaning in the social space, mostly because of considerable economic capital. This customer base, however, is often labelled as "bobos," a categorization that research has questioned (Authier et al. 2018) but one that is so routinely referenced in everyday discourse and by the media that it seems a more precise definition is needed than the one provided by David Brooks (2004).[12] Corbillé offers the following definition:

> A social group holding a relatively high position in the social hierarchy, endowed with a certain amount of economic capital that may fluctuate, as well as substantial cultural and social capital linked to family background, education, and professional practices (Corbillé 2013, 96).[13]

These individuals usually value cultural capital over economic capital. Besides having contrasting values, this is a primary way in which they differ from the traditional bourgeoisie. Since different types of capital lead to different tastes and ways of socializing (Bourdieu 1979), what each place offers can target people in distant positions in the social space. Here, this involves individuals positioned higher up but whose economic or cultural capital will vary and generate distinct strategies. The menus reflect these strategies, with varying dishes and equally different prices. Nonetheless, while the dishes offer prices that differ significantly, the prices of drinks tend to be more uniform.

Observations and interviews reveal differences in the clientele (Brizard and Triol 2020; Bergeron and Jolivet 2020), with interviewees sharing different perceptions of these venues. One of the interviewees offered to meet me there, going on to explain that he was joking. When I returned to the subject of the interview, he gave the following explanation:

12 The term, invented and popularized by an American author in 2000, has become less common in English-speaking countries but remains widely used in France.

13 Author's translation of the original French text.

> They, like, put in a large window to protect people. …You come, set up shop, ask prices that are…four or five times the price in the neighbourhood while openly not being intended for the locals. And then you add…a large window to show… like, the threshold not to cross. Knowing that that gives off a kind…a kind…a feeling of…of what, of a zoo…There's also another place that opened there…I don't think the intention is the same, and then over there, the coffee is €1 or 75 cents. So if you like, there's voluntarily the thought to say "OK, we're bobos, but look, it's op-…it's accessible and all." [And regarding La REcyclerie.] Yeah, it's a little like the Myrha, the approach isn't the same, it's a little…OK, it's not exactly aimed at…at the people who are normally in the neighbourhood. It could even be aimed at a new type of population…But I mean, at least it's accessible. There aren't prohibitive prices, there's…what's prohibitive is maybe…the state of mind, the culture that goes with it…

The interviewee, Anwar, a 28-year-old resident since 2015 who bought an apartment thanks to financial help from his parents, works as a social sciences researcher. This means he is particularly aware of what is at stake in this area. He points out both the contradictions he has noticed in these new venues and the major difference between the brasserie and other places. Despite his observations not aligning with mine regarding the prices of drinks, the spatial layouts undeniably create symbolic boundaries. Other interviewees also mentioned the brasserie, indicating its impact on local life and prompting spontaneous comparisons among these establishments.

The discourse surrounding these establishments highlights the gentrifiers' contradictions, including the imperative to foster diversity, intentions to transform the neighbourhood, and discomfort over displacing original residents (i.e., causing them "to flee"). Regardless of whether one is a customer, these places rarely go unnoticed by residents of the neighbourhood. My interviews align with press coverage; a journalist for *Les Inrockuptibles* described the Brasserie Barbès as follows: "with its protective glass panel, the place feels like a giant aquarium for people from a good background who have come to observe the indigenous and exciting flora." (Camu 2015). In addition to Anwar, Matthieu also mentioned the glass panel:

> I find that…this difference between these two worlds has materialized even more…you have these large…you have these large things in glass to delineate the outdoor seating and…but that go really high, so what I

> mean is that for… I don't know why they did that, but you really have… the…the big bobos who are behind it, so you feel like you're in a zoo with the big bobos behind their thing, and opposite are the…the guys selling… Marlboros on the street.
> *Matthieu, Jobseeker* (*Business School Graduate*)*, 28 years old, Homeowner, arrived in 2015.*

The term "zoo" was used in the articles and by these interviewees, who may have borrowed it from the articles they read. At La REcyclerie, *Libération* highlighted its €1 coffee, more affordable for people with an unsteady income, and Anwar compared it with another restaurant that had opened nearby with a similar concept.

Regardless of the angle of gradual gentrification, the articles I analysed mainly focused on commercial gentrification, while a study of real estate prices and population statistics indicates changes in the populations living there over several years. *Libération* mentioned a rise in real estate prices from €5,160 to €6,200 between 2010 and 2015 (*Libération* 2015) or a 20 per cent increase in five years. The journalists from *Les Inrockuptibles* and *20 minutes* noted substantial changes in the Goutte d'Or throughout the 2000s, including redeveloped buildings, new social housing, and the arrival of more affluent populations (Camu 2015; Oihana 2014).

Even though both projects are different, as shown in their media coverage, the negative aspects openly criticized in the case of the Brasserie and briefly mentioned in that of La REcyclerie do indicate that the gentrification process is ongoing.

Conclusion

The approach I have taken here complements those of researchers who have studied media coverage of gentrification (Brown-Saracino and Rumpf 2011). Rather than focusing solely on what journalists report as gentrification, I conducted a field study to identify what appears to stem from the phenomena of gentrification—in the academic sense, meaning the replacement of affordable shops with high-end businesses (Sakızlıoğlu and Lees 2020)—and examined how the media covers this by using a qualitative approach. The results are clear. There is a discrepancy between what the media and researchers define as gentrification. In my view, it is possible to speak of gentrification when there is a significant shift in the social relationships

of a space that benefits a new dominant group to the detriment of a group that is less well-situated in the social space.

These two examples of commercial gentrification offer very different projects, which is partly reflected in their media coverage. My analysis of press articles shows a strong contrast in the media stories. Depending on the publication, the section where the articles appeared, and especially the tone of each article, there is a variation in how the different projects, the conveyed representations and values, and the social relationships of race and class are portrayed. La REcyclerie has been mostly viewed through the lens of its alternative project, transforming an urban wasteland (i.e., the former Ornano railway station) into a space focusing on ecology, recycling, and urban agriculture and offering an oasis to nature-deprived Parisians. Any fears of a potential social division such a place might create are barely mentioned. Conversely, the Brasserie Barbès has been presented as the flagship of gentrification in the 18th arrondissement, with opinions ranging from denunciation of the phenomenon to praise for a project aiming to normalize the notorious Barbès neighbourhood.

However, in the articles directly mentioning gentrification, the focus is often on the visible side of this phenomenon, as exemplified by these businesses. This happens especially when a business appears to skip over certain stages in the gentrification process. While commercial gentrification is unquestionably one aspect of urban change, it masks other types of less visible but equally profound changes, some of which are occasionally mentioned in the articles.

When journalists observe this phenomenon, their analysis often aligns with existing studies, offering contrasting views of the potential benefits and risks of gentrification (Brown-Saracino and Rumpf 2011). While race is superficially addressed through the depiction of a multicultural neighbourhood, the deeper social relationships of race and class are rarely tackled directly, despite being evident to an attentive observer. The major implication in studies dedicated to gentrification (Rucks-Ahidiana 2018; Hwang and Sampson 2014) and their absence in the press articles reveal the place of social relationships of race in the French context (Clerval 2014; Palomares 2013).

Thus, while the media does not make gentrification and its consequences visible in equal measure in its coverage of the two restaurants and without categorically denouncing both commercial spaces as exclusionary, it raises the question of whether both places have similar effects despite their differing concepts.

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About the Author

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9. Constructing the Authenticity of Gentrified Districts? Newspaper Coverage of Belleville (Paris) and El Raval (Barcelona)

Marina Montaner

Abstract: Belleville (Paris) and El Raval (Barcelona) were both working class, stigmatized districts, that have been used several times as case studies for gentrification research. The following chapter presents the results of a piece of research that focused on identifying the representations local actors reproduce of both districts in urban development plans and written press. We will here focus on the presentation of the results of the Critical Discourse Analysis of sixty-eight articles, that identified the representations of both districts in written press. The qualitative analysis that resulted allows us to identify three major common representations (trendy, conflictual, or supportive district) but also some contextual differences that can lead to other ones.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, qualitative analysis, user experience

Introduction

Time Out is a lifestyle magazine that publishes guides which inform readers about the most interesting shops, restaurants, and leisure establishments in cities across the world. The guide describes the areas of Belleville in Paris and El Raval in Barcelona as having undergone significant and value-adding urban and social transformations. Belleville is depicted as a district with a working-class past and a cosmopolitan present, defined by its "bobo" lifestyle

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(*Time Out Paris* 2016). Similarly, El Raval, once overlooked by visitors, has experienced a renaissance that has been enhanced by the construction of new cultural venues and a luxury hotel (*Time Out Barcelona* 2015). These districts of Paris and Barcelona are considered trendy on account of their cultural and commercial dynamism. They offer new perspectives on studies of cities and gentrification: they simultaneously embody working-class and cosmopolitan lifestyles and are characterized by ethnic and socio-cultural diversity.

For a long time, Belleville and El Raval were stigmatized as working-class suburbs. Part of their population was neglected during the modernization of Paris and Barcelona between the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century (Fernández González 2014; Simon 1993; Ter Minassian 2009). Bourgeois residents feared that the inhabitants of these areas might engage in violent revolt. In Paris, the participation of Belleville in the Commune insurrection between 1870 and 1871 reinforced this belief and fostered a narrative of the area as a "bastion of socialism" (Simon 1993, 8). At the beginning of the twentieth century, El Raval became the nerve centre of the Catalan anarchist movement. This contributed to a climate of violence and to the proliferation of rhetoric demonizing the area and its residents (Fernández González 2014). Housing a large immigrant community contributed to reshaping the commercial nature of El Raval (Ter Minassian 2009, 117). Similarly, Belleville became a point of contact between Paris and the home countries of the immigrant population. This led to the flourishing of certain businesses, such as telecommunication stores and so-called "ethnic" shops. This reinforces "the particular ambience of these working-class districts whose attendance is very cosmopolitan" (Clerval et al. 2011, 4).

For almost two decades now, both districts have been used as case studies to explain gentrification processes in Paris (Clerval 2011; Stott 2015; Vivant and Charmes 2008) and Barcelona (Sánchez-Aguilera and González-Pérez 2021; Ter Minassian 2009). Gentrification has been described as a "diverse phenomenon" which can hardly be reduced to a "linear, sequential and progressive" timeline (Chabrol et al. 2016, 44). Although it comes in different forms, some common features are observable. According to Chabrol et al. (2016), gentrification involves the transformation of the commercial and urban structures of a district. This transformation creates competition between actors with high resources appropriating spaces and those with fewer resources struggling to maintain their hold on spaces. This struggle over space not only has material consequences but also symbolic dimensions. Thus, according to Hiernaux-Nicolas and Imelda (2014), the analysis of the

rhetoric of power and how it is exercised in space reveals the symbolic mechanisms of control and appropriation of space. Rhetorical dissection allows focus on several elements that may express power from a social perspective, such as the study of the design of spaces, their appropriation by different actors, or the modification of their names. Representations of the spaces which are portrayed by the media entail direct consequences for the material evolution of such locations (Zukin 2017, 17–22). Analysing media depictions of gentrified districts indicates the way local actors perceive these spaces, how they confront each other, and how they perceive the transformation of areas. This chapter presents the results of a study identifying the depictions by local actors of Belleville and El Raval in urban development plans, newspapers, and lifestyle magazines. Firstly, the chapter discusses the state of academic literature in the study of media representations and gentrification. Secondly, it takes a closer look at the methodology used in this study. Finally, it presents the main results of our fieldwork.

Studying Gentrified Districts in the Media: Filling a Void in Gentrification Literature

Rather than using words such as "perception" or "image," we choose "representation" because this notion has been widely used in urban studies, most notably by Marcel Roncayolo. According to Roncayolo (1990), a city manifests as a space of representations. The "representation" approach rests on three main pillars: firstly, the system of ideas held by those who draw and give structure to the city; secondly, a more generic system that encompasses both a definite space and a broad interpretation of the world; and lastly, the representations of urban space that emanate from its inhabitants and users.

Academic literature in the 1980s and 1990s frequently discounted the value of media representations of gentrification because they were considered superficial or uncritically positive vis-à-vis this complex phenomenon (Beauregard [1986] 2010; Smith [1996] 2005). Towards the end of the 1980s, a wide body of scientific literature focused on the study of American cities. At the time, Robert Beauregard claimed that the "thinnest and outermost layer of our comprehension of the gentrification process is that of journalistic and public-relations hyperbole fostered by its 'boosters'" (Beauregard [1986] 2010, 11). These so-called "boosters" have an interest in increasing economic activity within a city and an affinity with the middle class. Their descriptions consequently tend to misrepresent the gentrification process and often betray an ideology that favours it. This "hegemonic boosterism" erroneously

presents gentrification as beneficial for cities (Beauregard [1986] 2010, 12). In his analysis of an editorial published by the *New York Times*, Marxist geographer Neil Smith condemns the complicity of the New York media in reproducing positive representations of gentrification (Smith [1996] 2005, 28–45). According to Smith, journalists suggest that gentrified urban spaces are wild territories that require conquering and civilization while insisting on the virtues of the urban pioneers and the opulence of the new artistic scene.

Some of the observations made by Sharon Zukin with regards to the impact of discourse on disinvestment and reinvestment in urban spaces identify the role that media can play in urban change (Zukin 2017, 17–22). According to Zukin, the shift from managerialism to entrepreneurship in urban governance which had been identified by David Harvey (1989) requires a discursive investment in urban spaces. Beyond the economics of gentrification, the creation and destruction of the value of urban spaces are linked to discourse. The discourse of reinvestment appears in different forms (informal conversations, official reports, press articles…). These discourses are always subjective and may have an impact on urban spaces. Firstly, targeting areas with a potential for development can lead to increased investments. Furthermore, the creation of a "buzz" that mobilizes public attention to new cultural attractions can support the arrival of tourists and promoters. Thirdly, the staging of future new districts through lifestyle magazines creates a considerable rise in real estate prices. In all these cases, discourse contributes to producing a rhetoric of the "cool" and "authentic" nature of gentrified urban spaces. However, as this rhetoric has repercussions on the evolution of such spaces, it contributes to their standardization (Zukin 2017, 17–22).

In Paris and Barcelona, some authors have talked about the complicity between media and gentrifiers. For instance, in Paris, Anne Clerval criticized the fact that the media supported the transformation of working-class districts into spaces which respond to the habits of the intellectual bourgeoisie. These claims are however not backed by examples (Clerval 2008). Nevertheless, some more recent studies about the city are based on qualitative analysis of press coverage. In his analysis of the content of fifteen articles on two venues located in the 18th arrondissement (La REcyclerie and the Brasserie Barbès), Pierre Joffre observes that there is a "strong contrast in the media stories" (see Joffre in this volume). He suggests that these two projects and their values were more or less critical depending on the publication and the sections in which the articles would appear. Similarly, the social relations between ethnicity and classes tended to be negatively represented in the texts.

In the case of Barcelona, several authors have pointed to the fact that some representations of the central districts that appeared in the media were similar to those used by certain social, political, or economic agents. Anthropologist Miquel Fernández González (2014) explains that during the first half of the twentieth century, the condemnation of criminality and prostitution in El Raval, along with its poverty, misery, and insalubrious character, created a consensus between liberal hygienists and conservative moralists. This contributed to the creation of a myth about the district, depicting it as a bastion of evil: the *Barrio Chino*, or Chinatown in English (Madrid 1925). Using the specific case of the demolition of the Illa Sant Ramón block in the south of El Raval, Fernández González denounces the role of the media in the process of legitimizing renovation operations that are overly invasive upon the urban fabric. During this event, the media used an infamous episode in the neighbourhood to trigger a "campaign of discrediting and stigmatization," which allowed them to portray the area as problematic and call for a blunt intervention by the public authorities (Fernández González 2014, 129–134). Gaspar Maza also points out that the media discourse about El Raval shifted radically following the completion of the buildings planned by 1986 *Pla Especial de Reforma Interior* (PERI) *del Raval*. Along with the inauguration of new cultural spaces, such as the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA), and new public spaces like the Rambla del Raval, a whole new narrative concerning the social history and a new identity for the district was produced (Maza 1999).

After 2010, more comprehensive studies explored the question of media discourses around gentrification in more depth. These studies tend to use American cities as case studies and often neglect the district scale. Notwithstanding these limitations, they provide a useful basis for understanding the construction of different media framings on gentrification and their evolution over time (Brown-Saracino and Rumpf 2011). These studies also clarify the benefits of analysing media discourse to study the symbolic dimension of gentrification. Daniel Makagon (2010, 27) claimed that since gentrification is a "form of symbolic action," analysing "how communication facilitates and frames the class remake of urban neighbourhoods" may provide better ways to understand it. In that context, analysing media discourses about gentrification provides a greater understanding of the influence that the media have on urban culture and, therefore, on how individuals experience or represent their right to the city. The popular press, which Makagon (2010) defines as newspapers, alternative weeklies, and news magazines, tends to cover the issue of gentrification more than other media platforms (such as radio or television programmes). Working

on written and digital press archives allows us to obtain a wider corpus (Makagon 2010).

This chapter seeks to show how local actors create and reproduce representations of gentrified areas in development plans and the media. Belleville and El Raval, and more generally Paris and Barcelona, have already been examined in gentrification studies. This chapter aims to fill a gap in existing literature by focusing on the symbolic mechanisms of the clash over what Chabrol et al. (2016) refer to as the conservation and appropriation of local spaces that takes place during the gentrification process.

A Multidisciplinary Method to Study the Representation of Gentrified Districts

The first part of this research project consisted in applying methods of analysis derived from communication studies to urban plans, which are generally used as a source in other disciplines, such as urban studies. We used a content analysis method to examine several plans produced by Ville de Paris and Ajuntament de Barcelona from the 1980s to 2019 (Direction d'Aménagement urbain de la Ville de Paris and APUR 1983, 2006, 2016, 2019; Ajuntament de Barcelona 1985, 1993, 1995, 2001, 2005 (a), (b) and (c), 2016, 2018 (a) and (b)). This method of analysis was selected because the corpus of documents to be studied was several hundred pages long: an exhaustive Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was thus unfeasible. Several elements that emerged from the analysis were then linked with contextual aspects borrowed from other disciplines, such as history, urban studies, sociology, or anthropology. The main goal of this project was to identify the different representations of Belleville and El Raval contained in these documents produced by public authorities and to link these representations with the projects that are included in those development plans and the socio-historical context of the districts and the cities.

We then produced CDA of sixty-eight articles about Belleville and El Raval, taken from six different newspapers. The selection criteria are explained below. CDA has wide applications in several disciplines and research topics, making it an ideal tool for a multidisciplinary study like this one. CDA provides some guidelines that allow researchers to observe social, political, cultural, and historic structures, processes and constraints in order to achieve a better understanding of the links between discourse and society (Van Dijk 1999). Moreover, Teun Van Dijk (1999) has stressed the importance of discourse in the reproduction of power and domination dynamics in

society, as well as its influence on the perpetuation of social inequalities. Therefore, studying discourses of two gentrified districts with CDA helps to gain a better understanding of how hegemonic speech can reproduce, maintain, or fight the inequalities linked to gentrification.

Our main hypothesis was that the reproduction and construction of representations in media discourse would vary depending on media type and other elements, such as its financial independence or its editorial line. To confirm this theory, three media categories were defined, and three different media platforms (one for each category) were designated for the two case studies. The first one covered mainstream media. It included *Le Monde* and *La Vanguardia*, two of the most widely circulated press journals in France and Spain (country level), but also in Île-de-France and Catalonia (regional level). They both have a long history of publication and have complex relationships with bodies in other economic sectors such as banks, insurance companies, or real estate agencies (Grupo Godó, n.d.-a; Grupo Godó, n.d.-b; Fundación La Caixa, n.d; La rédaction du Monde 2019; Oficina Municipal de dades 2018; Observatoire de la Presse et des Médias 2019).

New media were represented by Mediapart and eldiario.es, which were both established during the restructuring of mainstream media after the beginning of the economic crisis of 2007. These two online publications aim to provide a more critical stance on societal issues and greater press freedom from powerful agendas compared to traditional newspapers. Eldiario.es is funded through a combination of public subsidies, ethical advertising, and member subscriptions. Mediapart is funded exclusively by subscriptions. These business models guarantee media's financial independence (Eldiario.es N.d; Mediapart N.d.). Finally, we selected *Time Out Paris* and *Time Out Barcelona* to study cultural and lifestyle magazines. *Time Out* can be found in more than three hundred cities worldwide. It depicts the areas and spaces that are believed to be the most trendy or original spaces of a city. It has been argued that its main audience would come from the creative class, in other words potential gentrifiers (Sabot 2018).

The initial search for the terms "Belleville" and "Raval" in online databases resulted in too many results to carry out a qualitative analysis using CDA. In order to build a reduced corpus that contained enough information to analyse the representations of the two districts, we applied precise selection criteria. Firstly, we set a time limit: given that the objective of the study was to understand what representations of the districts were present in the current press, the limit was set between January 1, 2018 and October 31, 2019. The second selection criterion was the length of the articles. By focusing on longer articles, we hoped to obtain more contextual information that would

allow us to conduct the analysis. However, we made an exception for opinion articles, as they tend to be shorter while granting a more direct glimpse of the author's representation of the district and thus of the media. Finally, we defined three themes: the socio-spatial dynamics of the district, its social mobilizations and initiatives, and its cultural life. These allow us to analyse different aspects of the transformation of the commercial and urban fabric of the district, as well as the construction of unequal relations concerning the appropriation of space which have resulted from these transformations. This selection process enabled us to build up a corpus of sixty-eight articles for CDA. The following table gives more details on the number of articles selected for each journal, as well as the main criteria used to select each article.

Table 9.1 Corpus-Building: Selection Method

Media	Selection Methodology	The Main Selection Criteria for Inclusion in the Corpus
Le Monde **12 articles**	Keyword search for "Belleville" in Europresse and manual selection of the results which fit in the selection criteria.	**General Criteria:** • Articles published between January 1, 2018 and October 31, 2019. • Articles containing keywords "Belleville" or "Raval" about the district. • News, reports and analyses at least half a page long for written press and at least a page long for digital press. Opinion articles, regardless of length. **The Cultural Life of the District:** • Articles about activities, cultural locations, and institutions in the district. • Texts, films, or photographs representing the district as the subject of art. • Articles highlighting creators or artists originally from or resident in the district. • Articles on the multicultural nature of the district. **Social and Urban Dynamics:** • Articles about social policies of the municipality. • Articles about urban renewal projects. • Articles about immigration in the district. • Articles about different dynamics affecting the city (tourism, real estate prices, speculation…). • Articles about prostitution. • Articles about crime and delinquency. **Mobilizations and Social Initiatives:** • Articles about the district's organizations and activists' mobilizations.
La Vanguardia **30 articles**	Keyword search for "Raval" in the journal's digital archives and manual selection of the results that met the selection criteria.	
Mediapart 6 articles	Keyword search for "Belleville" in website search engine and manual selection of the results which met the selection criteria.	
eldiario.es 22 articles	Keyword search for "Raval" in website search engine and manual selection of the results which fit in the main criteria of selection of the corpus.	

Media	Selection Methodology	The Main Selection Criteria for Inclusion in the Corpus
Time Out Paris **1 article**	Selection of the section of the guide dedicated to the Belleville / Ménilmontant district.	The sections of the guide devoted to the districts review a selection of locations to visit (restaurants, bars, shops, museums…). Each review is presented with a paragraph that refers to the beginning of the critique *Time Out* published about it. Therefore, we decided it was more interesting to analyse condensed reviews instead of a selection of articles that we would randomly choose.
Time Out Barcelona **1 article**	Selection of the section of the guide dedicated to the El Raval district.	

Table 9.1 shows that the main feature of the corpus is its heterogeneity. El Raval was covered far more than Bellville, with forty-nine articles compared to nineteen. The topics covered in the articles under consideration also greatly varied: thirty-eight of the forty-nine were related to social and urban dynamics. Table 9.1 also reveals that each media has its own preferred category: *Le Monde* and *La Vanguardia* publish more articles related to cultural life. At the same time, Mediapart and eldiario.es report more on social and urban dynamics. Differences can also be found in the type of articles in each journal. *La Vanguardia* is, for instance, the only media source in the sample that publishes opinion pieces, and *Le Monde* and Mediapart prefer analysis and reports.

The articles were analysed using grids that were built using the critical discourse analysis method proposed by Browne, Silva and Baessolo (2010) to analyse press content. These grids were then compared to identify their similarities and differences. This study restricted itself to an exploration of the discursive choices made by six different media outlets in portraying two districts that have been widely studied for their gentrification processes. This study is a preliminary foray into the question of media representations of gentrified urban districts that may help encourage future research in this field.

Characterizing the Districts Based on Their Trendiness, Their Conflicts, Their Community Spirit or Their Resistance: The Main Representations of Belleville and El Raval

Despite the heterogeneity of the corpus, the analysis of the selected articles allowed us to identify some common media discourses applied to Belleville and El Raval. Three representations of these urban districts are currently shared by the two case studies. They focus on characterizing the districts

based on their trendiness, their conflicts or even their community spirit. As each media outlet selects its content according to its own criteria, these representations are built or reproduced by the press according to the events or the news they choose to cover. Yet, it is worth pointing out how representations built by the different publications provide an example of the symbolic dimension of the gentrification of the two districts. All these representations converge on the same space and complicate the narrative on the evolution of the district and its trajectory in the gentrification process.

The District's Cultural Life as an Asset

Most texts included in the corpus show that the two districts are represented as sites of trendy cultural dynamism. It is through the added value of this cultural activity, the celebration of the district's diversity, and even of its history and authenticity that a representation of a trendy neighbourhood is constructed. The *Time Out* guide articles are a perfect example of how Belleville and El Raval are represented as trendy districts. In these pieces, finding the best places is equated with visiting the most authentic spots. Yet, authenticity is related to different criteria in each district. Belleville's authenticity is defined as rustic. To discover its hidden, non-contaminated spots, we must explore it. Sometimes, these expeditions can be risky because the good spots may be located in hostile environments. It is the case of the Clin's 20, a bar frequented by those Parisians brave enough to go beyond Pixérécourt Street, an area where, according to the guide, you must "avoid hanging out alone at night" (*Time Out Paris* 2016). Nevertheless, while the danger that is mentioned seems to be linked to the "really grey bars of housing," this "tiny candy-pinkish bar" "could bring the most cowardly of the Parisians to try the adventure" (*Time Out Paris* 2016). In those cases, the risk of danger during the expedition paradoxically reinforces the experience of discovering an authentic spot.

When it comes to El Raval, the quest for authenticity consists of searching out places that have become emblematic because of their history or where the décor maintains an old-time charm (*Time Out Barcelona* 2015). On some occasions, the myth of the *Barrio Chino* is recuperated to evoke the most conflicting dimensions of the past of the district. The guide article offers a curated selection of places where visitors can experience it without facing its dangers. In both guides, inhabitants are relegated to the role of extras in a performance of authenticity, being described as, for example, the "outlandish ravalian fauna of the Andes" (*Time Out Barcelona* 2015) and the "eclectic fauna" of Belleville (*Time Out Paris* 2016). Both expressions relegate the district's inhabitants to the role of fauna that visitors can observe

as if they were on safari. This kind of vocabulary appeals to the myth of the frontier, which, according to Neil Smith, tends to construct the social significance of gentrification (Smith [1996] 2005, 11). For Smith, the imagery of the frontier characterizes the poor and working class as an uncivilized or wild population. This discourse establishes the need to "tame the wild city" and promotes the rationalization of social differentiation and exclusion by presenting them as an inevitable phenomenon (Smith [1996] 2005, 16).

This appropriation of language and landscape comes with an ideological burden. Reproducing these discourses is a means by which reporters enrich the style of their articles. The reporters associate the wild and the unpredictable with excitement and unique experiences. In both cases, discourse analysis reveals a paradox. While *Time Out* addresses an audience that could be identified as being composed of potential gentrifiers, the magazine tries to escape locations where they may be present. Indeed, *Time Out Paris* criticizes the presence of the "bobos" several times because their frequenting of places affects their popular and convivial appeal and, by extension, causes prices to rise. In short, the discreet presence of the "bobos," implicitly identified as agents of the transformation of the place, is tolerated. However, when their presence results in the commercial gentrification of the space or even a transformation of its originality, it destroys its authenticity. In the case of Barcelona, the urban landscape generated by gentrification represents a condition for the creation of a holiday destination, and tourism accentuates the effects of gentrification (Cócola 2016). The presence of tourists here represents a loss of authenticity, while the presence of hipsters or *modernos* (used as equivalents of "bobo" in Spanish) is appreciated when it is not too pronounced.

In *Le Monde*, Belleville is principally valued as a site of creativity and for its unsanitized Parisian décor (Carpentier 2018; Jenvrin 2018). In contrast, Mediapart emphasizes its past as a working-class district to evoke the origins of some artists (Chevassus-au-Louis 2018). Most of the articles on El Raval that we analysed focus on a particular conflict that *La Vanguardia* mediatized (Barenblit 2019; Barranco and Sese 2019; *La Vanguardia* 2018 (b); Sese 2018; Sese 2019). The newspaper published a series of articles about a vacant lot where two urban projects were discussed. One was an annex of the dispensary of the district, the other of the MACBA museum. Inaugurated in 1995, MACBA is one of the venues constituting the cultural corridor planned by the *Pla del Liceu al Seminari* of 1980. Later, it was integrated into the *Pla Especial de Reforma Interior du Raval* (PERI). Its main goal was to form a corridor constituted by a series of cultural venues, which today comprise the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona, the Filmoteca de Catalunya, and the Liceu theatre. Javier Godó, the president of the group that owns

La Vanguardia, is also the vice president of the stakeholder foundation of MACBA (Fundación La Caixa, n.d.).

For this reason, these articles show how economic interests may influence the media's treatment of gentrified urban spaces. The museum is indeed presented here as a central piece of the cultural renaissance of the district. It is a "generative venue," built to become "a place of cultural diffusion" and a "generator of what was, at the time, labelled a positive transformation" (*La Vanguardia* 2018b). We can also notice a certain pressure in the discourse of *La Vanguardia* encouraging the acceptance of the idea that the development of cultural institutions in the district is an essential element in its further transformation. MACBA must continue to expand "so it can contribute to helping Barcelona reach its potential as a cultural space with international appeal" (Sese 2018) because this project "drew a map where the [Angels] square became the most powerful cultural spot in the city" (Barenblit 2019).

Districts Characterized by Conflict

In both districts, social and urban dynamics tend to be explored through articles that call the districts' safety into question and reaffirm the existence of conflicts that threaten to spread out into the whole city. *Le Monde* published two articles that cover the criminal cases of Sarah Halimi and Mireille Knoll, two elderly Jewish ladies who were murdered in Paris in 2017 and 2018. The antisemitic dimension of these crimes is used here to question the representation of a multicultural district where cohabitation between communities is peaceful: *Babelville*, a contraction of the biblical Babel and Belleville (Couvelaire 2018; Seckel 2018).

One of the reports portrays Kobili Traoré, the alleged murderer of Sarah Halimi, and suggests that his personal circumstances led him to commit the crime. Traoré is described as a man with a violent temper, a drug dealer and a user who already had a police record. Another element subtly hints at the real problem of the district. At the beginning of the article, a description of the Vaucouleur street points to the presence of social housing in the district. These buildings, with their "uncool façades" and "homes turned in on themselves," are the scene of the violent death of Sarah Halimi (Couvelaire 2018). In this withdrawn, slightly degraded setting, the real threat would come from the inhabitants whose living environment is more unstructured, as they would disturb peaceful cohabitation. The real problem in *Babelville* is, therefore, not antisemitism but, as Mrs Halimi's son suggests, the district's status as a "hotspot for drug trafficking" (Couvelaire 2018).

In El Raval, the rise of criminality and drug trafficking is seen as a throwback to the darkest years of the *Barrio Chino*, especially when it

comes to articles published by *La Vanguardia*. Between 1980 and 1990, the journal published several opinion articles lamenting insecurity, crime, and despair in the neighbourhood (*La Vanguardia* 1986; *La Vanguardia* 1988a; *La Vanguardia* 1988b). In 2018, the inhabitants of Barcelona experienced increased rates of crime in the whole city, but especially in the districts of Ciutat Vella, where El Raval is located (Elies 2019). That same year, El Raval experienced an increase in drug trafficking in squat apartments, the so-called *narcopisos* (Benvenuty and Muñoz 2018). These two phenomena catalysed the publication of new opinion pieces by the paper, where El Raval and Ciutat Vella are described as unsafe, and citizens are in constant danger (*La Vanguardia* 2018a). Insecurity is associated with a moral and physical degradation of the district, like the one that was described in the 1980s (*La Vanguardia* 2018c). Once again, the myth of the frontier makes its appearance (Smith [1996] 2005), as this feeling of threat is enhanced by the mobilization of the semantic field of combat, the use of the notion of the frontier, and the insistence on the possible expansion of the problem, which threatens the touristic and financial appeal of the city (*La Vanguardia* 2018b).

El Raval's representation as a district characterized by social conflict is presented as posing a threat to its fashionable aura. Faced with this situation, the publication calls for an increased police presence in the district, the establishment of a culture of order and civic-mindedness, and the creation of a comprehensive intervention plan focused on social issues (Miró i Ardèvol 2019). While the media treatment proposed by *La Vanguardia* is mainly composed of opinion articles, eldiario.es covers the subject from a more informative perspective. The news website tries to understand the reasons for the expansion of *narcopisos* and to link the phenomenon to other socio-economic problems. According to the reporters, these venues would be vacant apartments owned by banks and investment funds (eldiario.es 2019). This new approach allows the reader to identify the speculation in the real estate market as the main source of the problem. Those articles published by eldiario.es also call the media representation of the conflict into question as the recording and diffusion of images using smartphones skew perceptions and stigmatize the district and because the media are accused of giving more visibility to certain events to attract larger audiences (Pareja 2019).

Districts Characterized by Community Spirit

Mediapart and eldiario.es publish a series of articles that raise awareness of the social inequalities and injustices affecting individuals and communities that are vulnerable when it comes to maintaining their share of urban space. In addition to publicizing the situation of these groups, these articles make

visible and enhance the social action that aims to help them. When these media sources denounce the precarious situation of migrants, the efficiency of the institutions that are supposed to support them tends to be called into question (Mathieu 2018). Nonetheless, in the case of El Raval, social work undertaken by charities, like the Santa Anna Church or the Espacio del Inmigrante, is appreciated (Rodriguez 2019d; Iborra 2018). El Raval is also cited as an example of spatial segregation. Once again, eldiario.es tries to explain the origins of these dynamics by building causal links. In this vein, the spatial segregation phenomenon is the result of real estate prices, migration policies, solidarity networks, and racial discrimination.

Belleville and El Raval are offered as examples in matters of police harassment of sex workers and debates about the legalization of sex work (Requena et al. 2018; Fessard 2018). In Belleville, Mediapart's harsh criticism of police harassment goes further. The journal published two articles about harassment and sexual assault committed by policemen against young men in working-class districts (Fessard 2019; Hajdenberg 2019). These articles expose the racist and discriminatory dimensions of these practices. They also explain that frequent police checks have the effect of delegitimating young men's use of public space. Once again, the witnesses from the district's organizations are used to denounce the social conflicts that take place in its public space, and their social action is highlighted.

A District Resisting Gentrification

A last representation is exclusive to the media discourse of El Raval as a district resisting gentrification. *La Vanguardia* and eldiario.es construct this representation as the actions of the municipality and the inhabitants to resist the inroads of real estate speculation and tourism. Regarding municipal action, eldiario.es published an article about the cancellation of a permit for the building of a new luxury hotel in the district (Rodriguez 2019c) and the administrative unit in charge of disciplinary sanctions applied to big real-estate owners (Rodriguez 2019a; Solé 2018). *La Vanguardia* mostly emphasizes punctual actions on the part of the municipality, for instance, the limitation of tourism at Sant Antoni market given that tourists' spending power risks transforming the market into a tourism-exclusive space, like the Boqueria market, also located in El Raval (*La Vanguardia* 2019).

Eldiario.es positively depicts the efforts of the inhabitants to combat speculation (Bravo 2018; Estevez 2019; Rodriguez 2019b; Vilajosana 2019). All the articles related to this topic have common characteristics. First, the speculation issue is generalized before the case that is described in the article is contextualized in terms of the wider speculation dynamic that

can be seen in other districts and at a city level. The international nature of gentrification is also exposed. Secondly, these cases are transformed into symbols of resistance against gentrification and speculation.

Finally, the resistance on the part of local actors to real estate developers is cast in heroic terms with the semantic field of war and battle again being evoked. In these articles, it is therefore possible to observe what Doury, Casillo and Fijalkow (2017) identify as the metaphor of invasion. This rhetoric mobilizes the dialectic of colonization and related value judgements and contributes to framing gentrification as a process of invasion or occupation. This figuration is accompanied by an axiomatization of its actors, with "the good" being the population originally resident in the district and the "evil" being the invaders driven by greed. Victims of gentrification are characterized as the embattled original inhabitants of a place and by their position on the bottom of the social ladder.

Conclusion

Even with a reduced corpus of articles, the representations of a gentrified district emerging from the media discourse appear to vary based on the media analysed. There are, of course, some similarities in the discourses. Still, each media platform tends to construct its own representations of the districts according to the news they decide to portray and the individual journalist's or media outlet's take on the matter. The lifestyle magazines (*Time Out*) and traditional media (*Le Monde* and *La Vanguardia*) tend, for instance, to take up the adages of diversity and historicity in order to add value to the authenticity of the districts and cast them as "trendy."

In the eternal search for a space capable of offering a truly "exotic" experience, the inhabitants and users of the district are transformed into decorative elements; the living spaces of the working classes are sometimes presented as a threat, and increasing numbers of "bobos" and tourists are to be avoided at all costs. In short, a visit to the districts is presented as an urban expedition, perpetuating the discourse of working-class neighbourhoods as frontiers and reinforcing the rationalization of a difference between inhabitants and visitors. In the same way, the representation of Belleville and El Raval, as defined by social conflict and representing a threat to the social order, reappears in media in other contexts. *Le Monde* and *La Vanguardia* employ the coverage of certain criminal events in the area to show the "decline" of the districts and their inhabitants and to evoke (more or less subtly) the threat of the problem spreading to the rest of the city. Drug trafficking and the murders

of Sarah Halimi and Mireille Knoll jeopardize the survival of *Babelville*, a mythologized representation of peaceful multicultural coexistence in the district. In El Raval, the spread of the phenomenon of the *narcopisos* and increased insecurity in Barcelona's central districts are depicted as a return to the dark days of criminality in the *Barrio Chino*. Here, the newspaper calls for intervention by the public authorities and even mobilizes the transformative potential of cultural activity as a remedy to curb the expansion of the *Chino*.

The representations of Belleville and El Raval in the new media studied (Mediapart and eldiario.es) oppose those offered by the publications discussed above. When it comes to evoking the *narcopisos*, the reporters of eldiario.es try to link the phenomenon to other socio-economic problems, such as property speculation and interrogate the role played by the media itself in perpetuating negative discourses. Similarly, both publications strive to report on the social inequalities affecting the most vulnerable groups in the district. In addition, they make visible the social action aimed to help these groups, which contributes to creating a representation which values the solidarity of the district and its community life. In Barcelona, resistance to gentrification in the district of El Raval completes the mosaic of media representations. Slightly used by *La Vanguardia*, exploited more frequently by eldiario.es, it seems quite appropriate to ask whether this last representation might not, in fact, reverse the image of the frontier evoked by Neil Smith or, at least, exploit it from the perspective of those "gentrified."

In short, all these representations, which converge in the same space, complicate the narrative of the evolution of the district and its trajectory in the process of gentrification. While this study has its limitations, it offers new research perspectives and raises questions that may be interesting for further study of media representations of gentrified districts. The most obvious one involves the further study of the representations identified in a wider corpus to provide contextual richness. This work could allow us to verify if the main representations our research identified are present in other media or if they are valid for other case studies. This investigation is also relevant as an opportunity to pay more attention to the factors that lead media to reproduce a concrete representation of the district, among others. Is it a conscious choice made by reporters? Are they just following social constructions? Do the media's interests interfere in the reproduction of certain representations? Focusing on this question requires an understanding of how reporters perceive the case study, as well as the production cycle and the constraints the media imposes on them. The question that should spark our interest from now on is not just how a gentrified district is represented in the media but which elements enhance this representation.

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10. Acknowledging the Interplay Between Religion and Gentrification in the Press? "Muslim Enclaves" in Goutte D'Or (Paris) and El Raval (Barcelona)

Victor Albert-Blanco

Abstract: This chapter analyses the role of religious diversity within media portrayals of gentrified urban areas. Drawing on findings from qualitative fieldwork conducted in the Goutte d'Or neighbourhood in Paris and the Raval neighbourhood in Barcelona, this chapter shows that expressions of religious minorities play a complex and multifaceted role in shaping the collective perceptions of these urban areas as propagated by the media. On one hand, the public presence of certain religious minorities, such as Islam, is met with rejection by the dominant social groups, who perceive it as a catalyst for urban decay and incompatible with the presumed secular character of public spaces. Conversely, these same stakeholders strategically employ the concept of religious pluralism to brand the neighbourhood as a "multicultural" and "cosmopolitan" hub.

Keywords: Religious diversity; Islam; minorities, public spaces, stigmatization

Introduction

In recent decades, European cities have experienced a notable diversification of their religious landscapes. This transformation has been driven by the influx and settlement of individuals from various countries and geographical regions, which has given rise to new religious expressions, including Islam,

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Sikhism, Evangelism, and Hinduism, among others. These faiths coexist with the established traditions of Catholicism and Protestantism, as well as with processes of secularization and the emergence of contemporary "spirituality" movements (Becci et al.; 2013; Davie 2013). Furthermore, the presence of new religious minorities resulting from international migration is particularly prominent in certain urban neighbourhoods, whether located in city centres or suburbs. As noted by Clot-Garrell et al. (2022), "religious diversity manifests especially in neighbourhood contexts where ethnic and religious aspects coexist with complex urban issues" such as urban regeneration and gentrification.

This chapter undertakes an examination of the role of religious diversity on the urban imaginaries within two gentrified neighbourhoods situated in France and Spain. Drawing upon qualitative fieldwork carried out in the Goutte d'Or neighbourhood (Paris) and the Raval (Barcelona), the argument put forth is that religious pluralism plays a multifaceted role in shaping societal and media depictions. On one hand, the public presence of religions such as Islam tends to encounter resistance. In both urban areas, specific stakeholders, including certain residents' associations and local traders, tend to perceive these religious groups as a catalyst for urban deterioration. Consequently, their presence is deemed incongruous with the presumed "secular" utilization of public spaces. Nonetheless, this chapter elucidates how these stakeholders strategically leverage religious pluralism to portray the neighbourhood as "multicultural" and "cosmopolitan."

Local stakeholders do not passively observe discussions surrounding neighbourhoods and religious expressions in the media; instead, they actively participate in shaping distinct perceptions. Despite their diverse social and political perspectives, they shape, negotiate, contest, or challenge media narratives, thus playing a crucial role in influencing the conceptions of religious expressions within neighbourhoods. Scholars have highlighted that discursive production constitutes an integral aspect of the process of place-making (Gieryn 2000; Tissot 2011b). As suggested by Castillo and Fijalkow (2017), stakeholders employ rhetorical repertoires, symbolic imaginaries, and discursive practices in their decision-making and actions. Through an analysis of the specific portrayal of Islamic expressions within these discourses and representations, this chapter aims to address a gap in the existing literature: although being a prevalent social element in contemporary urban settings (Becci et al. 2013), religion has received limited attention in the analysis of media representations of urban transformations and gentrification (Brown-Saracino and Rumpf 2011).

Sites and Methods

This chapter relies on a diverse methodological approach encompassing interviews, ethnographic observations, and the analysis of official publications. These research materials were gathered during extensive fieldwork conducted in the two neighbourhoods between 2016 and 2020. This fieldwork was part of a sociological research project with a primary focus on the regulation of religion in gentrifying neighbourhoods. For this chapter, I draw on interviews conducted with various stakeholders representing both neighbourhoods, including two activists and an artist who owns an atelier-boutique in Goutte d'Or, a leader of a residents' association and a local trader from Raval, as well as two Muslim activists from the latter neighbourhood who are engaged in different community initiatives. It is important to note that while this diverse and heterogeneous corpus[1] does not claim to represent the entire "public opinion" of the two neighbourhoods, it serves as a valuable resource to shed light on the discourses and practices of various groups actively involved in local public life. These participants play a significant role in the social production of space and the construction of urban perceptions. In addition to the interviews, a series of ethnographic observations were conducted, encompassing a wide array of local public activities, including festivals, meetings, markets, and religious rituals and celebrations. The spatial presence of religious markers, such as halal butcheries and places of worship, was also observed and analysed within the context of urban transformation and gentrification. Furthermore, an assortment of official documents, including city council meeting minutes, policy statements, plans, and brochures and newsletters from local associations, were collected and analysed.

This contribution also delves into the representation of religion, particularly Islam, in the narratives presented by television and print media outlets that seek to depict the neighbourhoods' urban transformation. As part of this research endeavour, media discourses were gathered and scrutinized to complement the data obtained through interviews, ethnographic observations, and official documents mentioned earlier. The media sources utilized for this chapter were amassed through keyword-based searches (e.g., "Islam" AND "Goutte d'Or" and "Islam" AND "Raval") conducted on the online Europresse database. This process yielded a corpus of approximately one hundred articles that had been published in both general and national newspapers

1 For the research project I conducted a total of sixty-eight interviews, thirty-five in Goutte d'Or and thirty-three in Raval.

spanning from the late 1990s to 2020. These articles were selected due to their relevance to the portrayal and visibility of Islam in the neighbourhoods. Additional articles were also sourced from "cultural press" publications, such as *Time Out* magazine. Furthermore, the chapter also delves into the responses of local associations to the media representations of the neighbourhoods. Some of these associations and their print publications, like the local newspaper "Raval," frequently reference the neighbourhood's image as projected by the media. Meanwhile, other associations, such as "Paris Goutte d'Or," a residents' association, have even gone so far as to establish press archives, compiling articles about the neighbourhoods published in mainstream media outlets.[2]

This chapter extends its focus beyond the mere analysis of the discursive content within the corpus of articles. It also delves into the reception, reproduction, or contestation of these discourses by local actors, with the aim of demonstrating how narratives concerning religious expressions actively contribute to the construction of urban space within the context of gentrification. I applied a "triangulation" approach to analyse the data acquired through various research methods (Olsen 2004), enabling me to establish connections between the narratives and discourses surrounding religious pluralism and urban transformation, thereby comprehending their interplay. In addition to triangulation, comparison played a significant role in my study. It helped to discern both differences and similarities between the two cases, despite their apparent similarities as "similar" neighbourhoods situated in "different" countries. This comparative analysis allowed me to derive generalizations and draw a comprehensive framework for understanding the interplay of religious diversity and gentrification.

About Islam and Gentrified Neighbourhoods: The Imbrication of Two Newsworthy Objects

Goutte d'Or and Raval serve as paradigmatic cases for examining the intersection of religious pluralism and gentrification. Despite being situated in distinct national contexts, both neighbourhoods have experienced significant diversification owing to multiple waves of immigration in the latter half of the twentieth century. In Goutte d'Or, the initial influx consisted of individuals from Algeria and other North African countries,

2 This is the case of the site *La Goutte d'Or et Vous*, managed by a local associations' platform, which includes an "observatory" of media representations of the neighbourhood.

later followed by those from French-speaking Sub-Saharan countries such as Mali. In Raval, the first immigrants arrived from Morocco during the 1970s and 1980s, but the current demographic makeup is predominantly Pakistani, Bengali, and Filipino. These areas have been identified as "immigrant centralities" (Toubon and Messamah 1992) due to the strong presence and visibility of these populations in urban spaces, shaping communitarian associations and formal and informal retail landscapes, among other elements. Additionally, they are characterized as "religious super-diversity enclaves" (Becci et al. 2017). This label stems from the observable religious pluralism manifested in places of worship, shops, and restaurants bearing religious markers (e.g., halal, kosher, Hindu), as well as commemorations and festivities held in public spaces, and distinctive bodily or clothing expressions.

While Islam stands out as one of the most prominent religions in both neighbourhoods, it is not the sole faith represented. Despite the absence of official statistics on religious affiliations, Islam is acknowledged as the most important religious minority in France, Spain, and other European countries. In these neighbourhoods, Islam coexists with various other religious groups. In Raval, there are seven Islamic worship places, seven evangelical churches, and one Sikh gurdwara temple. Goutte d'Or, on the other hand, hosts two Islamic worship places, along with a Jewish oratory and a Nazarene church. Catholicism has historically been the "traditional" religion in both neighbourhoods. Its influence persists visibly and actively through prominent parish churches, private schools, and diverse material and symbolic markers. These include street names honouring Catholic saints and public shrines, underscoring the enduring imprint of Catholicism in the local fabric.

Islam and its manifestations have become central to public controversies in recent years. The discourse surrounding these debates is often connected to narratives asserting that Islam is incompatible with Western values (Hajjat and Mohammed 2013). Scholars have demonstrated that Islam has been shaped into a newsworthy object in Europe and other Western countries (Bourekba 2016; Deltombe 2003). It is crucial, however, not to perceive this process as occurring in a broad and abstract public sphere (Göle 2013). Rather, it frequently involves religious expressions at the local level, materialized or represented in urban spaces. Therefore, it is valuable to contemplate how religious expressions are discursively and symbolically framed concerning these urban spaces. This approach allows us to move beyond studies that suggest the social construction of these manifestations as either incompatible or acceptable in relation to presumed national or European values.

Goutte d'Or and Raval, like other inner-city or suburban neighbourhoods, have been cast as newsworthy objects. The media play a significant role in shaping the social and urban landscapes of these areas. Numerous scholars have demonstrated that Goutte d'Or and Raval were portrayed by the media as "problems" due to their high concentration of working-class populations and migrants. Additionally, phenomena such as prostitution, street vending, or drug trafficking were depicted as visible issues in these neighbourhoods. These representations were disseminated by the media through stories, pictures, and images, serving to justify public interventions in both areas. In the 1980s, public authorities planned urban transformations in both Goutte d'Or and Raval (Bacqué and Fijalkow 2006; Chabrol et al. 2016; Fernández 2014).

The official objective of initiatives targeting urban space and housing was to address local social issues and facilitate the symbolic and economic revitalization of neighbourhoods. However, the urban transformation led by public authorities, spanning the 1990s and 2000s, has tended to replace previous negative portrayals of the neighbourhoods with positive narratives highlighting their "diversity." As explored in other contributions to this book, this ambivalence lies at the heart of newsworthy representations of gentrification. Negative and positive depictions of urban areas are cyclical and interconnected, transcending the neighbourhood as a mere abstract entity. These representations also pinpoint specific urban artefacts such as buildings, uses and users of public space, and even particular shops and restaurants. While these elements may contribute to the construction of the imaginary of the "ghetto" or the "problematic" enclave, they simultaneously enable the portrayal of the neighbourhood as "cosmopolitan" and "vibrant."

Religious expressions play a significant role in shaping these representations, where Islam and gentrified neighbourhoods become intertwined newsworthy objects. Islam serves to crystallize and illustrate the ambivalence inherent in newsworthy discourses accompanying urban transformations and gentrification. The rhetoric surrounding certain Islamic expressions, such as street prayers, conditions of worship places, or the number of halal butcheries, becomes a pivotal element in constructing the neighbourhood as a "social problem." Simultaneously, it can be mobilized to highlight the diversity and multicultural aspects valued by gentrification actors (Albert-Blanco 2019). As noted by gentrification scholars, "these representations derive from images conveyed on different supports such as words, photos, drawings, or videos, [they] concretize and make palpable a vision of these places, omitting certain aspects but underlining others" (Chabrol et al. 2016, 194).

Islam and Urban Stigmatization

As mentioned earlier, Goutte d'Or and Raval share a parallel history with regards to urban transformation. Stigmatization and negative representations were employed to characterize these urban enclaves, which were perceived to host various "social problems," including insalubrious housing, drug trafficking, prostitution, as well as immigration and minority religious expressions. Several stakeholders contributed to shaping these discourses, with the media playing a crucial role in their dissemination.

In 1978, the daily national newspaper *Le Monde*, targeting a center-left readership, renamed Goutte d'Or as "la Casbah d'Or," drawing a supposed parallel to Arab and Middle East neighbourhoods and markets (Sarraute 1978). The Larousse dictionary of French language defines a "casbah" as a neighbourhood with "Arabic architecture," often situated between other neighbourhoods considered more "modern" in "North-Africa cities." In 1993, the conservative daily national newspaper *Le Figaro* referred to Myrha Street as a "local Jungle Book" (Salle Saint Bruno 1994). Notably, Spanish, and Catalan media used similar terms to describe Raval, and some newspapers even labelled the district as "Ravalkistan" (Abián 2008). In 2000, *La Vanguardia*, one of the most influential Catalan daily newspapers associated with local elites, published an article claiming that one of the Islamic communities was seeking a new place of worship in the area. The piece depicted a "normal Friday" in the mosque but also mentioned a couple of "drug addicts" and a "prostitute with her pimp" appearing in front of the building during "prayers and Arabic songs" (Álvaro 2000). In both cases, the Orientalist references allude to the cultural and religious markers of a segment of the neighbourhood population, while also addressing (directly or indirectly) other urban dysfunctions, such as prostitution or drug trafficking.

Media and other actors tended to incorporate religious diversity into negative portrayals of neighbourhoods. They specifically focused on Islamic expressions, which played a central role in stigmatizing discourses characterizing these urban enclaves as "ghettos" or "dangerous" areas. An example from 2015 is a report by *Le Monde* covering the transformation of Myrha Street in Goutte d'Or (Krug 2015). While acknowledging the recent "positive" evolution of the street, the report described three phenomena that supposedly contributed to its stigmatization in the past: poverty, crack traffic, and Muslim street prayers. These narratives often included references to Islamic alterity in Western societies and conveyed stereotyped messages about Islam and its followers. As various scholars have noted, the media have played a significant role in the "essentialization" of Islam, suggesting

that this religion is inherently and naturally violent, thus in contradiction with Western values, especially following 9/11, when they established a "continuum between Islam, Islamism, and terrorism" (Hajjat and Mohammed 2013, 174). At the local level, these messages reinforced existing urban imaginaries and contributed to shaping negative representations of the neighbourhoods.

In Goutte d'Or, a significant public controversy revolves around the visibility of Islam in the neighbourhood. As reported by *Le Monde* in 2015, Muslims had been praying in the street since the 1990s due to a lack of space in the local mosques. While this issue was initially addressed at the local level, various stakeholders, including politicians and groups associated with the political far-right, gradually became involved, transforming it into a national controversy. Certain groups and activists, such as *Risposte Laïque* or *Resistance Républicaine*, utilized social media to publish posts and videos against street prayers. They also attempted to organize an "aperitif" with wine and saucisson (a French pork product), but this event was banned by the police. Notably, Marine Le Pen, the then-president of the far-right National Front, went so far as to compare Muslim street prayers to the "occupation" of France by the Nazis. These events unfolded against the backdrop of other heated debates concerning the veil in public spaces, halal food in schools, and women wearing a "burkini" on beaches and in swimming pools (Khemilat 2018; Göle 2015).

In 2011, the French Government decided to ban street prayers, arguing that this practice "disturbs citizens" and "constitutes a real breach to the principle of laïcité" (*Le Figaro* 2011). The national and general media played a prominent role in fuelling this controversy. As demonstrated by Hajjat and Mohammed (2013, 46), negative opinions among the French population towards street prayers increased from 25 per cent to nearly 40 per cent between 2009 and 2011.[3] A photograph of a Muslim praying in the street circulated in newspapers and on television, portraying not only a "breach" of the secular understanding of public space but also a Parisian enclave seemingly permanently occupied by an Islamic manifestation, according to the French Home Ministry (*Le Figaro* 2011). Despite prayers in the streets lasting only a few minutes each week, the image perpetuated by the media projected a perception of a public space continually occupied.

The fieldwork conducted for this research provided the opportunity to engage with local activists affiliated with groups such as La Vie Dejean

3 According to the data provided by the *Commission Nationale Consultative des Droits de l'Homme* (CNCDH) in its annual report on racism and xenophobia in France.

and the Collectif d'habitants Château Rouge-Goutte d'Or (CHCRGO), who strongly opposed street prayers. Additionally, other groups, such as Paris Goutte d'Or or Collectif 4C, aimed to foster a more empathetic position toward the local Muslim communities and other minorities. Despite their differing opinions, many of these groups emphasized the significant role played by the media in shaping public controversies. While some activists criticized what they perceived as a "disturbing" religious practice, they simultaneously condemned the images created and perpetuated by the media. They argued that the reality portrayed by television and newspapers did not accurately reflect the situation in the neighbourhood. For instance, Sandrine, a neighbour in her forties involved in Collectif 4C, asserted that the street prayers controversy was "produced" by the media and would further fuel the intervention of the far-right in the debate.[4] Jules, a neighbour in his fifties actively promoting community allotments, shared a similar perspective. He explained, "[Street prayers were] visible, [the media and the far right say] 'look at them, they [Muslims] are here, they are invading France.' But I think that in Goutte d'Or, it was not a problem."[5]

Some critics of media representations have decried the ongoing public debates in France surrounding Islam and *laïcité* (secularism), emphasizing the negative images of the neighbourhood being disseminated. Local stakeholders were cognizant that the visibility of the Muslim community plays a role in the stigmatization of the area. Cécile, an artist in her sixties, who owns an atelier on Myrha Street, offered her perspective:

> It's mostly a visible thing. It is visible in terms of poverty, I think. And also it stands out with the shops, for example I can think to myself 'there, in front I see an Islamic bookstore' [laughs]. In fact, they are very nice, but an Islamic bookshop, here, with the word Islam, 'ah, how horrible!' So yes, it's a sight matter. There are incivilities, like putting mattresses out, or doing sort of public dumps, you can see everywhere, and then you think…like…we're not in Sweden…"[6]

Cécile has been a resident of the neighbourhood for more than 20 years, and she owns an atelier-boutique where she sells her creations on Myrha Street, one of the locations where street prayers occurred until 2011. The establishment of her atelier-boutique in this street was part of a public

4 Interview, October 2, 2017.
5 Interview, October 2, 2017.
6 Interview, April 14, 2017.

policy aiming to introduce new cultural and commercial establishments in the neighbourhood, as detailed in Pierre Joffre's contribution to this volume. Cécile's perspective is noteworthy because, as we will explore later, she was actively involved in an association of local artists and traders that challenges the representation of the neighbourhood as a "no-go zone," propagated by a conservative American TV channel. In this context, Cécile referred to the visual markers of Islamic presence, such as the bookstore located in front of her atelier. She argued that these elements contribute to negative representations of the neighbourhood, where religion is perceived as a "horror." The visibility, as Cécile described it, can be interpreted as a form of subjectivity. Framing it as a "horror" should be linked to a social, political, and newsworthy construction that portrays the neighbourhood as a space where problems are overrepresented. In Cécile's discourse, Sweden symbolizes cleanliness, order, and social equality, characteristics believed to define Scandinavian societies. This is contrasted with the perceived poverty and disorder of some French neighbourhoods…such as Goutte d'Or.

In Raval, Barcelona, debates related to Muslim worship practices were not as heated as they were in Paris. Nevertheless, the visibility of Islam, notably through numerous mosques and halal shops, has garnered considerable attention. Media outlets like *La Vanguardia* went so far as to nickname the neighbourhood "Ravalkistan," drawing attention to the sizeable Pakistani community with its associated businesses, services, and organizations.

While the term "Ravalkistan" ostensibly refers to a geographical origin (Pakistan), it implicitly alludes to the religious aspect and places of worship of the Pakistani residents in the area, as evidenced by the following quote. It is important to note that this designation is not politically neutral and tends to be invoked, particularly, in the aftermath of tragic events. For instance, when eighteen individuals were arrested in the neighbourhood in 2008, accused of planning a jihadist attack in the city, *La Vanguardia* extensively covered the events and even published an aerial view of the neighbourhood. This view highlighted the urban structure, characterized by a chaotic fabric and narrow streets, presenting a stark contrast with the more affluent sectors of the city. Historically, this urban morphology played a crucial role in justifying regeneration policies (Fernández 2014). However, in this context, *La Vanguardia*'s coverage included the locations of the mosque, the "Oriental bakery," and the apartments where the arrests took place. Consequently, it contributed to reinforcing an imaginary urban geography marked by dysfunctions, now compounded by Islamic symbols, portrayed as exacerbating pre-existing urban problems. Furthermore, *La*

Vanguardia published an editorial signed by the newspaper's deputy director, titled "Los Pakis" (Abián 2008). In just a few lines, the media presented a stereotypical description of the Pakistani community, situating it within national and urban spaces:

> Eurabia, Londonistan and now, Ravalkistan. The growing presence of Islamic communities among us allows to think of recurring adjectives to rename the Old Continent, the British capital, or a district of Barcelona. Especially when arrests of fundamentalist groups occur."

While this influential newspaper endorses political pluralism, it is essential to note that its deputy director employed expressions reminiscent of far right and identitarian movements. The term "Eurabia," used by these groups, alleges the perceived "replacement" of the Christian European population by Islam and its followers (Meer 2019). The inclusion of such terminology in *La Vanguardia*'s discourse does not necessarily imply the newspaper's endorsement of these theories. However, it does underscore the prevalence of such terminology in the broader public discourse surrounding Islam.

Similar to the situation in the Goutte d'Or neighbourhood, certain local stakeholders voiced criticism regarding the media portrayal of the Raval neighbourhood. Approximately a month following the arrests, the local newspaper *Raval*, a freely distributed monthly publication available in shops and community centres, also took issue with the way national media were perpetuating certain representations of the district. However, it contended that the significant Muslim population in the neighbourhood might intensify "fear and mistrust" of inhabitants. The local media thus conveyed an ambivalent stance on Islam and Muslims. While it condemned the stigmatization of this community, it simultaneously acknowledged that the (perceived) prevalence of Muslims in the area could potentially contribute to and rationalize "fear" due to the presumed associations of Islam with violence and terrorism.

In a similar vein, when I sought the opinions of members from local associations during my fieldwork regarding the media's use of "Ravalkistan," their responses were mixed. While they disapproved of the unfavourable image cast upon the neighbourhood, some asserted that it was crucial to dispel stereotypes and foster social integration. For instance, Jorge, a unionist in his fifties with twelve years of residency in the neighbourhood who actively participated in a local residents' movement addressing "nuisances," provided the following response:

> "Raval-kistan. That's what it is. Ok but…here in Ravalkistan, everything is permitted. Right now, you could go outside pee in the street with no consequences. No one would say anything. Unless the police are there, nothing happens to you. Here everything is allowed. Here, this wall…They're not in their right minds. A lot of fights. One after another, there's always a fight."[7]

Jorge employs the term "Ravalkistan" not only to characterize the religious practices of the Pakistani community but also to encompass broader urban phenomena, such as public urination and confrontations. In responding to the term "Ravalkistan," Jorge participates in a process of "othering," delineating an "us" group affected by the presence of "others" associated with issues like untidiness, disorder, and disturbances in the neighbourhood. While Jorge's use of the term reflects this othering perspective, some interviewees explicitly condemned the term "Ravalkistan," highlighting media tendencies to only address negative aspects of the neighbourhood. For instance, Georgina, in her forties, a business owner trendy bars in the area, remarked:

> "A little bit, yes…It's changing, but it's still going on. It is clear, in the media, when they say negative things, they always refer to Raval, they describe this neighbourhood like a place in decline, a place with drugs, with prostitution. And they put it up like this, with big headlines [like Ravalkistan]"[8]

Local Muslim stakeholders express concerns not only about the representation of their neighbourhood but also about the broader stigmatization of Muslims and their faith in media discourses. Mohammed Halhul, a trader and member of a local Islamic community involved in communitarian and local initiatives, criticized the media for perpetuating this stigmatization:

> "I think that in the media, when the terrorism topic comes up, whether we like it or not, it's linked to Islam. (…) I believe that if one day the media comes to really distinguish the terrorism from Islam, meaning a radical Islamism, ISIS and things like that, it would really help the community, at least in terms of public opinion (…). Because sometimes this use creates confusion and it can have negative consequences for the coexistence in certain neighbourhoods, (…)."[9]

7 Interview, November 16, 2017.
8 Interview, February 2, 2018.
9 Interview, June 8, 2017.

Interviews with local residents and stakeholders and the examination of media outlets reveal that religion plays a significant role in the discourses contributing to the stigmatization of these neighbourhoods. While these representations are linked to the broader Western and European context of othering Islam in the post-9/11 era, they are also intricately connected to the urban context. In both Goutte d'Or and Raval, discourses on religious expressions are often intertwined with other phenomena, contributing to the reinforcement of an image of urban degradation and the potential formation of a "ghetto." It is crucial to note, however, that these representations are not uniform. As explored in the next section, they coexist with narratives that celebrate religious diversity.

Religious Pluralism in a "Trendy" Neighbourhood

Gentrification and urban transformation involve a regulatory process concerning some religious expressions (Albert-Blanco 2022a). The most disruptive practices, like street prayers in Paris, are often prohibited or subject to restrictions. In contrast, other manifestations, such as iftars in Barcelona (the communal ritual breaking of the fast during the Ramadan month), are not only tolerated but also actively promoted by public authorities, local stakeholders, including residents and trader associations, and even cultural museums. Consequently, these events are featured in media pieces that highlight the city's "cosmopolitanism," "diversity," or "multiculturalism."

In Goutte d'Or, the City Council planned the construction of the *Institut des cultures d'Islam* (Institute of Islamic Cultures). This centre currently operates with two branches: one dedicated to culture, open to a non-religious public, and the other providing a prayer room, managed by an Islamic association affiliated with the Great Mosque of Paris. The primary objective of public authorities was to offer "dignified" places of worship for the local Muslim community and address the issue of street prayers. Simultaneously, the project aimed to present a "positive image of Islam" to non-Muslims through cultural events and exhibitions. The Institute has played a pivotal role in the urban transformation of the area and is strategically located near other cultural centres that were established during the same period in the neighbourhood and other areas of the city (Chabrol et al. 2016; Clerval 2013; Albert-Blanco 2022b).

While some journalists, particularly those identifying with leftist or right-wing "French republican" ideologies (Bernard 2014), raised concerns about the compatibility of the Institute with the French principle of *laïcité*, others

positioned it as a crucial element in urban transformation. Newspapers like *Liberation*, *Le Monde* (Guillot 2011), and even *Le Figaro*, as well as cultural magazines including *Les Inrocks*, *Time Out*, *Vice*, or *Le Bonbon*, featured the Institute in sections dedicated to "things to do" in the Parisian north-east area. In these sections, the Institute is portrayed as a contributor to urban "diversity," surrounded by trendy shops, cafes, ethnic restaurants, and a fusion of Oriental flavours.

In 2014, the online edition of *Time Out* magazine in Paris, targeting a young and urban middle-class audience, published a guide to the 18th arrondissement, home to the Goutte d'Or neighbourhood. This area was characterized as a space where a "touristic quarter," an "African, Maghrebi, and Asiatic enclave," and a "trendy area" coexist. In this milieu, the Institute of Islamic Cultures was described as a "hybrid site" and a "common ground for Islam and the culture of its surroundings," situated in the "cosmopolitan streets of Goutte d'Or."

Positive representations of the neighbourhood are also endorsed by certain local actors who express their appreciation of the area's diversity. This pronounced taste for diversity (including religious one) does not mean racial prejudices have disappeared, but they are rarely overtly expressed (Tissot 2011). Moreover, it's important to note that these actors actively contribute to the regulation and limitation of this social, ethnic, and religious plurality. They do so through the organization of events and festivals, advocacy campaigns regarding the number and aesthetic of worship places, or the establishment of specific rules governing the use of social and cultural centres (Albert-Blanco 2019, 2022a).

Some of these actors, such as artists, local traders, or residents involved in associations, play a crucial role in promoting a revitalized image of the neighbourhood. They actively work to counteract the negative representations still projected by certain media outlets. In 2015, following the terrorist attacks in Paris, the American conservative TV channel *Fox News* published a map designating several "no-go zones" presumed to be Islamic enclaves: Goutte d'Or was part of them. A group of local artists and traders, associated with the organization La Goutte d'Or de la mode et du design, responded to this characterization by initiating a campaign to showcase and celebrate the neighbourhood. Cecile, who was part of this group, explained that they devised an itinerary through various neighbourhood studios and boutiques, titled "Barbès No-Go Zone," deliberately altering the spelling of "No" to play with the negative representations and subvert their meaning.

This campaign and the efforts to rebrand the neighbourhood spearheaded by local artists and traders were initially a response to the negative media

Figure 10.1. Myrha Street With New Cultural Establishments. Source: Author, June 2022.

portrayal of the Muslim population in the area. Interestingly, the religious dimension, including the presence and visibility of Islam, was not explicitly referenced. Instead, religion and its markers, such as worship places and halal shops, were blended into the broader narrative of "flavours" and "pleasures" of the neighbourhood. This implies that religious pluralism, particularly Islam, is valued when situated within a framework of social diversity and cultural events. The emphasis here is on appreciating the richness of the community's

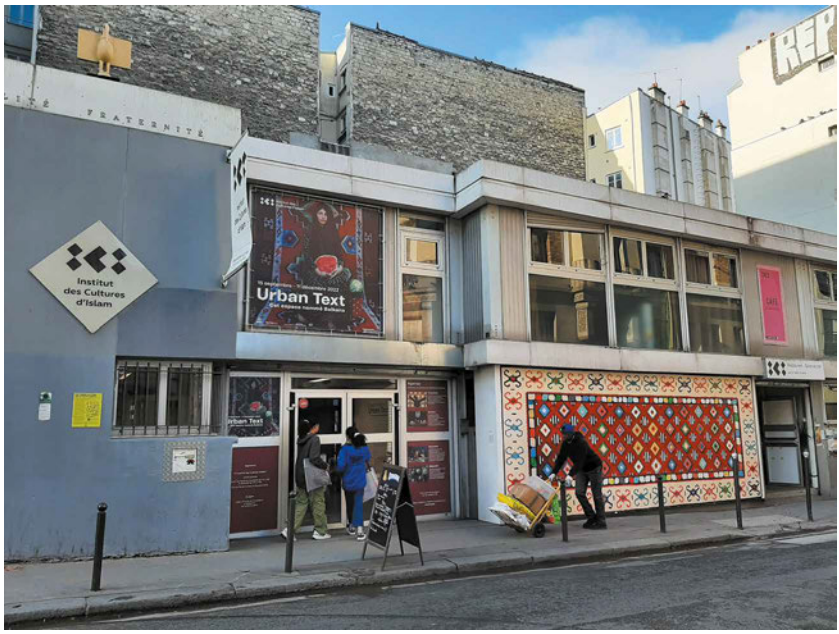

Figure 10.2. The Institute of Islamic Cultures in Goutte d'Or. Source, Author, December 2022.

cultural fabric, where religious elements coexist (in a nuanced way) with other aspects (shops, arts…) contributing to a vibrant and diverse local identity.

In Raval, the media actively played a role in portraying and cultivating a distinctive "multicultural" and "cosmopolitan" urban ambience. Religion is occasionally hinted at through references to specific ethnic and racial groups. In 2005, the widely read Spanish daily newspaper *El Pais* published a report about Raval in its "travellers" supplement. The article, titled "The Alternative Barcelona City-Center" (Salas 2005), outlined the main transformations resulting from the neighbourhood's regeneration. It portrayed the new cultural institutions, including the Barcelona Contemporary Art Museum (MACBA), as catalysts for additional private initiatives such as art galleries, trendy bars, and cafes in the area. Raval was characterized as a "rebranded multicultural area," and the article introduced what were presumed to be the daily scenes of the neighbourhood, featuring "hipsters with glasses" coexisting with other figures like "Maghrebi kids" or a "Young Arab woman wearing a veil."

In these portrayals, the acceptance of ethno-religious groups and their markers, such as the "veil," is contingent on their coexistence with other social groups. Immigrants residing in the sector are embraced because they do not form a "ghetto," and the presence of other communities like hipsters, artists, as well as various establishments, particularly bars, art galleries,

and design shops, contributes to shaping a distinctive urban landscape. This blend of diverse uses and social groups distinguishes Raval from other city-center neighbourhoods often perceived as "simply" touristic enclaves or "leisure areas." In contrast to these more mainstream sectors, Raval is often characterized as the "heart of the alternative, multiracial, and inclusive Barcelona" (Salas 2005), a representation that persists nowadays.

For instance, in 2013, the Barcelona edition of *Time Out* published a selection of addresses in Raval, predominantly focusing on Joaquim Costa Street, a major road in the north of the neighbourhood. The bars and "new shops" were described as contributing to a distinctive urban atmosphere, "inserted near the Pakistani supermarkets and shops" (TimeOut 2013). In 2015, the same publication presented a selection of five "Ramadan restaurants in Barcelona," showcasing the "best places to taste the typical menus of the fasting Islamic month" (Martin 2015). One of the featured addresses is located in Raval, described as a "Moroccan restaurant in the deepest Raval" that "resembles a shawarma shop" but is deemed a "recommendable place." These descriptions actively contribute to shaping a unique urban atmosphere and even a symbolic geography where establishments with ethnic and religious markers play a prominent role. These restaurants and shops (and their representation) redefine the neighbourhood's "authenticity" through diversity (Brown-Saracino 2004; Zukin 2008). Furthermore, this "authenticity" allows locals and visitors to explore distinctive places and flavours, moving beyond mainstream, touristic, or degraded urban areas.

The iftar ritual extends beyond "Moroccan restaurants" or worship places. It often takes place in public spaces, with Raval being a particularly visible venue for this commemoration in recent years. Various Muslim associations in the neighbourhood organize their own iftar events, where they offer traditional meals to non-Muslim neighbours and public authorities. Stakeholders interviewed as part of this research welcomed these actions, as they provided an opportunity to directly experience a Muslim ritual through food and music, transforming a religious celebration into a cultural and civic one (Martínez-Ariño and Griera 2020; Clot-Garrell et al. 2022). Catalan and Spanish media have routinely covered iftars during the Ramadan, often highlighting them as the most esteemed celebrations of the Muslim community. Reports frequently focus on neighbourhoods like Raval, where Islamic presence is prominent. For instance, in 2009, *El Periodico*, a widely read newspaper in Catalunya, published an article titled "Muslims and Barcelonians share a popular iftar in the Raval" (López 2009). The piece emphasized that this activity provided an opportunity to counteract "bad representations of the Raval's inhabitants," noting that for many non-Muslim

Figures 10.3 and 10.4. Drinks and "Oriental" Pastries in a Raval Public *Iftar*. Source: Author, June 2018.

participants, the iftar allowed them to experience a "colourful intercultural snack-dinner." In 2014, *La Vanguardia* also covered the celebration, stating that "Raval neighbours share an iftar with the Muslim community" (*La Vanguardia* 2014). In 2018, Betevé, the local Barcelona television channel, reported on its website that "Muslims break the Ramadan fasting in the first Raval popular iftar" (Segura 2018).

In these narratives, the media often echo the descriptions and explanations provided by the organizers of these events. Public iftars are portrayed as opportunities to enhance the coexistence of diverse communities and ethno-religious groups in the neighbourhood. They are also framed as activities that can contribute to the re-branding of the district by amplifying the visibility of its religious and cultural diversity. While general media may occasionally employ an exotic and orientalist rhetoric in covering these activities, local stakeholders, including both religious groups and secular associations, actively engage with newspapers and television outlets to project an image of the neighbourhood grounded in positive values such as diversity, coexistence, and solidarity. These associations frequently issue press releases to invite media coverage of such events. During my ethnographic observations of public iftars, I consistently noted the presence of journalists from local and regional newspapers and televisions. Additionally, these associations may issue public statements to respond to controversies about the neighbourhood and its religious pluralism. For instance, Maryam, a women's rights activist born in Morocco who has been residing in Barcelona since the 1990s and is actively involved in the Raval Interreligious group, explained this strategy in an interview. She referred to the collective response of various local religious and secular organizations after a conservative politician labelled the Raval as a "ghetto" in 2015:

> "We joined all together, we made a statement and [we read it] in the Rambla del Raval and well, in some way to make visible that not all the Raval thinks this. With this we make visible the common activism [of different ethno-religious groups and associations], but it does not end with making a statement and that's it, (…) we must continue working, continue working [for the neighbourhood]."[10]

In both Goutte d'Or and Raval, the media play a role in reshaping the image of the neighbourhoods by emphasizing diversity and religious pluralism. For instance, Goutte d'Or's Institute of Islamic Cultures is featured in reports by

10 Interview, June 8, 2017.

media like *Time Out*, whereas in Raval, public iftars are covered by general newspapers and television channels such as *La Vanguardia* and Betevé. The media frequently intertwine references to religious markers, such as halal shops, restaurants, and the "veil," with other indicators of "diversity" or "cosmopolitanism," such as trendy cafes or ateliers that emerge as part of the urban transformation. These additional markers are presented as crucial in making religion more acceptable, preventing the formation of "ghettos," and ensuring the blending of uses and users in public spaces according to the preferences of middle-class residents and gentrifiers. Local actors, including residents, artists, and religious associations, actively contribute to these discourses. They may contest the negative portrayal of the neighbourhood still perpetuated by some media and political figures by mobilizing rhetoric and actions rooted in values like diversity and conviviality.

Conclusion

The empirical evidence presented in this chapter underscores the ambivalent role of religion in the representations of gentrifying neighbourhoods. Religious pluralism, particularly Islam, serves as both a factor in stigmatization and a tool for urban re-branding (when controlled and regulated). This ambivalent role should not be interpreted as contradictory or following a linear evolution over time. Instead, it highlights the capacity of various actors to shape and reproduce urban imaginaries, emphasizing the pivotal role of discursive production in the construction of place and space. Religious expressions, such as worship places, public prayers, shops, and bodily expressions, are material and symbolic markers within these neighbourhoods, contributing to their representations. While the media play a significant role in this production, they are not the sole actors in constructing these images. Local actors, including activist residents, local traders, religious groups, and public authorities, actively contribute to shaping these imaginaries. They have the capacity to contest or legitimize certain representations and can strategically use media to disseminate statements or project specific images related to public activities. These representations, particularly those concerning religious expressions and Islam, are not isolated but are intricately shaped by social and power relations. They are linked to the otherness attributed to Islam and Muslims in Western societies and are intertwined with the broader urban transformations that reshape and redefine neighbourhoods.

The ambivalence towards Islam and Muslims is notably evident in certain media outputs. While general media tend to perpetuate an image of religion

intertwined with urban problems and violence, cultural magazines (or the culture and travel sections of mainstream media) often engage in a form of exoticism related to the area. This does not necessarily imply that some media or journalists are more racist or Islamophobic than others. Instead, it underscores the inherent ambivalence at the core of the otherness attributed to Islam and Muslims. Going beyond discursive analysis, a sociology of media production could shed light on the underlying logic of difference within this ambivalence. General news outlets are frequently associated with tragic events, such as terrorism, and stories about Islam become part of the competitive landscape for media audiences (Hajjat and Mohammed 2013). On the other hand, cultural and travel pieces target a specific urban audience characterized by a certain level of cultural capital and an expressed openness to diversity which may include an appreciation for religious and cultural pluralism and a quest for neighbourhoods "authenticity."

The comparative analysis between Goutte d'Or and Raval highlights the interplay of Islam and gentrification. Despite differences and specificities influenced by national contexts, religion, particularly Islam, is intricately woven into the representations of these neighbourhoods. This analysis adds a valuable dimension to existing scholarship on similar urban areas, which has predominantly focused on the presence and visibility of ethnic minority groups (Bacqué and Fijalkow 2006; Chabrol et al. 2016; Tissot 2011b; Tristán-Jiménez 2015). Furthermore, it extends the examination of how urban regeneration is portrayed in the media (Brown-Saracino and Rumpf 2011) by delving into the specific object of religion, a topic that has received comparatively less attention in the literature. The recognition of the interplay between religion and gentrification suggests the potential for a new research agenda in sociology and media studies, beyond the qualitative analysis presented in this chapter. Exploring representations of minority religious groups in these and other urban areas through a quantitative database and systematic content analysis could offer deeper insights into the dynamics of media portrayal. Such an approach could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationships between religion, urban transformations, and media discourses, offering valuable contributions to the literature on these interconnected themes.

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11. Part 3: Discussion

Yankel Fijalkow

Housing reflects both profound inequalities and mechanisms of differentiation. Like clothing, the place where we live illustrates our standard of living. The location of a dwelling and its furnishings, the building frontage, and the appearance of the street contribute to producing value judgements about the people who live in these places. The process of differentiation through housing designates people as less accessible or even less employable than others. This game of symbolic attribution reinforces economic inequalities.

Within this system, gentrification appears to be somewhat of an enigma. How can stigmatized neighbourhoods become the *nec plus ultra* in urban culture, even the *places to be*? The term gentrification, which first appeared in England in the early 1960s, has spread on both sides of the Atlantic over the last twenty years to describe the phenomenon of working-class neighbourhood transformation. Yet, the phenomenon later coined as gentrification has long been known. As early as the 1920s, urban sociologists in Chicago had identified marginal neighbourhoods where young artists and intellectuals began their careers and pursued their social advancement if they did not move to other, more prestigious areas of the city (Grafmeyer and Joseph 1990). In the long run of urban life, working-class neighbourhoods such as the Marais in Paris or Harlem in New York have gentrified and any urban planner knows that this fate is not inevitable.

The concept of gentrification, which describes the strategy of slowly taking over working-class districts, house by house, by the middle classes, is not in itself a revolution. In Europe, however, it illustrates a shift away from policies that sought to renew central working-class neighbourhoods in the 1960s and 1970s. At the time, Marxist sociologists criticized these actions which they referred to as "renovation-deportation," and consisted in removing the working-class population from the urban centre by demolishing their homes and replacing them with luxury buildings. Henri Lefebvre's *Le droit à la ville* ("Right to the City" 1967) condemned these practices. In Paris, Barcelona,

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and Berlin, authorities introduced "softer" procedures in the 1980s. They encouraged landlords to improve housing with public subsidies. In the long run, they were able to charge higher rents and therefore made the investments profitable. These new methods have led to a soft urbanism, or even a slow urbanism, which is out of all proportion to the transformation of North American cities, where even incentives produce visible results within a year (Chabrol et al. 2016). In Europe, gentrification has generated an inclusive discourse, standing up for the poor, the immigrants, and promoting social diversity. The narrative of the dream city, where all social groups mix in a single place of harmony and friendship, is readily disseminated. It often masks the reality of skyrocketing property prices that force the poorest to move elsewhere.

In Europe, however, gentrification is fuelled by penniless artists and intellectuals who move into working-class neighbourhoods. These pioneers are a key part of the process: they accept living with the working class and ethnic minorities and prepare the ground for the more affluent classes and subsequently, for developers. The term "gentry" refers to this new bourgeoisie which, unlike its more popular component, rejects the suburban lifestyle (car, large plots, and bungalows) and promotes urban centres, walking and small shops (Fijalkow and Préteceille 2006).

Why is there a new infatuation with neighbourhoods that were considered unhealthy and dangerous only a few decades ago? How did this shift occur, and what narratives have made these places attractive, as reflected by real estate prices?

Two chapters of this book take the example of two Parisian districts, Goutte d'Or and Belleville. The first was one of the Parisian scenes of the Algerian war because of the presence of immigrant workers and independence organizations. The buildings, dating from the nineteenth century, were often furnished hotels and the number of dwellings with sanitary facilities was twice lower than the Parisian average. Prostitution and drugs were rife in these unfit buildings. From the early 1980s, a series of upgrading and renewal programmes aimed at combating the deterioration of old housing and focused on reducing substandard living conditions. Dwellings in dilapidated buildings which were rented at high prices by the very poor were replaced by social housing with controlled rents. Private owners were also encouraged to undertake work to provide housing for the middle classes. Thus, although the working classes (employees and workers) still accounted for half of the district's active population in the 2010s, social transformation is underway. It is reflected by an increase in the proportion of high socio- professional categories and a widening of

the gap between social categories. Although the property market in this district is still one of the most accessible in Paris, the rise of real estate value has been spectacular. It has involved a selective re-appropriation of the housing stock and the confinement of the most modest households to uncomfortable accommodation, which is diminishing, particularly due to the decline in the number of furnished hotels (Fijalkow 2013). Like the Goutte d'Or, Belleville is an old working-class district of Paris. The memory of the Paris Commune haunts the area, which has recently been the scene of struggles between organizations defending social cohesion and the Paris municipal council, which intends to refurbish run-down housing in the area. The social housing stock, which makes up a large part of the area, is holding back the process of gentrification that has been spreading to the private housing stock. Along the small alleys and cul-de-sacs, private streets are home to young intellectuals and artists with a low living standard. The latter have created a festival of artists' studios to which the whole of Paris is invited in the spring (De Villanova and Deboulet 2011).

In these districts, public space was important. While property prices are beyond the reach of the working class who do not live in social housing, squares, streets and public market places are sites of resistance to gentrification. Former residents like to return to their neighbourhoods (Chabrol 2012). Perhaps this is why the public authorities are trying to "civilize" these places by paying more attention to them. Cleanliness and security are gentrification's best allies.

The notion of the village is therefore particularly present in the discourse on these neighbourhoods. It is characterized by the valorization of local and architectural resources from the past, the promotion of public spaces and processes that favour local negotiation. It rejects urban planning without memory, based on the blind application of impersonal rules. It values proximity. The model of the *community village* is deeply embedded and is based on an intelligence and depth of place that penetrates human personalities (Fijalkow 2006). This comes from afar. As early as 1937, the writer Daniel Halévy (1932), in *Les pays parisiens*, praised the notion of the village to describe Montmartre before its annexation. Inspired by the folklore of the 1920s, he attributed psychological virtues rooted in childhood to each district. This pro-city stance clashed with the ruralist discourse of some French intellectuals at the time. However, it continued in the 1970s with the publication of the magazine *Paris aux cent villages* under the patronage of Albert Laprade and Bernard Champigneulle, who had been promoting Parisian heritage since 1943. This magazine published numerous reports on "neighbourhoods at risk" and provided critical information on the progress

of municipal projects. In similar vein, sociologist Louis Chevalier denounced the "assassination" of working-class neighbourhoods due to the construction of high-rise buildings (Chevalier 1977). Technocracy, he argued, was incapable of understanding the soul of a city. His battle to save the violently demolished Halles district was based on the "common sense" of its users. While some people justified the operation in the name of hygiene, Chevalier declared: "the people of Les Halles and their representatives were quite happy with the so-called filth of the markets, that is, with their own filth, which they knew what to think of, which they were used to, and which they certainly tasted" (Chevalier 1977, 260). These examples revived the memory of the peripheral and working-class communes annexed by Haussmann in 1860, such as Belleville, Montmartre, or the Butte aux Cailles.

The nostalgia for working-class Paris that these neighbourhoods highlight is based on a search for authenticity, to which the media contribute greatly. Pierre Joffre's article, which shows how the Parisian press welcomes certain forms of commercial gentrification more positively than others, is suggestive. If shops are indicators of gentrification, the suspicion of a process of spatial reconquest is stronger when gentrification is reflected by the attraction a visibly rich clientele from outside the neighbourhood than when it reflects the bohemian bourgeois tastes of pioneers, intellectuals, and artists with little money. This undoubtedly reflects a narrow view of gentrification, limited to the most affluent. But it can also be explained by the nature of the narrative promoted by the companies involved. While some deny any connection to the neighbourhood and its past, others use the argument of authenticity and the *community village* metaphor to gain acceptance. In any case, the shopkeepers' narrative strategy is a plausible explanation. In the Goutte d'Or, some oriental patisseries wrap their cakes in European style, while others use local craftsmen. The story of the "fresh eggs of Paris" is symptomatic of these strategies. This business, which until recently sold live poultry to the local population, has reoriented its activity towards families looking for organic products. "Style" is therefore essential. In order to gentrify a neighbourhood with the help of the commercial apparatus, it is better to present it as inclusive, respectful of ecology and ethnic minorities, than as resolutely heteronomous from the values of the neighbourhood, as presented by the media.

In this context, the media value cultural, conflicting, and resistant neighbourhoods, as Marina Montaner illustrates. There is a nostalgia for urban struggles, and it is no coincidence that the reviled figure of Haussmann is stirred up by the opponents of gentrification (Clerval, 2016). When gentrification is perceived as negative, it indeed is fashionable to focus on

neighbourhoods that oppose it and are in line with their struggles. For many researchers, neighbourhoods such as Belleville in Paris or Le Raval in Barcelona are of historical and sociological interest. Shops and public spaces are closely observed as places of passage and resistance.

Thus, the media, who read researchers' work on gentrification, encourage the gentrification of the very districts which resist gentrification. This is in fact not a paradox. If gentrifiers who managed to settle in these neighbourhoods are not tormented by the guilt of having contributed to the disappearance of working-class neighbourhoods, they can be proud of having crossed a symbolic border. They will have earned the right to live in that working-class neighbourhood and will be one of those open-minded and tolerant people who had the courage to live among the poor, despite the problems of violence and dirt. They will be able to testify to the uniqueness of their way-of-life and will encourage other gentrifiers to follow him and develop the same discourse. In *La cité heureuse*, Benoît Duteurtre (2007) portrayed a resident who was exempted from paying rent in exchange for publishing his novels about the district where he lives and where life is good. Ultimately, the romanticization of rebellious neighbourhoods is as much about rebelling against gentrification as it is about promoting it.

All these examples show that the role of the media is fundamental. The romanticization of neighbourhoods by the media supports the process of gentrification. This new contemporary process differs from traditional gentrification processes. The journalists who run them play a key role because they create the illusion of both a nostalgic return to the past and an eternal present (Boyme 2001; Hartog 2003). Their narratives are often based on those of researchers and only the past that appeals to the reader is preserved. The present is only a point of arrival for which no alternative is envisaged. This pasteboard setting takes shape on the pages of the newspapers in which they write. By freezing the roles of the actors, their performative narratives condition everyday interactions and behaviour.

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Part 4

Voicing Alternative Narratives and Resisting Gentrification

12. The "I am Denver" Chief Storytelling Office: Critical Co-Creative Media to Change the Dominant Narrative of Gentrification?

Simon Renoir

Abstract: The chapter deals with the establishment of the "I am Denver" participatory storytelling project in Denver, launched in 2018 in order to change the mainstream media narrative about gentrification which is not representative of the diversity of local cultures and communities. The "I am Denver" storytelling project tackles this issue by producing and editing two main types of content: documentaries about the history and culture of local minority communities (especially Native, Black, and Latinx communities, but also LGBTQIA+ communities), and short stories relating to inhabitants' daily lives told at "storytelling labs." The stories are videoed and shared on social media platforms. Drawing on a socio-semiotic and discourse analysis of this media project (its design, its content), I examine the objectives and the potential effects of this one-of-a-kind approach.

Keywords: participatory storytelling; alternative media; gentrification of memory; culture of daily life.

Introduction

During the summer of 2017, the City of Detroit launched a new—and unprecedented, for a governmental institution—"Chief Storytelling Office." The service consists of a newsroom composed of journalists and video producers, headed (from July 2017 until January 2020) by "Chief Storyteller"

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Aaron Foley, a trained journalist and the former editor of *BLAC Detroit*, a local magazine that promotes black culture and community. In order to "combat psychological gentrification and the media portrayals of Detroit focusing on white entrepreneurs,"[1] the service produces stories that celebrate black, Latinx, and long-time residents' culture and initiatives and publishes them on a dedicated website (theneighborhoods.org). In 2018, the cities of Atlanta and Denver opened similar services, pursuing the same goal: building a narrative of reconciliation situated between the dominant media narrative that celebrates gentrification and the anti-gentrification protests' narrative that lacks visibility. They also want to correct the distorted image of inner-city urban neighbourhoods portrayed by the dominant media (Costera Meijer 2013).

This chapter studies how the Denver Chief Storytelling Office (subsequently referred to as CSO) tries to slow down the gentrification process by producing multiple representations of the city and the diversity of its people and thereby seeking to create an alternative narrative. As in other cities worldwide, gentrification gained a foothold and accelerated in Denver in the late 2000s and in the 2010s. A critique of gentrification emerged (for academic works on the subject, see Sbicca 2019; Jackson and Buckman 2020), forcing the local government to address this issue. This is encapsulated by CSO's latest documentary, which is presented with the following statement: "gentrification has caused population shifts and historic buildings have been razed in the name of development. To preserve that history, the City of Denver has embarked on an exploration of the diverse communities that have helped shape our city." The CSO is in charge of a storytelling project called "I am Denver" and produces two types of content: documentary films and short personal stories (inspired by the "Humans of New York" project)[2] by city inhabitants. Most of them were videoed at "storytelling labs," during which residents are invited to come and tell their personal stories and share their bond with the city.

My objective is twofold. First, I intend to describe the mission, the design, the method, and the functioning of the "I am Denver" storytelling project, as well as define this hybrid approach. Following this, by comparing an

1 Author's interview with Aaron Foley, Detroit, September 29, 2017.

2 Humans of New York (HONY) is an artistic project, started in 2010 by American photographer Brandon Stanton. The initial goal was to photograph many New Yorkers in the streets and create a catalogue of the city's inhabitants. Quotes and short stories from people's lives are placed alongside their portraits. From its beginnings as a blog, the project has grown to reach 20 million followers on social media and has expanded to feature stories from twenty countries, and two books have been produced.

analysis of official discourse concerning the project and an analysis of the content produced, I shall evaluate its potential symbolic and political effects. Prior to this, it is necessary to further contextualize the relationship between the media, gentrification, and underrepresented communities.

The discourses and representations of a city contribute to creating an image of a place, but they also play a role in constructing the material place itself (Noyer and Raoul 2011; Raoul 2017; Mennel 2019). For example, media portrayals of neighbourhoods undergoing gentrification (Zukin 2008), restaurant reviews (Zukin et al. 2017), and geo-tagged tweets referring to such places (Gibbons et al. 2017) will likely increase the desirability of a neighbourhood. Thus, these representations have an influence on one of the decisive requirements for gentrification to occur, that is a cultural preference for inner city residence by a certain segment of the service class (Hamnett 1991), and more broadly by middle-class professionals. The media representations confer symbolic value upon once-devalued places, which will attract new potential home buyers and thus spur on the gentrification process.

For a long time, academic literature has suggested that media coverage was overwhelmingly supportive of gentrification, with Neil Smith, for example, implying that the media is a "revanchist" tool of the elite that helps real estate developers to set up gentrification strategies (Smith 1996; Tolfo and Doucet 2020). Although this view has been given greater nuance by several studies showing that media coverage is much more diverse, ranging from wholly supportive to strictly critical (Brown-Saracino and Rumpf 2011), recent work argues that, since the mid-2000s, contemporary media critiques of gentrification have been "constructed through a decidedly middle-class lens" and that "working-class or immigrant perspectives are themselves 'evicted' from narratives" regarding gentrification (Tolfo and Doucet 2020, 13–14). This is of the utmost importance for this study since the CSO in Denver—and in Detroit (Renoir 2021)—has been implemented specifically to reintegrate working-class and long-time residents' perspectives into the narratives of urban change. Besides, media representations of working-class, immigrant, and ethnic minority neighbourhoods tend to distort reality by insisting on various social problems in an unbalanced way and ultimately stigmatizing these populations (Champagne 1991; Wacquant 2006; Berthaut 2013).

Considering this and drawing on an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that ranges from media studies to urban studies and discourse analysis, and specifically literature concerning mechanisms that try to give voice to the voiceless (Ferron et al. 2022), this chapter raises a series of questions. Can a change in narrative have an effect on the gentrification process itself?

How is the "I am Denver" project designed to achieve this goal? Can the project give way to a progressive politics of self-representation and direct participation or is it a superficial mode of participation that only serves to promote the local government?

To answer these questions, the methodology of this chapter draws on an analysis of the strategies and discourses of the stakeholders in charge of the CSO, as well as a content analysis of the videos produced (six documentaries and approximately ninety short stories by inhabitants) by the "I am Denver" project. Specifically, we restrict the analysis to examining the scenography of the enunciation (as defined by Maingueneau in Angermuller et al. 2014) and to identifying narrative themes that emerge from the various stories. The set of data is completed by one semi-structured videoconference interview with Denver Chief Storyteller Rowena Alegria and her main collaborator, multimedia journalist Roxana Soto (duration: one hour forty-two minutes), and by "I am Denver" media and social media metrics.[3]

The chapter will first describe and circumscribe the "I am Denver" storytelling project before exploring three levels of analysis. It will look, firstly, at how the service is designed to foster the social recognition of marginalized groups, secondly, at its ambition to rewrite the city's history, and finally, at the role of participatory storytelling in the creation of new media narratives.

The "I am Denver" Storytelling Project: A Hybrid Media Approach

The "I am Denver" storytelling project is led by the Chief Storytelling Office (CSO), an internal City Hall service created specifically in 2018 at the initiative of Rowena Alegria (the current "Chief Storyteller"), who was formerly Mayor Michael Hancock's communications director for three years. She conceived the project and proposed it to the Mayor, who offered it support and an allocated budget. Since 2018, the CSO has been located within the Agency for Human Rights and Community Partnerships (HRCP), in the City of Denver (even though its presence is not visible on the agency's websites). It does not depend on the Communication and Marketing Department, nor on the Mayor's Office, although it works in close collaboration with them. First and foremost, it is a communications project and a media object, although it is a hybrid project, unlike any other form of media.

3 The metrics have been provided by Rowena Alegria and Roxana Soto from the Denver CSO. I express my thanks and my gratitude to them for sharing this data.

Alternative Media, Co-Creative Media, State Media…or None of the Above?

Although the "I am Denver" project run by the CSO does not describe itself as a media outlet, it has most of the defining characteristics of one. It is led by journalists, it employs other multimedia technicians (video, sound, and film editors), and it is a material apparatus that relies on technical support (a web page, and videos posted on social media platforms) and facilitates communication through the production and circulation of signs, messages, and sociocultural representations (Sonnac and Gabszewicz 2013). Many scholars distinguish between mainstream and alternative media. Bailey, Cammaerts, and Carpentier (2007, 18) use four criteria to differentiate between them: mainstream media are usually considered to be a) large-scale and geared towards large, homogenous audiences, b) state-owned or commercial companies, c) vertically (or hierarchically) structured organizations staffed by professionals and d) carriers of dominant discourses and representations. The CSO has a complex position in regard to these criteria.

On the organizational side, the CSO has a staff of four people and a budget of around $300,000 annually, making it a small-scale project. The budget comes from the City Hall, directly from the Mayor's Office, so it is state-owned. It is staffed by professionals (one journalist/editor and storyteller, one multimedia journalist, and two sound, video, and film editors) and has a hierarchy to some degree, albeit a very minor one compared to typical mainstream media. Moreover, their organizational methods are very flexible. Rowena Alegria claims that "the strategy is ever evolving" and adds: "I tell my team that everything is a test because nobody's done this before" (interview with author, July 8, 2021). On the strategic and operational side (the type of audience, the type of content, and representations it produces), it posts and shares its content on various social media. Technically it can be seen by a large audience, but its main digital public space consists of a web page within the City of Denver website and it focuses on reaching underserved communities and marginalized groups. Last but not least, and I will explore this further in the next section, the "I am Denver" project seeks to produce non-dominant discourses and representations and stresses the importance of self-representation.

More precisely, Rowena Alegria and Roxana Soto (chief multimedia journalist at the CSO) contrast their journalistic practices with those of the mainstream media. Even though they have audience performance targets, they are less time-constrained and less audience-oriented, since their funding does not rely on advertising. As Roxana Soto explains:

> Our interviews are not 10, 20, 15 minutes, sometimes they go over an hour. […] And we'll ask questions that other people don't ask cause obviously the news media doesn't work like that. It's like "Let's go! […] Let's put it up there! […] [A]nd then we move on to the next thing."

In addition, their desire to express the voices of the voiceless means that they "don't use narrators or voice-overs," they "don't use a script going to a story." Instead, they let ordinary people tell their stories in the first person, which is supposed to "close the psychic distance" from the audience and open up a more emotional connection. As Rowena Alegria puts it:

> It's not our interpretation of a story, it's these people having the chance to tell their own story. And I think that's a huge difference from typical media or typical history in general. I mean, it gets interpreted. And we don't do interpreting, we allow people to speak their truth.

Various aspects of these practices (both journalistic and organizational) correspond to the ethos of alternative media. According to Mowbray (in Atton 2015, 29), alternative media practitioners "sought explicitly to work against the grain of traditional journalistic 'regimes of objectivity' […] by taking up […] a declared bias in solidarity with those who struggle against oppression and domination."

Finally, the CSO produces three types of content: first, film documentaries that all focus on underrepresented, minority communities and cultures (e.g.. "Celebrating Indigenous Peoples' Day"; "From Prohibited to Proud: The History of Drag in Denver"). Second, the "featured stories" section highlights noteworthy stories by inhabitants who are committed to supporting their communities or advocating for specific causes. Third, the CSO has designed "storytelling labs," during which ordinary residents can come, write, and tell their stories, which are videoed. At present, there are approximately one hundred stories available on the website. These storytelling labs are organized by the CSO, usually in partnership with various local stakeholders (schools, public libraries, performing artists and writers' organizations, local community centres). They specifically target minority and underserved communities. While Denver's population is around 55 per cent White (non-Hispanic), 9 per cent Black or African American, 29 per cent Hispanic (including 22 per cent White Hispanic), approximately 3.5 per cent Asian, and 3.5 per cent Multiracial,[4] around two-thirds of the storytelling labs'

4 See: https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/denvercitycolorado,denvercountycolorado/PST045221; and https://datausa.io/profile/geo/denver-co/#demographics.

participants belong to underrepresented communities. Whereas the moniker "featured stories" implies an editorial choice with a staff member covering the ground to find stories, no editorial choice guides the stories from the lab: it encourages broad participation from the community.

Nevertheless, the CSO cannot be labelled an alternative media outlet since it originated inside of the local government and is directly funded by the City of Denver budget. This contradicts one of the most widespread definitions of alternative media as a "third voice" between state media and private commercial media (Bailey, Cammaerts, and Carpentier 2007). In this regard, it seems obvious to characterize it as public service media or state media since its funding and ownership are public. However, such characterization would not be fully applicable, since its activities and practices differ greatly from those of public service broadcasters. For example, the CSO does not broadcast news. Furthermore, even though the City council sets audience objectives and supervizes the entire project, it does not directly intervene.

The "I Am Denver" project also differs from alternative media in the way it manages participation. All the CSO's content is edited and published by professional staff members (journalists and content creators/editors), with no content coming from amateur or citizen journalism, unlike the approaches frequently followed by alternative media (Mowbray, in Atton 2015). Likewise, the CSO encourages participation, but it does so in a superficial or *partial* way rather than through a full or *intensive* mode of participation that would involve letting residents decide the types of content the CSO should produce, or participate in the daily management and overall direction of the storytelling project. Finally, in order to circumscribe the "I am Denver" project more precisely, it is necessary to look closer at the original vision and the objectives of the service.

The Construction of a Co-Discourse to Change the Gentrification Narrative

Originally, the project emerged out of growing community concerns regarding gentrification and displacement. Commenting on this issue, the City of Denver's Mayor Michael Hancock said that "one of the things that became clear was that the loss of cultural identity—the loss of our history—was one of the emotional flash-points for people. People said, 'Our stories are being lost. Our history is being lost. How do we preserve that?'"[5] The CSO

5 Lundgren Kim (2019). "Denver's Chief Storyteller on the Power of Stories to Engage Your Community," KLA Associates, https://www.kimlundgrenassociates.com/en-us/blog/denver-storytelling-podcast. Accessed April 21, 2021.

was launched to solve this problem and, until this day, its main goal has been to "rewrite[e] Denver's history one untold story at the time."[6] This is probably the main argument that ultimately qualifies the CSO as alternative media, insofar as the project challenges the way in which social reality is defined and named by the dominant power (Couldry and Curran 2003, cited in Atton 2015). More precisely, the project was previously described as follows on its homepage:

> I Am Denver recognizes the individuals who have made this city. In the same way that historic preservation efforts honor and protect buildings, we honor and protect Denver's history, culture, and vision by recording and archiving in video, audio, and photo the faces and voices of the people who make Denver.

Here, it is interesting to note that the mission statement insists on the collective making ("the individuals," "the voices of the people") of the city. In the media, Mayor Michael Hancock and Chief Storyteller Rowena Alegria have declared that the project tries to invert City Hall's communications approach. Instead of getting City Hall's message out, it is about listening to the people's voices, especially the voices of "underrepresented residents," and helping them get *their* message out (Bloomberg Cities 2019; Lundgren 2019). Surprisingly, given its institutional origin, the CSO resembles the hyperlocal and citizen media examined in other chapters of this volume (see Sadoux's contribution) that try to spark and sustain debates that tend to be ignored by the traditional and dominant media.

Furthermore, an in-depth analysis of the "I am Denver" project and of the stakeholders' discourses allows us to identify four interconnected goals. First, it seeks to "reach underserved populations"[7] and communities and tell their stories. Second, Rowena Alegria and her staff want to do this "*in spite of today's media*" that do not give an "accurate reflection" of who these communities are. They want to "give a more honest representation" of these communities. Hence, they develop a set of media practices that they themselves label "alternative."

The third and fourth goals are best expressed by Rowena Alegria during the interview, when she states: "My goal was not just to tell stories and

6 See: https://www.denvergov.org/Community/Neighborhoods/Office-of-Storytelling.

7 All subsequent quotes in this section (unless otherwise mentioned) come from the author's semi-structured interview with Rowena Alegria and Roxana Soto, videoconference Lille/Denver, August 7 and July 8, 2021.

correct history. Like that's not big enough, right? My goal was to make sure that these voices are heard in City Hall to influence policy" (interview with author, videoconference Lille/Denver, July 8, 2021). In other words, there is the ambition to rewrite the history of the city, insisting on ordinary people's oral history and oral testimonies and employing digital tools such as videos to make room for marginalized communities' histories in the official records of the city's history. In so doing, the Storytelling Office is fighting against what some scholars recently coined the "gentrification of memory," defined as "the methodical and deliberate eviction of marginalized communities' histories, in service of capital accumulation and dominant class interests" (Tolfo and Doucet 2022, 7). The last goal of the Office is to influence policy, that is to act as a mediator during the drafting of neighbourhood development plans and as an interlocutor for the City of Denver Department of Community Planning and Development.

Ultimately, the CSO's activities seem to be in line with the practice of "digital storytelling" that emerged in the late 1990s at the Center for Digital Storytelling in Berkeley and which subsequently spawned a "co-creative" (sometimes called "critical participatory") media movement (Spurgeon and Burgess, in Atton 2015). Indeed, in co-creative media, "creative practitioners and media professionals facilitate community-based self-representation in ways that critically engage with the social change potential of participatory media cultures" (Spurgeon 2015, 133). In this way, the CSO's action facilitates the emergence of a (new to the local area) public problem thanks to the construction of a co-discourse (Auboussier 2015) which combines a counter-discourse (the anti-gentrification narrative) coming from a subaltern counter-public and an institutional discourse.

The Potential Value of Participatory Storytelling in Fighting Gentrification and Advocating for Social Change

In this second section of the chapter, I wish to provide an in-depth analysis of these questions. First, I examine how the enunciation scenography designed by the CSO during the storytelling labs aims to foster social recognition. Second, I reflect on the CSO's desire to rewrite the history of Denver and its neighbourhoods through the revalorization of everyday life, ordinary stories, practices, and people. Finally, I ask whether these participatory storytelling practices are giving way to a new progressive politics of self-representation and direct participation or if they should be seen as new, ambiguous, and superficial modes of participation that only serve to promote the local government.

A Semiotic Scenography to Foster Social Recognition as a Tool Against Gentrification

The storytelling labs design a scenography with a series of semiotic features that frame residents' utterances. A photographic portrait of each participant is taken from a middle distance before they tell their story in front of the camera (again, filmed from a middle distance). At the end of their story, they have to perform a specific speech act: saying their name, followed by the same catchphrase "and I am Denver," which are the final words of each video (for example "I am Vanesha McGee and I am Denver"). This is also the hashtag used to promote the project on social media: #IamDenver.[8] Finally, the videos are edited with background instrumental music (usually a soft piano melody) that enhances the stories' emotional side (Roxana Soto, interview with the author). Using this semiotic scenography, the storytelling labs seek to produce a sense of homogeneity and underline the sociopolitical relationship between the singularity of each personal story and the collective sense of belonging to the same community. Indeed, the portrait as a typical journalistic genre models the representation of the relationship between individuals and their community (Wrona 2005, 2012), evidencing the recognition of an individual subject by a community (Beyaert-Geslin 2017).

Furthermore, this semiotic scenography invites residents to "give an account" of themselves, a discursive practice that establishes a dialogue between the "I" who is speaking and the "you" (sometimes fictional) who is listening. This practice facilitates the development of one's own subjectivity and helps recognize the radical alterity of the other (Butler 2005). Thus, the storytelling labs' enunciation scenography seems to facilitate social recognition both for the speaker and for the receiver.

Finally, the catchphrase and hashtag #IamDenver appears to be an attempt to reinforce the residents' identification with their city, both as a piece of land called Denver, as a community, and as a governing institution that rules that portion of land. The words "I am Denver" are strongly linked to identity and identification. Here, identity goes hand-in-hand with recognition, especially the social recognition of minorities and dominated social groups (since the participants are predominantly from minority social groups), which is at the core of the politics of multiculturalism (Ricœur 2005). This initiative can be viewed as the first step of a policy that fights gentrification insofar as one of the problems caused by gentrification, as

8 According to the CSO team, the "I am Denver" catchphrase has served its branding purpose and is no longer used in the most recent labs.

highlighted in recent work, is the disregard often expressed by gentrifiers (or newcomers) for the community in which they settle (Donnelly 2018). Moreover, even when it does not cause displacement, gentrification can have negative effects on long-term residents' sense of place: they can feel "out-of-place" when their familiar haunts (shops, cafes, services, meeting places, other people in the neighbourhood) become unfamiliar (Shaw and Hagemans 2015). If social recognition is the first step towards reinforcing long-term residents' sense of place, cultural and historical recognition would be the second.

The Construction of Ordinary Legitimacy to Build a "Right to Memory" for Marginalized Groups

One of the CSO's main objectives (as stated on its homepage) consists of archiving ordinary people's stories to protect the collective memory in the same way that historic preservation protects buildings. Mayor Michael Hancock described the Office of Storytelling as compiling "a digitized encyclopaedia" of people's stories. The CSO proposes to record the personal stories about ordinary people's everyday lives. The office's goal is to make sure they are:

> correcting a history that has left people of colour out, poor people, LGBTQ people, people who were living with disabilities.... They were not part of the City's official history even though I knew darn well that was wrong. You know, we had helped to build the city and we had been here the whole entire time (Rowena Alegria, interview with the author).

This brings us to the crucial and complex question of how history is written (and by whom) and of how memory is constituted (and by whom). As Rowena Alegria puts it, the CSO's goal is in line with what historians call "history from below," defined as "rescuing stories from the inequalities of collective memory, and national history" (Hitchcock 2013; Cerutti 2015). From this perspective, recording and valuing everyday stories and everyday life might be seen as a practice of social resistance against various modes of domination that are naturalized by the official written history (Certeau 1975) and against the colonization of ordinary cultural practices by the modernist system of power (Certeau et al. 1990).

Firstly, by giving voice to the voiceless (and giving a name to the nameless with the catchphrase "I am [name of the person] and I am Denver") and by promoting the use of oral histories, the rewriting of history can be interpreted in a very broad, symbolic sense as an act of "deinfantilization"

of citizens, and hence an act of democratization (Certeau 1975). Secondly, more precisely and in a more practical sense, stories from the "I am Denver" storytelling labs frequently deal with themes and issues relating to daily life. For example, listening to the stories, the significance of the theme of "home" and of the role the home plays in inhabitants' attachment to a place is clearly visible.[9] Many ordinary and resistant practices are based around the home (like "homemade" and "do-it-yourself" objects) and start with the claim of "being at home" (Certeau et al. 1990). Thus, by giving value and visibility to long-term residents' sense of place, the "I am Denver" project questions the feeling of being "out-of-place" (Shaw and Hagemans 2015), as well as the issue of displacement as a result of gentrification.

Furthermore, the CSO's most recent documentary, titled "Qué viva la raza! Honoring a Denver legacy" (February 2022, thirty-two minutes), is an overview of the 150-year-plus history of Mexicano, Chicano, and Latino people in Denver. It has served as a blueprint for creating the "Latino/Chicano Historic Context Study," a new document that will be used to guide preservation planning focused on specific ethnic, racial, or cultural groups. The CSO is also working in partnership with the Department of Community Planning Development as a mediator and facilitator to bring neighbourhood voices into official conversations concerning neighbourhood planning. In turn, they can be involved in deciding the rules of a neighbourhood: how high will the buildings be, what will mobility look like, how many parks will exist, and so on (Rowena Alegria, interview with author).

Thus, the CSO is fostering the construction of ordinary legitimacy based on the recognition of ordinary practices (Didier and Philifert 2019) and on the recognition of a right to memory and a right to the city (Lefebvre 2009) that would help preserve buildings and places that may not have exceptional architectural features but that encapsulate the immaterial culture and memory of a social group (Didier 2018). In these various ways, the "I am Denver" storytelling project, much like other independent or alternative media studied in this volume (see Vincent's contribution, for example), can trigger anti-gentrification resistance. Its implicit critique of displacement has revived the debates on gentrification and has started to change (locally)

9 The theme of home appears in many stories (see for example Tibby Miller, posted on YouTube on September 29, 2019; Charlotte Vitak, Suzi Q Smith, October 16, 2019; Karen Van Haaften, Karen Pellegrin, August 9, 2019). Sometimes, the "storytelling labs" focus on one specific theme, with one lab about "Social Injustice," and another titled "Health Equity Collaborative Goes Home Again" and described as follows: "Home plays a vital role in our health and well-being. [...] Our ability to thrive depend[s] upon the stability of our living situation, and our sense of home, our memories, help determine who we are and where we fit in the world."

the dominant narrative that tends to favour a critical class perspective (Tolfo and Doucet 2020). In addition, by addressing the "gentrification of memory," it could stop places that are stalwarts for local communities from disappearing and, as a consequence, prevent further displacement.

Evaluating the Democratizing Effects of this Participatory Storytelling Project

To end this chapter, I wish to address one last issue. If participatory storytelling, as utilized by the Denver CSO, can have positive, democratizing effects on media narratives, this supposed democratization must be scrutinized and assessed. Is the CSO an effective discursive and political space for tackling the issues related to gentrification? Or is it just another depoliticizing public relations tool?

Critiques of both storytelling and the participation of ordinary citizens have flourished in recent years. Within a context that some authors call the "biographical society," various studies illustrate the growing significance of telling personal stories and shed light on the paradoxical injunction of this practice, caught between subjection and subjectivation as both an act of resistance and an act of allegiance (Delory-Momberger 2012).[10] Indeed, on the one hand, storytelling has been considered as a narrative power that adds to the disciplinary techniques of government (Salmon 2008; Godin 2014) and that carries in itself the suspicion of lies (Bonnet et al. 2021). On the other, scholars assert that storytelling can help bring mutual recognition or even reconciliation between communities in conflict (Neile 2015; Maiangwa and Byrne 2015), or that it can facilitate individual empowerment and stimulate community participation, as well as sense of place (Costera Meijer 2013). Digital storytelling workshops have been utilized, with varying but often positive effects, in many different fields, ranging from planning and evaluation in health and education services to dealing with experiences of migration, poverty, gender, and youth violence (Spurgeon and Burgess, in Atton 2015)

In response to similar critiques expressed in the media (Lundgren 2019; Vyse 2019; Bloomberg Cities 2019), Denver's Mayor Michael Hancock confesses that a project like the CSO will not "solve any major economic issue that is challenging Denver today," adding: "this is not about hiding anything. In fact, let's reveal it." The statement, and thus the "I am Denver" project, can be interpreted in at least two ways. On the one hand, it can be viewed

10 This also refers to Michel Foucault's governmentality theory and the development of the modern subject (Foucault 2001).

as an example of depoliticization, which "involves removing a political phenomenon from comprehension of its *historical* emergence and from a recognition of the *powers* that produce and contour it" (Brown 2006, cited in Clarke 2010, 646), since it will not be grappling with the main economic issues. On the other, it can be seen as the creation of a public space open to criticizing and revealing the power mechanisms that cause gentrification or other sociopolitical problems.

This is an old debate in the field of participatory politics and among the practitioners, activists, and researchers who implement and study various projects and apparatus aiming at giving voice to the voiceless (see Ferron et al. 2022). The inclusion of ordinary citizens in participatory political processes sometimes moves towards new forms of populism and the depoliticization of related issues (Clarke 2010.). In the same way, there is no easy correlation between the participation of ordinary people in the media and cultural democratization. The growing participation of ordinary people in the media could lead to a populist and "demotic turn" (meaning "of or for the common people") rather than engendering actual democratic changes in the structure of power, in the distribution of wealth, or in the enforcement of individual rights and freedoms (Turner 2009).

Interestingly, this relates to another old debate between cultural studies and the political economy of communication, namely, whether or not we should prioritize economic relations over cultural (and discursive) relations (see Garnham 1995). Without re-enacting this debate—and because I believe, following Maurice Godelier (2010), that the human and social construct of reality always combines symbolic and material elements—we must agree with Nicholas Garnham when he asserts that "no empowerment will mean much unless it is accompanied by a massive shift in control of economic resources" (Garnham 1995, 65, 70).

This being said, I nonetheless believe the CSO could have a positive effect on empowerment and social justice, depending on its audience and visibility. Fundamentally, the CSO is a media outlet and institutional mechanism that intends to give a voice to the "voiceless," or, in other words, to give their speech the visibility, or even better, the authority it lacks (see Ferron et al. 2022). Thus, one of the crucial criteria for evaluating the CSO's action has to be the circulation, visibility, and legitimacy of the content it produces. So far, the CSO has shown good but varying performance on different indicators and metrics; its figures are above the City of Denver's average. On social media, the overwhelming majority of "I Am Denver" posts outperform the average city post in terms of Facebook distribution

score, reach, and impressions.[11] Over the last three years, the posts have averaged over 450,000 impressions on Facebook and over 300,000 on Twitter, with an engagement rate of around 1.8 per cent on Twitter (above their initial target of 0.6 per cent). The number of video views on YouTube and Instagram is not impressive, at around 10,000 to 15,000 total views per year, but the average number of views per video is growing. Recently, the documentary "Chicanas: Nurturers and Warriors" won an award at the 2022 Xicanindie Film Festival (a Denver-based film festival focused on Latino and Chicano films), four "I Am Denver" films were nominated for Heartland Emmy Awards and the CSO received three Awards of Excellence (in 2020 and 2021) from the National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors.

Ultimately, and even though stories and discourses alone cannot stop gentrification, they have a performative element. If they continue to gain visibility and authority, they might mark an important first step towards sparking a conversation, revealing problems, and thereafter influencing urban policies. Given the relative inability of existing democratic mechanisms and institutions—whether they be traditional ones or more recent deliberative, participatory ones—to solve major economic issues (such as poverty, growing inequalities, and gentrification) and to deal with a political crisis of representation, the CSO belongs to a newer movement that seeks to encourage, or even force, the diversification of expressions and representations in the public debate and spaces (Ferron et al. 2022).

Conclusion

To conclude, the Denver Chief Storytelling Office is a hybrid media project, positioned somewhere between co-creative media, alternative media, and public service media. It utilizes participatory storytelling in order to create new representations of the city that differ from the mainstream media narrative of gentrification. By giving a voice to the "voiceless," it advocates for a more inclusive vision of urban change and for a more democratic society. Nevertheless, it is important to err on the side of caution and not automatically assume that participatory storytelling has democratizing effects, since storytelling as a marketing technique and the call for ordinary citizens' participation as a political process have been widely used with the opposite effect: reinforcing the power of dominant institutions. However,

11 Impressions refer to how many times a post appears on a person's feed.

when seen as a whole, I believe that participation and storytelling can lead to positive outcomes, provided they are shaped by a sense of inclusion. The polyphonic and productive dimension brought by the multiple participants alleviates the negative, insidious aspects of political storytelling. As Christian Salmon (2008) contends, the narratives of power associated with storytelling techniques can become narratives of resistance.

The media play an important role in gentrification as they shape and publicize positive or negative representations of gentrification (and/or gentrifiers, gentrified neighbourhoods, and so on) and its effects. In recent years, as gentrification has seemed to become a worldwide and inevitable phenomenon (especially in every major US city), critiques and discourses have shifted their focus towards the cultural representations and effects of gentrification, increasingly pointing towards cultural gentrification and a gentrification of memory. Although these are not new, the issues here are associated more specifically with the third wave of gentrification and they need to be tackled by employing new sets of policies and mechanisms. The Denver CSO is one of them. It would be interesting to study the CSO further, not least since its response to these issues goes beyond the problem of gentrification. Its ambition of including sociocultural subaltern groups in the written history of our societies and to build a more inclusive collective memory is in line with broader debates, past and present, about the construction of (post)modern multicultural representations and identities. Perhaps this is one more reason why we should pay attention to the connection between gentrification and the media.

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13. Citizen Journalism and Gentrification: Local Community Views and Discourses on Urban Change in Brixton, London, 2011–2022

Stéphane Sadoux

Abstract: This chapter deals with urban change and gentrification in Brixton, London. It focuses on the coverage of such processes by the *Brixton Buzz* blog, which is a prime example of hyperlocal news produced by citizen journalists. The chapter draws from theoretical frameworks from journalism, in order to question the identity, status, and role of those who produce news. It focuses on the rhetoric propagated by the website to resist gentrification and demonstrates that language reflects the attitude, beliefs, and concerns of the local community and is thus a powerful indicator of community reaction to urban change over time.

Keywords: hyperlocal news, blogs, *Brixton Buzz*

Introduction

The district of Brixton holds a special place in the history of London: during the post-war years, this area of Lambeth Borough became home to a large community of Caribbean migrants and has been referred to as "a centre for Afro-Caribbean culture" (Kerr 2012, 60). Yet it is also sadly famous for the 1981 riots when the Metropolitan police and Black youth clashed in a context of economic recession (Jackson 2015). These tragic events affected Brixton's reputation: although the first middle-class incomers arrived in the late 1970s (Mavrommatis 2011) and cohabited with the "old Brixton of reggae, high unemployment and British-Caribbean street food" (Butler and

Sadoux, Stéphane, Marie-Pierre Vincent, David Fée, and Louise Dalingwater, eds. *Gentrification and the Media: Building and Propagating Discourses on Exclusive Urban Change*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2025.
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Robson 2003), most of the area was relatively unaffected by gentrification for several decades when compared to other parts of London. By the turn of the century, however, it had been earmarked as an "internationally renowned, cosmopolitan lifestyle centre" and was attracting those who could no longer afford living in fully gentrified areas such as nearby Clapham (Butler and Robson 2003, 2155–56).

Novelist Alex Wheatle, who was imprisoned during the 1981 riots, wrote a piece for the *Independent* in 2015: he claimed that nowhere in London had "the before-and-after effect of gentrification been so marked as in Brixton" (Wheatle 2015). The symptoms, effects, and reactions against exclusive urban change are frequently featured in the mainstream media. In April 2015, a diverse group marched down the streets of Brixton to protest against the gentrification of the area. The *Evening Standard* explained that the event was partly triggered by evictions in local council housing estates and the railway arches around Brixton station (Marshal and Mann 2015). The demonstration was led by the *Reclaim Brixton* group, whose statement on Facebook was quoted by the BBC: "today vibrancy is sold to garnish property development posters and overpriced bar branding, but in doing so, it is also slowly being killed" (BBC 2015). *The Guardian* outlined some of the protesters' demands, which included building more homes, stopping evictions and putting caps on rents (Hill 2015). The *Financial Times* reported that house prices in the area soared by 35 per cent in 2014, more than three times the average increase in London (Steele 2014): even the more affluent residents were gradually being priced out of the area (Walker 2013).

Rather than using mainstream media as a source, this chapter focuses on the coverage of gentrification by *Brixton Buzz*, hereafter referred to as *Buzz*, which defined itself as the area's "biggest and most comprehensive news, features and listings site" (Brixton Buzz, n.d.). More than 11,500 posts have been published online since it was launched in 2011, generating over fourteen million page views and 15,500 comments. As a prime example of hyperlocal media and citizen journalism, the site will first be presented in the light of theoretical frameworks borrowed from journalism and communication. Such media allow us to question the identity, status, and role of the journalist, as well as issues related to advocacy, interpretation, objectivity, credibility, and gate-keeping. Hyperlocal media also prompt us to think about the contribution of online communities to addressing democratic deficits (Harcup 2016). The chapter then focuses on the rhetoric propagated by *Buzz* with regard to urban change and gentrification. A corpus of over 250 posts published between 2011 and 2021 dealing with urban change was analysed, seventy of which are cited in this chapter. Two criteria were used to narrow down the

number of posts included in the corpus. The first one was one of exclusion: posts in which the word gentrification appeared but was not central to the piece nor discussed were omitted. The second one was conversely one of inclusion: posts were incorporated in the corpus when they contributed to illustrate the recurrence of certain events or issues that appeared to have been closely associated with the gentrification of Brixton. The intention is not to assess the validity of the discourse but to demonstrate that posts reflect the attitude, belief, and concerns of parts of the local community and are a powerful indicator of community reaction to urban change over time. The corpus thus allows us to shed light on grassroots narratives of gentrification written by citizen journalists. The chapter also draws from semi-structured interviews conducted with Mike Urban, the founder and editor of *Buzz*. Although hyperlocal media and citizen journalism have in recent years been scrutinized by a number of scholars (Williams et al. 2015; Hess and Waller 2016; Lowrey and Kim 2016; Liu et al. 2018; Tenor 2018), more case studies are needed, notwithstanding the availability of excellent literature such as Harcup's study of the *Leeds Citizen* which describes itself as a "minor irritant on the flesh of the body politics of Leeds" (Harcup 2016, 6).

Hyperlocal News

Although there is no consensual definition of hyperlocal news (Ewart 2014), Picone's formulation is regularly cited in literature reviews. He posits that it refers to a "style of news devoted to the stories and minutiae of a particular neighbourhood, ZIP code of interest group within a certain geographic area" (Picone 2007, 102). This geographic focus is also stressed by Hess and Waller (2016) who suggest that the content of such media can be excessively local and Wall (2015) has pointed out that some issues are too specialized to be covered by the mainstream media too. Although *Buzz* regularly refers to places other than Brixton, it essentially focuses on this particular district of London and covers "local news, politics, sports, photo features, local history and more" (Brixton Buzz, n.d.).

Hyperlocal media appeared and developed as a response to specific needs (Metzgar et al. 2011). Newspapers have gradually been disappearing throughout England, leaving citizens with fewer sources of information, particularly at the local level (Barnett and Townend 2015). A report produced for the Department of Digital, Culture, Media & Sport published in 2020 documented the decline of daily and weekly local newspaper circulation from 2007 to 2020. It found that the average print circulation across local authority

districts in 2019 was respectively at 31 per cent and 39 per cent of 2007 figures for daily and weekly newspapers (Lavender et al. 2020, 6). According to Mike Urban (2022a), "barely anyone buys the newspapers anymore": as a free news resource with a local focus, *Buzz* arguably provides an appealing alternative. Research also has shown that the loss of local orientation in UK mainstream media has been due to cuts in resources and a lack of field work in journalism (Williams et al. 2015). Mike Urban highlights that investigations are particularly time-consuming. He argues that "local newspapers don't have the time" and consequently "post any old fillers because they can't afford journalists" (Mike Urban 2022a). Traditional media have therefore tended to overlook information which communities ask for and find in hyperlocal media (Glaser 2010) such as *Buzz*, namely local news and alternative narratives (Domingo and Heinonen 2008) which are primarily community-oriented (Metzgar et al. 2011; Williams et al. 2015). Citizen journalists also play an increasingly important role as they complement mainstream media discourses in an era of "online activism" (Lim 2013, 500). Hyperlocal media and citizen journalism can in addition be considered as a reaction against what Franklin has labelled McJournalism: the coverage of local issues has become more tabloid-oriented, lacks in depth and is driven by the search for efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control (Franklin 2005).

The case of *Buzz* however reveals that the lack of local information is not the only reason for launching a hyperlocal news website. Mike Urban explains that *Buzz* was also initiated as a response to another website, *Brixton Blog*, which he argues is "very parochial." He "couldn't bear the way they were representing Brixton. They are lovely people, but they decided to rely on advertising and this does limit freedom of speech" (Mike Urban 2022a). Conversely, *Buzz* exclusively relies on donations and crowdfunding: the website claims that "there's no sponsors to upset or cosy council relationships to tip-toe around, giving the site the freedom to report forthrightly on local issues" (Brixton Buzz, n.d.). *Buzz* intends to remain independent and in May 2021, Mike Urban published a call for donations which would allow the team to "continue to report on local issues, investigate what the council are up to, help spread awareness about local campaigns, list events and bring you exclusive content from our neighbourhood" (Mike Urban 2021b).

Citizen Journalism and Journalists

Research into hyperlocal media inevitably leads to questioning the identity and status of those who edit and provide content. A survey of academic

literature reveals that the terminology used to refer to them is diverse: participatory journalists, community journalists, citizen journalists, bloggers, nonprofit journalists, alternative journalists, hyperlocal journalists, user-generated participants, para journalists to name a few (Miller 2019). In this chapter, the term citizen journalism is preferred.

As a practice, citizen journalism has been subject to an increasing amount of research (Lewis et al. 2010; Abbott 2017). The *Dictionary of the Internet* states that it refers to the "use of ordinary citizens in collecting, analysing and publishing news" and further contends that "the term has only come into use because of the rise of technologies such as podcasting and blogging" (Ince 2019). Arguably, *Buzz* is an example of what Domingo and Heinonen (2008) have coined "citizen blog," namely a journalistic weblog written by the public outside the mainstream media. The preface to the first edition of the *Community Media Handbook* published in 1973 suggested that professional journalists were "preparing for an assault upon this previously sacred media" (Zelmer 1973, v). Ironically of course, this comment was made prior to the advent of new technologies which has provided an arena for non-professional journalists to thrive in. As Splichal and Dahlgren (2016) have suggested, the advent of the internet may not be the only reason for the deprofessionalization of journalism, but it certainly has contributed to it.

Another useful definition of citizen journalism has been put forward by Miller, who argued that it involves first-person reportage, "often spontaneously during a time of crisis, accident, tragedy or disaster when they happen to be present on the scene [...]" (Allan 2013, 9). Of particular interest here is the reference to crises: this chapter aims to show that they are not necessarily ephemeral. The relentless gentrification of Brixton is arguably experienced as a long-term crisis by part of the district's local community. In addition, the case-study of *Buzz* also confirms the validity of Allan's contention that citizen journalism relies on the "provision of such diverse contributions as first-person eyewitness accounts, audio recordings, video footage, mobile or cell phone and digital camera photographs, and the like, typically shared online via email or through bulletin-boards, blogs, wikis, personal web-pages and social networking sites" (Allan 2013, 9).

A high number of citizen journalists are non-professionals whom Ahva (2017) has called "in-betweeners": they have diverse profiles and occupations and can be activists, freelancers, residents, and academics. They are not full-time journalists but nevertheless contribute to the news production process. Robinson and DeShano (2011) have added that they usually report for a local blog or website. When asked about his own background, Mike Urban explains that he did not train in journalism: he initially became involved

in it as an activist who fought the 1994 Criminal Justice Bill. Although it originally targeted ravers, he was worried that it would also affect the football supporter community he belonged to: "the act was about gatherings, about protests and there was also a section called causing intentional alarm or distress" (Mike Urban 2022a). This concern led him to launch the Urban75 website in the early nineties—a platform that rapidly gained momentum. Mike Urban was consequently identified as key activist and invited to contribute to several mainstream newspapers, including the *New Statesman*. He acknowledges that he was then "paid to write" but stresses that he was required "to give an opinion" rather than be impartial. In his own words, Mike Urban "fell into journalism" and when asked whether he thinks of himself as a journalist, he replied: "I am a member of the National Union of Journalists as a publisher, I suppose that makes me a journalist of some sort" (Mike Urban 2022a).

The diversity of profiles found in citizen journalism has encouraged scholars to design taxonomies. Of particular interest is the one developed by Kus et al. (2017, 11,12), who focused on the reasons why individuals engage in citizen journalism. As the second part of the chapter will show, Mike Urban and the *Buzz* team are "community builders," who focus on local affairs and attempt to "build a sense of sharing and belonging," but also "activists," who produce "news and comments in order to openly support an issue, a campaign or a topic." Thus, citizen journalism reflects the process whereby people express their views and concerns on the internet (Miller 2019). If we consider the taxonomy developed by Mortensen et al. (2016), Mike Urban and his team are "watchdogs" who delve into issues and topics that are overlooked by the mainstream media and affect them personally and do so in a personal way.

Documenting Urban Change: The Sources and Their Credibility

Mike Urban acknowledges that *Buzz* propagates subjective views of local affairs. Such a claim inevitably raises the questions related to the credibility of the information provided and the sources which underpin it. A body of literature has addressed these issues and the reliability of information disseminated by citizen journalists (Miller 2019). In particular, Paulussen and D'heer (2013) have examined the ratio of official and non-official sources used, the likelihood to quote material from press agencies or to draw from personal experience, and the extent to which citizen journalists provide links to external sources. These questions have in fact been a matter of concern

for decades. Turk and Franklin (1987) showed that the media increasingly rely on official sources such as press releases issued by public bodies and Davis (2008) demonstrated that this partly is a consequence of reduced resources. Conversely, citizen journalists tend to rely on unofficial sources and acquaintances or friends (Miller 2019). Interviews with Mike Urban confirm that his team heavily relies on a close-knit network of acquaintances who adhere to *Buzz*'s editorial line, but are concerned about exclusive urban change in the area. He acknowledges that many people write to *Buzz* "in confidence" (Mike Urban 2022a). Yet this hyperlocal media also regularly makes use of the Freedom of Information Request (FoI) mechanism to confirm rumours: by way of example, a piece published on April 21, 2015 refers to information obtained on the basis of an FoI request and established that "that four property developers spent £20k on taking four Lambeth Council staff to Cannes for gentrification jolly" (Jason Cobb 2015c).

Symptoms and Milestones of Gentrification

Signs that a neighbourhood is being gentrified are diverse. In 2013, an A to Z of gentrification was published on Urban75, *Buzz*'s sister website, also run by Mike Urban. This stringent list is presented as "sure-fire signs that your neighbourhood is upwardly mobile" (BrixtonTonTonTon 2013): the extensive inventory of key words it includes refers to events, places, people, actions, and attitudes, to name a few. When asked to formulate a definition of gentrification and to illustrate its manifestations, Mike Urban explained that it occurs "when a working class or poor community finds itself evicted, priced out, because a place has become fashionable" and added that "this usually goes hand in hand with council policy and developers who have decided a place has become fashionable" (Mike Urban 2022a). This answer is revealing: it highlights the fact that *Buzz* pays particular heed to the local authority's (Lambeth Borough Council) role in the district's transformation and does not merely focus on property developers and incoming populations.

Although the gentrification in Brixton is visible on a daily basis, Mike Urban highlights several significant milestones in the process. The first example which is extensively covered in *Buzz* was the eviction of residents on Rushcroft Road in 2013. The BBC covered the event and explained that occupants had been squatting and not paying rents since 2000 (BBC 2013). Evictions do however not only concern housing: Mike Urban argues that a key event in the gentrification of Brixton was the removal of a long-standing community of shopkeepers in the Brixton railway arches which occurred

in the second half of the 2010s, as a consequence of the redevelopment of property owned by Network Rail. He nevertheless argues that a crucial turning point was the Brixton Village project: in 2018, London Associated Properties announced that it had sold Market Row and Brixton Village for £37.25 million (Bloomberg 2018), a considerably higher price than the stated book value of £24.5 million (London Associated Properties Plc 2018).

When asked to identify some of the factors that explain the increasing attractiveness of the area, Mike Urban highlights the fact that Brixton is seven minutes from Victoria by public transport. The area "resisted gentrification for so long because of its bad reputation and because it was seen as a black neighbourhood." The gentrification, he argues, "had been happening bit by bit, piecemeal, but it accelerated when developers came in." He stresses that Brixton Village was advertised in *Time Out*, thus demonstrating that the district was "being sold to tourists": this, he believes, is when "things started to speed up." He further contends that the recent Pop Brixton project launched in 2015 is an additional illustration of the "commodification of Brixton" (Mike Urban 2022a). In an earlier post, *Buzz* had argued that "the role of the popup shop in gentrification is well established" (Mike Urban 2014e). It is noteworthy that the Pop Brixton initiative markets itself as "creative independent initiative" (Pop Brixton, n.d.) and has been described by *Time Out* as being "developed in reaction to high street brands dominating storefronts across London," with "a selection of traders – all of which are independent, and a majority of which are local" (*Time Out* 2018). This positive discourse is in stark contrast to *Buzz*'s opinion: in April 2015, Mike Urban wrote a piece in which he warned readers that the initiative was slipping away from its original objectives (Mike Urban 2015g). The post cross-referenced an earlier publication which had warmly welcomed the then *Grow Brixton* project: *Buzz* had then suggested that the collective leading it "tick all the correct boxes when it comes to community, culture and yep – 'sustainability.'" *Buzz* added: "we wish them well, and we look forward to the pile of rubble […] becoming an active community space" (Jason Cobb 2014b). These few comments and posts reveal that in *Buzz*'s view, gentrification was caused by a change in the local authority's attitude: Lambeth Council was believed to be "looking to squeeze more profits from this commercial minded enterprise." Consequently, *Buzz* shared "many of the concerns of locals about how this site seems to be turning into something quite different to what was proposed, both in terms of scale and purpose" (Mike Urban 2015g).

Mike Urban's role in documenting and resisting the gentrification of Brixton over the past twenty years earned him an invitation to give a talk as

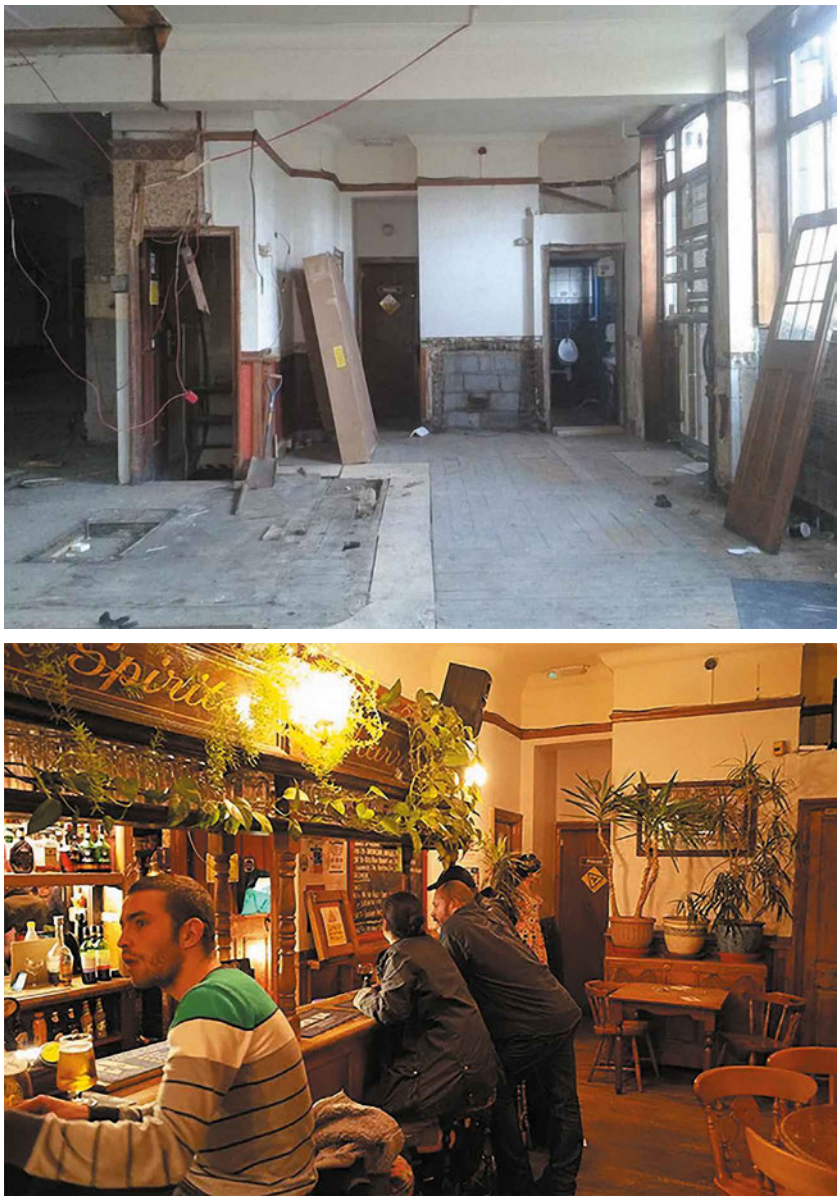
part of the local TEDx series in 2014 (Mike Urban 2014d). During his address, he argued that indicators of change include the subdivision of large houses into smaller units that become luxury flats, the fact that landlords let their properties crumble since they are aware they will make profits when they sell at a later stage, as well as the squatting of empty properties by those who can't afford the rents. Yet Mike Urban explains that he fights against exclusive urban change rather than change *per se.* Of particular concern to him is the fact that "newcomers don't really have to interact with Brixton, they can just go to their posh restaurants. A lot of them just go back to their wealthy parents at the weekend" (Mike Urban 2022a). He ironically pointed out that no one from his council estate attended the TEDx conference, thereby further highlighting the lack of interaction between communities in Brixton (Mike Urban 2022a).

Unpacking the Rhetoric

The last section of this chapter highlights some of the key themes that underpin *Buzz*'s discourse on gentrification. Although they are not the only ones found in the corpus, the frequency of their occurrence is an indicator of their significance in the eyes of this hyperlocal media.

Community Places That Matter

Numerous posts highlight the consequences of gentrification on places and spaces that are believed to be important for the local community. In March 2015, "heart-breaking images" of a pub in the nearby district of Stockwell appeared (figures 13.1 and 13.2): photos of people gathered in the venue 2013 were published alongside shoots of the same empty rooms, showing the venue after it had been "stripped out and trashed by developers" (Mike Urban 2015e). Six months later, readers were informed that a popular Brixton pub had been boarded up prior to being demolished and replaced by "yet more luxury flats": *Buzz* contended that the pub served "as a reminder of just how much Brixton is losing to gentrification as developers continue to snap up valuable community assets" (Mike Urban 2015n). The following month, additional pictures in *Buzz* showed the "tumbling" walls of this "once splendid Victorian pub," thus drawing attention to the simultaneous loss of built and cultural heritage (Mike Urban 2016a). The language of death and life is regularly used, with articles mentioning a pub which had "24 hours to live" (Mike Urban 2015k), or the "death of a community" due to the closure of many cafes on Brixton Station Road (Mike Urban 2016c). In



Figures 13.1 and 13.2. Grosvenor Public House, "Stripped Out" by Developers (Top) and As It Was (Bottom). Source: Brixton Buzz, 2015.

July 2015, *Buzz* lamented "heart-breaking scenes as Brixton's Kaff bar holds its clear-out sale" after the landlords tripled the rent (Mike Urban 2015i). In October the same year, it announced the closure of a delicatessen which had been running for a quarter of a century. The piece ends with a grateful and

compassionate sentence: "Buzz says Goodbye to A&C, yet another victim of gentrification and another loss to the community. And thank you for serving Brixton so well" (Mike Urban 2015m). Posts may refer to specific places, but *Buzz* systematically addresses their loss with regards to the local community which they used to serve.

Housing: Soaring Prices, Evictions, and Profit

The spectacular rise in house prices is regularly criticized and ridiculed. As an illustration, a post published in 2020 told the tale of "Brixton's most knackered house" being put on the market for £400,000. It included photos of the crumbling property (Mike Urban 2020b) and a few weeks later, *Buzz* reported that the house had been sold at an auction for "a thumping £717,500" (Mike Urban 2020d). Yet the core of *Buzz*'s discourse focused on the consequences for the most deprived communities.

In July 2013, *Buzz* warned that seventy-five residents were facing eviction on Rushcroft Road. Ahead of the eviction, a link to a petition to stop the process was shared (Stevie SW9 2013a). *Buzz* does therefore not only raise awareness: it also encourages the community to take action. According to the post, the squatters occupying these units owned by Lambeth Council argued that they were no longer maintained and that their demolition would lead to the building of new unaffordable housing (Mike Urban 2013a). The piece featured the statement issued by the remaining occupants and other posts appeared the same day, including two that were related to the eviction process. One featured a video showing "police and High Court Enforcement Officers violently ejecting residents" (Mike Urban 2013c) and included a link to an extensive photo report showing one of the houses' "soon-to-be-smashed-in door" and the officers' "very heavy-handed action" (Mike Urban 2013b). *Buzz* regularly updated readers along the process and a couple of years later, quoted the *Evening Standard*: some of the former squats were reported to be on the market for a "spectacularly unaffordable £3,000 per month" (Mike Urban 2015f). In September the same year, *Buzz* mentioned that two properties on Rushcroft Road had been sold to "an offshore company that is not required to pay UK tax" (Jason Cobb 2015e). This piece provided a list of other buildings and venues in the district that were also believed to be owned by offshore companies.

Reports of other eviction processes have been published over the years. One striking example was the case of tenants living in an estate managed by the Guinness Partnership. In 2014, *Buzz* relayed the call for a "Twitterstorm" launched by residents (Stevie SW9 2014) and a few months later, announced that a protest was being organized: the date, time, and meeting place were

provided, thus reflecting *Buzz*'s support. The post included the statement written by the Lambeth Activists group who were instrumental in the protest (Mike Urban 2015a), whilst another piece provided a testimony of one resident, whose rent was increased by 240 per cent (Mike Urban 2017a). This example reflects *Buzz*'s objectives and methods: factual information is illustrated through touching personal experiences which locals can relate to, whilst the announcements of demonstrations and links to petitions highlights the role that this hyperlocal media plays in contributing to resisting gentrification. In addition, references to the local council and, in the case of Rushcroft Road, of the involvement of offshore companies, reflects a desire to denounce some of the wider financial mechanisms believed to underpin the gentrification of the area.

Vanishing Independent Shops

Over the years, *Buzz* has also sought to document the effects of rent increases and evictions on local shopkeepers. Regular pieces have sought to illustrate how land ownership and management have impacted the types of stores found in Brixton Market. A lengthy report published in 2014 featured many photos taken in the 1960s, showing a majority of Caribbean outlets. The piece however explained that most have "long since vanished thanks to the gentrification that has seen trendy restaurants, boutiques and even a champagne bar opening up inside" (Mike Urban 2014f). A more recent publication (Mike Urban 2016b) further criticized this trend, which Gonzalez and Waley have studied (2013): although markets are important for the less affluent British populations, they have gradually been changing in order to cater for wealthier classes.

A significant process in the gentrification of Brixton was the redevelopment of the railway arches along Atlantic Road and Brixton Road Station. Although this specific type of marginal space has allowed the accommodation of a range of small-scale manufacturing and retailing activities in London (Froy and Davis 2017), their redevelopment is threatening the businesses that once thrived and contributed to providing local communities with a range of goods and services. In July 2014, *Buzz* reminded its readers that it had "broke[n] the story of Network Rail's plans to evict traders operating in the arches" (Mike Urban 2015c). The original post, dated February 4, suggests that information about forthcoming evictions was provided by one of the tenants. Once again, *Buzz* opposed the planned evictions and supported shopkeepers: "if this turns out to be the case, we here at *Brixton Buzz* will put our full weight behind a campaign to save these stores, many of which have been serving Brixton for decades. They form an essential part

of Brixton's character" (Mike Urban 2015b). That *Buzz* was the first media to publicize the forthcoming evictions reflects the fact that the team can rely on the local community to share breaking local news. In this particular case, Mike Urban argued: "we knew it was going to be a big story because many of those stores have been a much-loved part of Brixton for decades, but we were surprised by the strength of the reaction". He further explains that the feature attracted "many thousands of page views, was shared over 3,000 times on Facebook and was picked up by several mainstream press outlets, including Channel 4." Consequently, *Buzz* was "inundated with comments from locals wanting to start petitions and get involved in the fight to protect the traders." (Mike Urban 2015c).

The redevelopment of the Brixton railway arches was a long process. In September 2016, a photo report showed the closed-down shops and described how "one of the most bustling parts of Brixton" had become "eerily quiet" (Mike Urban 2016e). Two years later, a contributor wondered when the businesses would return and described a "Dead-Zone" that now "defined the middle of our town." It was suggested that "Network Rail and their contractors have made painfully slow progress and nothing is yet open and this could continue for quite some time" (Contributor 2019a). Eventually, in March 2021, *Buzz* reported that scaffolding had been removed and that there may be "signs that the strip may finally be coming back to life" five years after the evictions (Mike Urban 2021a).

The evolution of the area was documented by shopkeepers themselves. One lamented that "unscrupulous estate agents and greedy landlords are depriving Brixton of what has made its character, its beauty, its complex diversity. They are simply obliterating the people" (Mike Urban 2015d). It is however noteworthy that this particular publication was a repost: the text had originally been published on another blog with an evocative title, "London's working class epuration" (Klaus tattooer 2015). This cross referencing reflects the process whereby the "online news gatherer" acts as a specialist librarian, who constantly surveys the information becoming available in a variety of media and serves as a guide to the most relevant sources when approached by information-seekers. This "librarian" position contrasts markedly with that of the traditional ideal of the "disinterested" gatekeeper-journalist. Instead, internet "librarians" (if we accept this term for now) are usually personally involved, "of the people" and partisan; they support the case of those seeking information rather than of the information providers or controllers (Bruns 2003, 34).

A high proportion of posts on *Buzz* reflects this method and attitude. By way of example, an entire chapter of a book written by Chris McMillan was

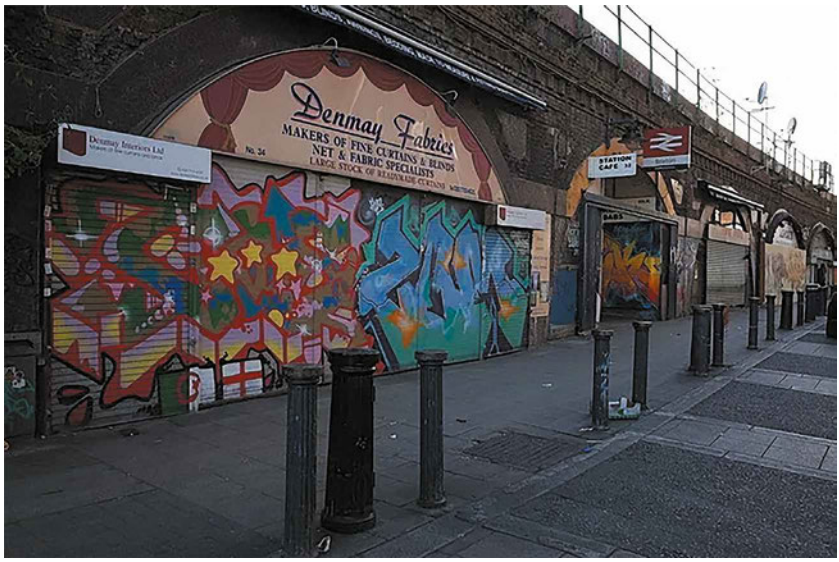


Figure 13.3. Brixton "Ghost-Town": The Arches After the Evictions. Source: Brixton Buzz, 2016.

published on the website. The article in which it is included presents it as a "fascinating read, charting how Brixton has been impacted by gentrification and the role of the council and Pop Brixton has played in the town's recent transformation" (Contributor 2020a).

Changes of Use, Changes in Communities

Changes in land-use patterns are powerful indicators of gentrification. *Buzz* regularly highlights the gradual replacement of long-standing businesses by others which, they argue, are targeted at the new affluent residents. In February 2015, it reported that a Caribbean restaurant would be turned into an "instagramming" natural wine bar. *Buzz* explained that "Tony's Chicken, Oxtail and Curry Goat are out in favour of natural wine, a charcoal grill and retro furniture" (Rich 2015). In a similar vein, *Buzz* explained that a "local anarcho-activist group" had announced a "Champagne Holocaust Street Party to coincide with the opening" of an "upmarket Champagne and Fromage bar" (Stevie SW9 2013b). In July 2014, *Buzz* had argued that gentrification was "sweeping down" Coldharbour Lane, one of the district's main roads, where another Caribbean restaurant was due to be turned into a cocktail bar (Mike Urban 2014c). *Buzz* regularly criticizes the loss of diversity and the gradual displacement of the Caribbean community in favour of global trends and products—a process which is in particular referred to

as a "frenzy of cultural whitewashing" (Contributor 2019b). Yet *Buzz* does not merely condemn: it also points readers to resources which are believed to help gain a better understanding of gentrification and its effect on the Afro-Caribbean community. In March 2019, it announced "an interesting free talk about the impact of gentrification on black neighbourhoods" given by Chairmaine Brown of Greenwich University (Mike Urban 2019b) and a few years later, it encouraged people to read a book focusing on this very issue (Mike Urban 2022b).

Starting in 2015, *Buzz* also published a series of pieces focusing on Club 414, an iconic electronic music venue that had been running since the early 1980s and explained that a planning application had been put in by the landlords who wished to turn the building into housing and a bar. *Buzz* called on the local community to object to the application (Mike Urban 2015l; 2017b, 414). Whilst this application and a subsequent one were unsuccessful (Sadoux 2021), the business eventually had to move out after the building was sold to Hondo Enterprises. A series of photo reports showing the last nights run by Club 414 on Coldharbour lane were published (Mike Urban 2019c; 2019d; 2019e). After the venue closed, a post was published with "heart-breaking" pictures showing the building being "stripped out and cleared away." It stated that "Club 414 was a fantastic club run by fantastic people" and that "Brixton will never see its like again" (Mike Urban 2019f). A few weeks after the building had been vacated, a post somewhat ironically announced that the premises were being squatted (Mike Urban 2019a) and a statement by Hondo, that had been previously published by *Brixton Bugle*, was quoted: "Hondo are currently looking for a new tenant that will be able to retain the diverse, fun and world-famous atmosphere of 414" (Brixton Bugle 2019). To which *Buzz* replied: "you might think the people best placed" to do this "would be the very people who created it in the first place, but Hondo had made no offer" to them (Mike Urban 2020a).

Naming and Shaming People and Brands

The corpus of posts analysed as part of this research reveals that specific stakeholders and businesses are vividly criticized by *Buzz*. A striking example of this process is the frequent mention of Foxtons, an upmarket estate agent which was once described by *The Guardian* as "symbolic of the "yuppie" colonization" (Hill 2015). In July 2014, *Buzz* asked whether it was "Brixton's most hated business" (Stevie SW9 2015) and in April 2015, pointed out that it had "once again found itself being targeted by housing campaigners and activists": the windows of the Brixton branch were smashed during

the Reclaim Brixton anti-gentrification protest. The piece interestingly quotes the *Independent* that presents Foxton as the "estate agent that gives estate agents a bad name" (Milmo 2013). *Buzz* thus occasionally refers to the mainstream media in order to support their arguments. In this particular post, Mike Urban argues that "in Brixton, where the effects of gentrification, rising rents and ever diminishing affordable/social housing stock is causing real hardship to long term residents and businesses, the shiny and brash presence of Foxtons seem to form an irresistible target" (Mike Urban 2015h). A few months later, *Buzz* reported that the premises had been "boarded up [...] ahead of Brixton splash and community carnival" and ironically claimed that "Foxtons have shown themselves to be terrified of the very community they're supposed to serve" (Mike Urban 2015j). It is also noteworthy that the same year, *Buzz* announced that Lambeth Council would partner with the estate agent to "help manage all future housing projects in Brixton" (Jason Cobb 2015b). This post, however, was an April fool and the one devised by *Buzz* the previous year had suggested that Brixton was to be renamed East Clapham as part of a "forthcoming rebranding policy" (Mike Urban 2014b). Commenting on Twitter, the *Evening Standard* argued that this may have been the "best prank of the day."

Another key stakeholder regularly named and shamed by *Buzz* is Taylor McWilliams, owner of Hondo Enterprises, who has been acquiring property in Brixton and whose profile was set out in a post titled "privilege, wealth and power." Echoing the piece on Foxton, *Buzz* asked whether Hondo had become "Brixton's most hated landlord." In this particular publication however, *Buzz* reported that the company had launched a Twitter account called "Truth of Brixton" in an attempt to provide an alternative narrative of their actions (Mike Urban 2020c). *Buzz* frequently criticizes McWilliams and his company, whom part of the local community accuses of "turning Brixton into Canary Wharf." Their projects are believed to "supercharge the gentrification already seen in the area, which is said to harm local, Black-run businesses and exclude the community from the profits of an area they themselves made popular" (Mike Urban 2020f). *Buzz* regularly updates the local community with regards to Hondo's planning applications and in October 2020, stated that the company was "tinkering with the designs" of a major development "in an effort to make the bleak concrete interior look a bit more attractive and community-friendly" (Mike Urban 2020e). Alongside this naming and shaming process, *Buzz* also encourages locals to resist and to object to planning applications submitted by Hondo (Mike Urban 2020g), publicizes demonstrations and features interviews of protesters (Contributor 2020c; 2020b).

Holding the Council Accountable

The mission statement published on the *Buzz* website is clear: one of its key aims is to hold the council accountable. Mike Urban acknowledges that the approach is biased: "we don't just act like a reporter of news, we are not an impartial news source." He justifies this attitude by explaining that *Buzz* "caught Lambeth lying so many times: if you want to serve the community, you need to get your hands dirty" (Mike Urban 2022a). As an illustration, the leader of Lambeth Council was accused of "pimping herself out at £495 to speak at a property porn conference" (Jason Cobb 2016) and the previous year, *Buzz* shared a link to a petition calling for the "resignation of three high ranking Lambeth Cabinet members as anger over gentrification grows" (Jason Cobb 2015d).

Buzz appears to have been particularly active in disseminating information related to ongoing planning processes and their effects on the area. In 2015, a post focused on the new local plan and its consequences. It argued that "with the report clocking in at just under 500 pages though, finding any relevant detail beyond the usual Council co-operative crap can be a tough task" (Jason Cobb 2015f). Later that year, *Buzz* claimed that the local authority was attempting to withhold information or at the very least, that it would make it difficult to find: it reported that hard copies of planning applications would no longer be available in libraries. *Buzz* argued that the provision of such information is "a key part of local democracy" and asked: "how else are you to know about the proposed luxury flats that are about to be built next to your back yard if the council doesn't tell you about it?" (Jason Cobb 2015a). According to Mike Urban, this "shows the disconnection between Lambeth Council and the people they are supposed to serve" (Mike Urban 2022a). In 2014, *Buzz* quoted a local councillor who argued that referring to gentrification as "social cleansing" was "bollocks" (Jason Cobb 2014a), and in 2022, it reported that another councillor had attended a meeting for ten minutes "just so that he could claim his £10,597 allowance for the year" (Jason Cobb 2022), thereby highlighting this sense of disconnection. Arguably, *Buzz's* distrust of the council illustrates the trend whereby digital journalism can involve resistance against existing power structures (Wall 2015).

Art and the Expression of Resistance and Discontent

Brixton has a long history in culture and the arts. In 2012, *Buzz* devoted a post to a local band, the Severed Limb. One of its members argued that "Brixton was a thriving creative hub long before Brixton Village" (Rich 2012). Whilst the website regularly tells stories of artists who are being priced out of the area, it also pays heed to publicizing the ways in which art is used as a means

of expressing resistance and discontent in the face of gentrification. A recent publication drew readers' attention to a song by reggae star Macka, who "documents the pain of Brixton's gentrification" (Mike Urban 2020h). There are however many other earlier examples. In 2013, *Buzz* had warned of the possible loss of a popular pub in nearby Stockwell (Mike Urban 2013d) and a few months later it published photos of an anti-gentrification movie being "beamed onto the luxury development" opposite the pub. This event was run by Reel News, which describes itself as a "London based activist video collective, using film to bring about social change" (Reel News, n.d.). *Buzz* explained that "several videos showing the fight against gentrification from around the world were projected onto the large white sheet covering the front of the Redmayne Apartments development" (Mike Urban 2014a). In 2018, *Buzz* reported on the release of *This is Brixton*, a short film by Shane Duncan which "explores the impact of gentrification around Brixton" (Contributor 2018). The piece quotes the film-maker, who explained: "I kept reading about regeneration in my area and it didn't match up with what I saw, what I felt…I wanted to find out for myself and hear from people that live and work here not a pundit so I picked up my camera and started to ask people about their experience" (Mike Urban 2018a).

More recently, *Buzz* publicized an action led by Save Nour, a "group of Brixtonians and friends who came together to oppose the eviction of Nour Cash and Carry in Brixton Market" ("Save Nour," n.d.). This group commissioned art from locals to "amplify local voices and experience of gentrification" as part of the public consultations for one of Hondo's proposed developments. On a billboard appeared a work by Ellie Laycock. In bold print, one could read: "international capital flow investment zone high income hedge fund regen district empty offices place-making luxury apartments coming soon." (Mike Urban 2021c).

It is also worth pointing out that street art has also been featured in *Buzz* in an attempt to highlight its role in the expression of resistance to gentrification. In 2016, it published photos of a series of caricatures, including Boris Johnson and Theresa May, that had appeared on boarded-up premises in the Brixton railway arches (Mike Urban 2016d). A couple of years later, it reported that "righteous anti-yuppie, anti-gentrification graffiti" had been added to the railway bridge next to Brixton station (Mike Urban 2018b).

Conclusion

In 2012, Mike Urban published a post in which he wrote: "although Brixton Buzz is primarily about music, we've been part of the Brixton community for

years and we're growing increasingly unhappy seeing our friends being priced out of town as gentrification takes over" (Mike Urban 2012). This comment confirms two findings from previous scholarly research. First, that citizen journalism tends to produce "opinionated, value-laden and emotional news" and is about freedom of speech (Min 2015, 5). Second, that it often relies on personal stories and on the use of the first-person (Deuze 2003; Netzley and Hemmer 2012) – or in the case of *Buzz*, of the term "we" which allows citizen journalists to stress their sense of belonging to the local community.

Reflecting upon media coverage of the 2011 riots in London, Allan argued that poverty and inequalities are "seldom regarded as newsworthy to warrant sustained attention" (Allan 2013, 144). To some extent, this claim, which he demonstrates is applicable to most media, deserves to be reconsidered in the light of hyperlocal media which operate in areas affected by gentrification. As Miller has shown, citizen journalists aim to spark off and sustain debates that tend to be ignored by the traditional press (Miller 2019). This, we argue, is also done by producing and propagating alternative discourses on urban change that remind us that journalism is influenced by the context in which it operates: as Meadows (2013) contends, it is a cultural practice. In Brixton, where the effects of exclusive urban change are indisputable, the role of *Buzz* is not merely one of news provision: it also involves campaigning against the trends and forces that are believed to fuel inequalities. In this respect, we argue, *Buzz*'s approach can be seen as a contemporary manifestation of what Chalaby once called a social crusade, namely a "campaign a newspaper launches to call for reform," more specifically one aimed at "alleviating the plight of the poor and the oppressed" (Chalaby 1998, 141).

This chapter focused on a specific hyperlocal media and the texts in the corpus were written by a limited number of authors. The research findings should therefore be taken for what they are, namely one narrative of gentrification in Brixton. Future research could usefully contrast it with others and delve into the issue of reception, by scrutinizing user comments which are characteristic of hyperlocal media.

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14. Popular vs. Independent Local Newspapers and Anti-Gentrification Resistance: Mixed Representations of the 2015 Cereal Killer Cafe Attack in London

Marie-Pierre Vincent

Abstract: Since Gin and Taylor's work in 2010, little attention has been paid to the press coverage of anti-gentrification resistance. This chapter focuses on the local newspapers' coverage of the Cereal Killer Cafe attack in London in 2015. Relying on content analysis, and building upon the findings of le Grand's paper (2020a) on national press coverage, it seeks to explain first why the popular local press somewhat aligned itself with the mainstream national coverage of the attack. It then aims to explain why an independent local paper (the *Hackney Citizen*)—while being a fierce anti-gentrification press organ—overlooked the event. The chapter highlights the importance of the local press as both a potential catalyst and stakeholder of anti-gentrification resistance.

Keywords: riots, hipsters, *The Guardian*, *Hackney Citizen*, Brick Lane

Introduction

As this edited volume demonstrates, the press is a surprisingly neglected topic in gentrification research. Yet, beyond the emergence of research pointing to the increasing critical media representation of gentrification (Brown-Saracino and Rumpf 2011) almost no attention has been paid to newspaper coverage of anti-gentrification resistance per se. Although media

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coverage has been a significant focus of social movement research (Earl et al. 2004; McCarthy et al. 1996; Jenkins and Perrow 1977; Lewis 2000, among others), there is a dearth of research on the newspaper coverage of anti-gentrification resistance. Gin and Taylor's pioneer paper was published in 2010 (Gin and Taylor 2010). It takes, as a point of departure, the suggestion that the media supports the growth machine and is therefore not inclined to provide favourable coverage to movements trying to limit development. It compared six newspapers' coverage of anti-gentrification movements from 1995 to 2005 in the San Francisco Bay Area. The findings indicate the coverage is more nuanced than the initial assumption suggested. Although Gin and Taylor's paper (2010) delved into a ground-breaking research theme, it has not yet led to further research on the topic. This chapter thus aims to fill part of this gap in the literature.

It will focus on an act of resistance to gentrification which occurred in 2015 in east London. On September 26, 2015, a mob of approximately 200 protesters attacked the Cereal Killer Cafe (shortened to CKC) on Brick Lane—a cafe serving, as the name suggests, branded breakfast cereals. The word "scum" was daubed on the shop window while the large crowd of activists gathered outside the cafe, carrying pigs' heads and torches, leaving customers, including children—barricaded inside—"terrified for their lives," to quote the cafe's owners. The attack was orchestrated by Class War—an anarchist group founded in 1982 in the United Kingdom.[1] The cafe was targeted as a "symbol of gentrification" by the activists following a Channel 4 interview with one of the two owners. In this December 2014 interview, carried out six months prior to the attack, the owners were challenged over their prices. Paying £3.20 for a bowl of cereal in Tower Hamlets—one of the poorest boroughs in London—was deemed an exorbitant price.

Even though the attack was preceded by a peaceful anti-gentrification demonstration, the former was the only event widely talked about in the press. Mostly due to its unprecedented violence, the attack hit the headlines of the London press, before going viral and being reported and commented upon in the national and international press and on international television channels. Yet, the press coverage at the local level slightly differed—both being more limited and framing the attack in a different manner.

1 In the 1980s, Class War organized a number of "Bash the Rich" demonstrations in wealthy areas of London. The group was resurrected as a political party in 2015 general election, after resuming its activities including a protest about "poor doors" in Whitechapel (London), in November 2014, ending in partial victory. In July 2021, a group emerged at the London School of Economics called "LSE Class War" demanding the abolition of the LSESU Hayek Society, and a private-school-free LSE.

Focusing on the case study of the CKC attack in order to research the newspaper coverage of anti-gentrification resistance proves to be significant for two main reasons. First, from a media viewpoint, not only did it receive extensive press coverage, it was also one of the rare anti-gentrification acts of resistance in the area depicted as such in the mainstream national press. Secondly, from an academic perspective, although the attack has been widely commented on in the media, academic inquiries into the subject are to date relatively scarce. A recent exception is a paper by le Grand (2020a) which examined the representations of the hipster figure in the national press coverage. Le Grand's paper studied in particular the moralizing media reactions to the CKC attack, not on the attack itself, but on the hipster figure of the owners of the cafe at two different times—first on the opening of the cafe, in December 2014, at the time of the Channel 4 interview and secondly, on the attack itself, in September 2015. He identified two separate stages in the coverage. The first one was marked by the failure of the folk devilling of the owners, resulting in the hipster figure being heroized and gentrification being heavily portrayed as desirable. The second stage was characterized by both the moralizing social reaction depicting the anti-gentrification activists (and not the owners) as folk devils, and the media support offered to the owners, referred to as hipsters.

Consequently, while the event has also been largely covered by international television channels, this chapter intends to build on le Grand's research and further our understanding of newspaper coverage of the CKC attack. First, while le Grand focused on national papers, this chapter will add the local press to the analysis bearing in mind the readers get different images of their local community according to the type of newspapers they choose to consult (Leupold et al. 2018). Yet, this choice was also made in order to understand the different, sometimes jarring views between the mainstream papers and the papers at the local level. Second, this chapter will decentre the analysis of the attack from the hipster figure to the attack itself. Third, by comparing and contrasting le Grand's analysis of the national press coverage with the chapter's subsequent conclusions, this research will aim to draw preliminary conclusions on the discrepancies between the mainstream national press and the local press.

Methodology

In terms of methodology, this chapter mainly draws on content analysis of articles in connection to the CKC or centering on the attack. Content

analysis has been recognized in social science since Bernard Berelson's landmark publication (1952) defining it as "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts to the contexts of their use" (Krippendorff 2004, 18). The use of content analysis is all the more appropriate in a comparison of the local press since the comparison is one of the tenets of content analysis (Berelson 1952). That being said, the chapter will now move on to the novelty of this research.

While le Grand (2020) chiefly focused on the media representations of the hipster figure in national newspapers, as suggested earlier, this chapter examines the representations of the attack, and in particular the choice of both its target and its use of violence. The corpus includes three local newspapers: a "quality" monthly independent paper, the *Hackney Citizen*, and two weekly sister tabloids, the *Hackney Gazette* and *The Docklands and East London Advertiser*. They principally differ regarding their target audiences, both in terms of readers' social class background and age-cohort. While the *Citizen* targets middle-class readers, aged from twenty- to forty-years old, the two tabloids aim at a more working-class and older readership.

The choice to focus on these three local newspapers is supported by the boundaries of the geographical coverage of each of them. Indeed, the attack occurred in an area bordering both Hackney and Tower Hamlets. It was wrongly identified as Shoreditch in many national newspapers, while actually taking place in Brick Lane. While the *Gazette* is distributed in the Borough of Hackney (which includes the Shoreditch area), *The Docklands* is distributed in the neighbouring Borough of Tower Hamlets (covering Brick Lane). If they essentially cover their own borough, they are not limited to it: the attack being a prime example of these geographical overlaps. The *Hackney Citizen*, as the name suggests, covers Hackney. Even though the *Citizen* might have stricter geographical boundaries, overlaps are common.

To briefly present the weekly newspapers, both the *Gazette* and *The Docklands* are sold at the price of £1 per copy in supermarkets and newsagents. Their online editions have also been available for free since 2012. In terms of content, they provide local stories, sport, and miscellaneous news items including sensational crime stories and celebrity gossip. While both are papers dating back to the late nineteenth century, the *Citizen* is a more recent paper. It was first launched in 2008 as a quarterly newspaper, before being published every month. From the very beginning, the newspaper offered nuanced views on gentrification and was edited in view of exerting a counter-power over the controversial Council paper, *Hackney Today*. Contrary to the popular local press, the *Citizen* is a free sheet provided in libraries, healthcare centres, and coffee shops. Given its publication

frequency, the editors rule out sensationalist articles and heavily rely on news of cultural events.

Therefore, this chapter relies on eleven articles specifically on the CKC from the local press: three from *The Docklands*, four from the *Gazette*, and four from the *Citizen*. It also relies on five leaders from the *Citizen* referring to the gentrification of the area. Finally, from an ad hoc comparative perspective between the local and national press, it relies on four articles from the daily national left-leaning paper, *The Guardian*, on the attack itself. A set of questions was addressed in the corpus examination. Here are a few examples among others. What are the general tone of the articles on gentrification and on anti-gentrification? In what terms is the event depicted? Whose ideas are cited or quoted in the articles? What forms do the articles take? How often are articles published on the event? Is there a noteworthy evolution in the tone of the articles? If applicable, what is the picture illustrating the article? This research is also underpinned by an interview with a reporter for the *Citizen*, Max Eckersley.

This chapter provides an analysis of the jarring reactions of three local newspapers relating to the attack, from the tabloids' harsh denunciation of its violence to the *Citizen*'s remarkable ignorance of the event. It will then focus on the *Citizen*—being a press organ specifically launched to recognize and address the paradoxes of gentrification (*Hackney Citizen* 2008). This research will examine the unsaid in the *Citizen*'s articles to study and explain its stance towards this act of resistance to gentrification. The fact that the *Citizen* globally overlooked the attack is inherently paradoxical. Proof of this, over the years, the *Citizen* has ruthlessly mocked the hipster figure, has denounced the downsides of gentrification, and has even proved to be a catalyst of anti-gentrification resistance. To better understand the stance of the local papers on the attack, this research will rely on an ad hoc comparative study of some of *The Guardian*'s articles on the matter. The choice of this mainstream left-leaning paper will be explained in due course. The chapter will then end with a comparison of the press coverage of each local newspaper, along with a larger comparison with the national press coverage based on le Grand's findings (le Grand 2020a) and a broader reflection on local journalism.

The Popular Local Newspapers' Wholesale Condemnation of the Attack

To set the attack in a broader context, the local press coverage of the opening of the cafe will succinctly be studied. The opening of the CKC in

December 2014 was overlooked by the popular local newspapers, whether it was the *Gazette* or *The Docklands*. Yet, in the wake of the media hype of the opening following the Channel 4 interview, the opening of a second venue in Camden in May 2015 was advertised in the ICYMI section of both popular papers (Hackney Gazette 2015) (The Docklands & East London Advertiser 2015a). Both papers issued the same article providing a reminder of the significant footfall of the Brick Lane venture—between 200 and 500 customers per day. It is worth noting these figures are further evidence that the scathing interview paradoxically boosted footfall.

In line with the national press coverage, the attack was on the front page of *The Docklands*. The headline "Mob attacks cafe with fire, bottles and paint" was issued along with three photographs (Brooke and Wyatt 2015). The biggest one was a view from inside the cafe—putting the reader in the customers' shoes looking at the protesters outside and their glaring torches, through splashes of paint on the window. The second picture was a staged portrait of the twin owners in their cafe, depicting them as nice and funny folks, pulling faces. Below this picture, the last photograph is a birds'-eye view of the mob outside the cafe. These mere photographs speak volumes on the paper's viewpoint on the attack. The title of the article makes no reference to the attack as an act of anti-gentrification resistance, in spite of the article being published five days after the attack which had been reported by national papers as such. On the contrary, the term "mob" echoes the violence and lack of organization of the event. The article itself is a heavy condemnation of both the violence and the target of the attack. The owners are victimized as "besieged cafe owners." To express this strong condemnation, the journalists lengthily quote different organizations that denounced the protesters' action. Running onto the next page, the condemnation relies on two business owners who criticized the attack. Yet the sharpest criticism comes from women's groups campaigning against the Jack the Ripper Museum also led by Class War (the Class War Women's Death Brigade). The attack is deemed by the women's groups to overshadow their own campaign. The women's campaign accused the Jack the Ripper Museum of glorifying sexual violence against women. The reference to the campaign against the Jack the Ripper Museum is surprising to the extent that it has been totally overlooked by national newspapers. Yet, the journalists rely upon it to show how divisive the attack was, including among Class War members. Moreover, this mention might be interpreted as a way for *The Docklands* to move on to another issue, belittling the importance of the attack, while denouncing the impact of it on the campaign against the museum.

An echo to this women's campaign can be found in a newsflash in the next edition of *The Docklands* (The Docklands & East London Advertiser 2015b). Interestingly enough, the women's groups which were implicitly praised a week earlier, were later compared to the Brick Lane protesters issuing death threats on the Jack the Ripper Museum's owner. The ominous prophecy of the women's groups turned out to be true—their campaign ended up being swallowed up by the bad press of the attack.

While the attack made the headlines of *The Docklands*, the coverage was slightly more low-key in the *Gazette*—probably owing to the coverage boundaries of the newspaper (more focused on Hackney than Tower Hamlets). Yet, the attack was still reported in the edition following the event. The title "Riot police called to 'gentrification' demo" left little room for doubt on the paper's take on the event. It was both a hint at its violence leading to the riot police intervention and a severe questioning of this anti-gentrification resistance action (Hedges-Scott 2015). The inverted commas around the term "gentrification" is evidence that the protest was not taken seriously by the journalist. The subtitle "Cereal Cafe among Businesses Hit in Protest" further reveal the journalist sided with the hipster owners. Throughout the article, the protesters are referred to in pejorative terms, presented as "an angry mob," quoting here the owners' version of the story, and then F**k Parade is presented as "*claim*[ing] to be campaigning for affordable housing" (my italics). While the account is clearly heavily biased, the attack is contextualized in a series of anti-gentrification actions targeting local businesses, such as an estate agency. The journalist wrapped up the article on the police report and the mention of an investigation. This implies that at the time, the *Gazette* dealt with the attack as a senseless news story which should result in legal proceedings.

The edition of the following week included a letter to the editor, proclaimed "letter of the week" (Simic 2015). Signed by a member of the Hackney Socialist Workers Party, it was presented as a Hackney resident's viewpoint on the attack. Without any mention of its violence, it is a severe criticism of the target of the protest, questioning the choice of a local business, at a stone's throw from the City, depicted as "the most concentrated hub of capitalism in Europe" and "the real enemy." It also draws up a list of institutions that could have been targeted in lieu of the CKC, such as the Bank of England and the Stock Exchange. The letter came with a photograph of the activists outside the cafe—actually the same as the one printed on the front page of *The Docklands*, right after the attack. The fact that it was proclaimed "Letter of the week" by the editors reveals they wholeheartedly sided with this reader's fierce criticism of the attack. While the article of the previous edition

lacked any analysis of the event, this is a way for the editors to express their own criticism of the target of the attack, implicitly and in a Manichean way, pointing to the fact that for the *Gazette*, the CKC should not be considered as a symbol of the gentrification of the borough. Indeed, in all the *Gazette*'s articles, unlike the national papers, the CKC is never referred to as a "hipster" cafe. Yet, by publishing the whole letter, including an introduction which expresses a bitter viewpoint on gentrification in general, the editors also express a critical view of gentrification in the borough—a stance which was not expressed in the news report a week earlier.

Furthermore, the caption under the picture "The Anti-Gentrification Activists Protested Outside the Cereal Killer Cafe" is also meaningful. Basically, it took a week for the protesters to be referred to as "anti-gentrification activists," not just protesters. This caption which was provided by the editors is evidence they were then starting to pay heed to the protesters' activism which had been glossed over until then. This change of tone can be deemed the result of the national left-leaning newspapers' extensive coverage which largely identified the protest as an act of anti-gentrification resistance in spite of providing a harsh criticism of the violence and the target of the event.

Indeed, the target of the attack was almost unanimously criticized in the newspapers, whether at the local or national level. In other words, the CKC was not considered as the prototypical example of gentrification. In that sense, a comparison with another anti-gentrification protest—which was led by Reclaim Brixton in the eponymous neighbourhood (about five miles south as the crow flies)—is meaningful. This protest led to an attack on the upmarket estate agent Foxtons, which was quite similar (in the way it was carried out) to the CKC attack as the windows were smashed. Yet Foxtons was seen by the hyperlocal media *Buzz* as "an irresistible target" (see Sadoux in this volume). And in that particular case, the hyperlocal media seemed to be in keeping with the mainstream national press considering the presence of Foxtons as a symbol of gentrification (see Sadoux in this volume). Thus, without being able to create a typology, it is worth noting that the choice of the attack might account for its reception by the press whether at the local or national level, even though the violence of the event might also come into play (the smashing of Foxtons' windows bore no comparison with the assault on the CKC's customers).

To get back to the local press on the attack, whilst no other articles were published at all on the matter in *The Docklands*, the *Gazette* issued an article on it in 2019. Three and a half years after the event, the *Gazette* promoted a musical based on the story of the CKC (Splarn 2019). Even though the theatre

was outside Hackney borough, the *Gazette* published an advertising article on the eponymous event.

While the producer's account of his musical, expressed in the article, leads one to think he struck a balance between the protagonists and antagonists, the *Gazette*'s contextualization of the musical is much more favourable to the cafe owners. A prime example is the lexical field of hostility used to refer to the event: "the animosity" and "Much worse was to come." Another expression hinted this time at an unintentional and unexpected position of the cafe owners—"the Cafe found itself at the centre of an anti-gentrification riot"—undoubtedly victimizing them. Yet, once again, the event is pinpointed as a protest action against gentrification. Curiously enough, this musical was reported neither in *The Docklands*, nor in the *Citizen*. *The Docklands*' lack of coverage of the report is startling on the grounds of its large coverage of the attack itself. Concerning the *Citizen*, the hypothesis may be that as the theatre sat in the West End, an area not covered by the local paper, it was avoided. The second hypothesis could be that since the attack went merely unnoticed by the *Citizen*, it did not spur any interest in the subsequent musical.

Indeed, astoundingly, the attack did not hit the headlines of the *Citizen* in the October 2015 edition. A sound reason explaining this lack of press coverage was the publishing frequency of the newspaper. As a monthly paper, the editors of the *Citizen* have always totally excluded the miscellaneous news items from their press coverage. This might be solid evidence that it considered the attack at first as nothing more than a news item. This is also corroborative evidence the event was subject to media hijacking which stirred up the *Citizen*'s late interest in the matter. Yet, this explanation cannot be the only plausible one.

The Radical Stance of an Independent Local Paper (the *Hackney Citizen*): The Intentional Oversight of the Attack

As a matter of fact, the leader of the October 2015 edition was an anti-gentrification stance, yet it totally overlooked the CKC attack which took place six days prior to the publication (*Hackney Citizen* 2015b). Titled "More Powers to Our Elbows," it was formulated as a call to action addressed to local residents of the borough to act against gentrification. The first part of the leader is a bird's-eye view of the rampant gentrification of the borough, the rise in the cost of living and the rent hikes. After stating the limited powers behoving local authorities due to the excess of powers of the London

Mayor and central government, the leader examines the residents' levers in the face of gentrification.

The second half of the leader is a list of concrete actions answering the major question addressed in its introduction: "Who can protect us ordinary folk from the onslaught of so-called gentrification?" Among these grassroots actions, none refers to the attack itself. Although totally different in their goals, the actions all fall under indirect resistance to gentrification. The editors go as far as stating that "Action by people at local level does not always have to be in opposition." This sounds like a cutting remark in disguise directed to the CKC protesters. This injunction to act can be read as an implicit criticism of direct and violent resistance to gentrification. As proof of this, the New Era Estate campaign—a series of peaceful protests over rent hikes, led by three single mothers, accompanied by the controversial actor Russell Brand, which ended up a national success—is cited as a prime example.

No article or leader refers to the attack in November 2015, leading the readership to think the total absence of reference to the attack a month earlier was probably an informed choice of the editors. In other words, the leader of October 2015 referring to anti-gentrification resistance did not coincide with the attack by happenstance—the October edition being published too close to the attack and preventing any reference or article about it—but a deliberate move.

Even more surprising, the newspaper's culture sections of the December 2015 edition advertised a play based on the social media comments following an event in a context of gentrification (Hemery 2015). A man sought help in a "hipster" Hackney pub, the Bonneville, after being stabbed, and a pub employee complained about the bad press it entailed for the recently-opened pub. If this event has nothing whatsoever to do with the CKC attack, the social media comments it spurred and the raging media response were similar, hence the unexpectedness of the lack of coverage of the attack.

Three months afterwards, in a leader summing up the hot news of the year, a paragraph distantly echoed back to the attack (*Hackney Citizen* 2016). Ironically titled "Meanwhile in Hipsterdom," the leader satirically compared the unchallenged supremacy of hipsters—referring to both the owners and the customers of the cafe—to the advent of a monarchy. This tongue-in-cheek comment reveals the attack was not taken seriously by the *Citizen*. The paper goes as far as carrying the burlesque metaphor one step further and refers to a big-game hunting while relating it to another act of anti-gentrification resistance: "Hackney's most journalistically dissected

indigenous species was subject to attack at Cereal Killers cafe in Shoreditch and Well Street Pizza." Through this highly critical phrase "Hackney's most journalistically dissected indigenous species," it is also worth noting that the *Citizen* wishes to distance itself from other local papers highlighting the irrelevance of this evergreen content of no interest. Even though the *Citizen*'s viewpoint is not clearly put forward in the rest of the article, the tone is deliberately jeering regarding the hipsters, yet no evidence suggests the paper has heartfelt sympathy for the activists either.

The *Hackney Citizen* as a Catalyst and a Stakeholder of Anti-Gentrification Resistance at the Local Level

The lack of the *Citizen*'s coverage of one of the most media-commented acts of resistance to gentrification poses a central paradox insofar as the editors have been taking on an anti-gentrification stance in several leaders since the newspaper's launch. In one of the earliest issues of the *Citizen*, the paper positioned itself as looking at the gentrification of the borough with a critical eye. Before the two aforementioned leaders denouncing the gentrification of the borough—the 2015 call to action and the 2016 one briefly referring to the attack—the editors took a clear stance in the leader of the second edition of the paper in 2008, titled "Gentrification – a neighbourhood 'grey area'?" (*Hackney Citizen* 2008).

This leader in 2008 is not straightforwardly a criticism of gentrification but rather an invitation to take some distance with this urban process and to question it. The editorial is in defence of community-building in the face of gentrification, relying on an idealized vision of the sociology of the area, referring to a supposed social harmony, reminiscent of the concept of "imagined community" framed by Benedict Anderson (Anderson 2006) in his work on nationalism—a social construct imagined by the people depicting themselves as part of one single nation. In this leader, the editors build upon the notion of community, exacerbated by the use of the pronoun "we," without ever defining or questioning it. It covertly calls upon both the long-established residents and the late incomers.

On the assumption that gentrification is a process inherent to the borough, the article balances its pros and cons, yet dwelling on the downsides of it, such as physical displacement, rent hikes, and community strife. From the onset, it is made clear that the editors are not against gentrification per se ("The economic and social forces at work are not such that we can stop gentrification – indeed, many would argue that we shouldn't want to try

to"). Yet, they pose the question of the ways in which first its downsides can be tackled, and secondly the most vulnerable can be helped to become resilient: "the paradoxes of gentrification need to be recognized and, as far as possible, addressed." In this regard, the newspaper's editorial line expressed in this second leader reminds the reader of the right to the city, essentially conceptualized by David Harvey as a collective right "to reshape the processes of urbanization" (D. Harvey 2008). Even though this leader does not fall within the scope of an anti-gentrification resistance, it is a nuanced criticism of gentrification. According to the *Citizen*, a second wave of gentrification hit the borough six years later which stirred a renewed interest in the topic. The year 2014 was reviewed by the *Citizen* as "the year we reached peak 'gentrification'" (*Hackney Citizen* 2015a).

This opinion was repeated first on the ten-year anniversary of the paper and more recently in an interview with one of its main journalists. In 2018, without directly hinting at gentrification, the editors wrote: "We saw that Hackney was undergoing a bit of a renaissance, some would call it gentrification, but we thought there was space for something that provided more informed debate and in depth analysis" (Forsdick 2018). Along the same lines, the journalist Max Eckersley (Interview, June 21, 2019) reported on the paper's take on gentrification: "I think our opinion on gentrification is that it's happening and we try and reflect people's anger with it, and obviously how the council deals with it. I don't think you would find many people who would defend gentrification because in a sense it just makes the borough less affordable for people who lived here for a long time. [...] We try to report on the impact of gentrification in Hackney." In other words, even if the journalist does not express outright anti-gentrification resistance, it is still critical of the social phenomenon.

A prime example of the paper's strong disapproval of gentrification was a comment published as a titbit a year prior to the attack (*Hackney Citizen* 2014). The editors were heavily ironical about the Bonneville backlash following the stabbing event which later gave birth to a play (*cf.* the *Gazette*'s advertising article Hemery 2015): "Forget whitewash and gentrification, the new word 'gentrificleansing' is a handy portmanteau of both." Playing with dark humour, the term is presented as the latest fad echoing the style of fashion magazines. The editors interpret the pub's reaction as having put forward a neologism—"gentrificleansing"—a portmanteau word combining "cleansing," implicitly referring to "social or ethnic cleansing" (part of the Marxist urban theory, see Rose 1984) and "gentrification."

These leaders reveal an escalation of the anti-gentrification radicalization of the paper. While the leader in 2008 presented gentrification as an urban

process to be nuanced, the review of the year 2014 (*Hackney Citizen* 2015a) states a peak in gentrification and the leader in 2015 (*Hackney Citizen* 2015b) is a catalyst of resistance through its call to action.

Taking these leaders into account, the bottom-line question is: on what grounds did the *Citizen* overlook this particular act of resistance to gentrification in Brick Lane while it frequently denounced the downsides of gentrification? Beyond the intentional ignorance, on what grounds did this local middle-class newspaper ultimately lampoon the hipster figure in the attack?

The most radical act of resistance to gentrification in the borough is in the end nearly completely overlooked by the *Citizen*. If one possible explanation could lie in the boundaries of the geographical coverage of the paper, this is not the most likely *post hoc* explanation insofar as it does not account for the lack of clear stance on the attack, since the attack is nonetheless mentioned in retrospect. The most satisfactory explanation for the lack of coverage is first an editorial decision to deal with it as a news item—typically outside the scope of the *Citizen*'s articles. Yet, this classification as a news item cannot account for the lack of reference to the attack in the leader on concrete actions to tackle gentrification (2015). The deliberate blindness to it is an avowal of the *Citizen*'s disapproval of the attack. Yet, if the attack itself was disapproved by the *Citizen*, the editors did not actually side with the owners. A few months later, the *Citizen* (2016) presented a biting satire of the hipster figures (the one titled "Meanwhile in Hipsterdom"), thus distancing itself from the mainstream press which usually victimizes them. Undeniably, more empathy towards hipsters would have been expected from the *Citizen* inasmuch as the newspaper had been pigeonholed as a hipster paper in the past (Interview with Max Eckersley, June 21, 2019). To the contrary, as a popular paper, a fierce criticism of hipsters would not have been discordant with the *Gazette*'s editorial line. This is evidence that the protesters' aim of the attack was not interpreted as they would have wished for.

To go back to the *Citizen*'s stance, it dissociates itself from the editorial line of other local newspapers on gentrification by its ultimate satire of the hipster figure. This will to dissociate itself is also perceptible in its hint that hipsters should not be a matter for journalistic debate. All in all, this position can be interpreted as a will to distance itself from past accusations of being a hipster paper. This is in line with the hipster-loathing trend: being a hipster is seldom a self-proclaimed identity but is a pejorative term ironically referring to consumption (Schiermer 2014). It should be noted that the *Citizen* never condemned, even implicitly, the target of the attack—the

choice of a local business—yet, it denounced the violence of it. While its stance is never made clear, it is subtly expressed in the unsaid of its articles.

Ad Hoc Comparisons of the Local Press with *The Guardian*'s Articles on the Attack

My aim in the last section of this chapter is to highlight the particularities of the *Citizen* as a local left-leaning newspaper with a critical view on gentrification. To better understand the *Citizen*'s stance on the attack, an ad hoc comparative study of *The Guardian*'s articles is meaningful inasmuch as *The Guardian* is also a left-leaning paper with a critical view on gentrification. In other words, the comparison and contrast between the *Citizen* and *The Guardian* will make us aware of the specific features of the *Citizen* in the way it deals with the attack. The main reason for choosing *The Guardian* is that, while being on the mainstream left, it published a pair of articles which clearly contrasted with other mainstream media on the attack. Yet, we will see that the comparisons with *The Guardian* are also meaningful for *The Docklands* and the *Gazette*.

At the national level, it was the only newspaper making way for jarring voices on the attack: attempting to strike a balance between different viewpoints. A prime example of this position is the publication of two articles poles apart, only two days after the attack: one was written by a demonstrator, the other by one of the two owners of the cafe. To the best of my knowledge, strikingly enough, *The Guardian* was the only paper to give a voice to the demonstrators, a fact mentioned in passing by le Grand (2020a). Le Grand's study was meant to offer an overview of the media representations of the hipster in the attack. While he conducted an extensive study on national newspapers of all political persuasions, he did not dwell on *The Guardian*'s articles. Therefore, this section aims at drawing ad hoc in-depth comparisons between *The Guardian* and the *Citizen* to account for the local newspaper's distinctiveness.

Thus, *The Guardian* dissociates itself from other mainstream papers with this aforementioned article signed by a demonstrator. It is also worth noting that the opinion column written by the demonstrator Will Harvey (2015) is the only one, among all the national newspapers, to offer an explanation of the violence of the attack. According to him, the violence of the attack should be read as a metaphor for the violence of gentrification in London. Yet, Will Harvey notes with regret that the aim of the attack—the denunciation of the inequalities and social cleansing—has been largely ignored by the media.

His argument is that the media failed to see that the violence of the attack intended to mirror the violence of the process of gentrification and only focused on the violence of the attack *per se*. He plays the violence down, referring to "paint and cornflakes" thrown at the cafe and deliberately not mentioning the pigs' heads and torches. Later he even goes as far as referring to "a carnival atmosphere" with families, anarchists, and social housing residents. This mention of the sociological profile of the protestors is also a covert way to debunk the myth—fed by *The London Evening Standard*—that they were mainly middle-class academics. He also puts the attack into perspective by insisting on the 49 per cent of children living below the poverty line in the borough of Tower Hamlets where the attack took place. Even though *The Guardian* was the only national paper to give voice to one of the demonstrators, this position stands out as an exception as the other articles tend to criticize the violence of the attack above all.

The second opinion leader was published on the same day as the one signed by the demonstrator. In this one, *The Guardian*'s readership gets to know the position of one of the two owners of the cafe and his line of defence (Keery 2015). Even though this is an opinion leader, this article is much more in line with the other articles from *The Guardian* with a severe criticism of the attack, referring to an "unacceptable bullying." Interestingly enough, his first argument was later taken up by a reader in a letter to the editor in the *Gazette* (Simic 2015). Indeed, it refers to the absurdity of the choice of the target—attacking a small business. His second argument defended the expensive price of their bowls of cereal: he argues selling "a cereal experience" rather than just a product. As this comment could be perceived as a characteristic of hipsters by the readers, he then voluntarily distances himself from it by flaunting his working-class origins. Last but not least, he argues that "protesting gentrification in Shoreditch is a little too late." He then points to other businesses (mainly chain stores) that could have been targeted instead, thus coming full circle with his opening argument.

The other articles from *The Guardian* openly criticize the attack, reminding the reader of the articles published in the *Gazette* and *The Docklands*, even though the attack is clearly depicted as an act of anti-gentrification resistance by *The Guardian* (Khomami and Halliday 2015) and not as a "mob" contrary to the local newspapers. The main argument is about the choice of the target roughly opposing a local business to chain stores. In that sense, *The Guardian*'s articles on the attack are very much in line with its articles prior to the attack, following the media outrage on the opening of the cafe: *The Guardian* stated that the CKC was "a symptom of gentrification, not

the cause" (Moore 2014). *The Guardian*'s bottom line is that the debate is more complex than it looks.

The ad hoc study of *The Guardian*'s articles also reveals the specific features of the *Citizen*. While the *Citizen* is notably critical of hipsters in its editorial policy, it gave no voice to the protesters following the attack, contrary to *The Guardian*. In that sense, *The Guardian* presented a more balanced narrative with different viewpoints on the attack. Likewise, the *Citizen* went so far as not considering the attack as an act of resistance to gentrification while *The Guardian* openly did. Yet it did not play on emotions by describing it as a "mob" contrary to the other local papers. Similarly to *The Guardian* and other papers in general, the *Citizen* indirectly condemned the protesters for the violence of their action and tended to lean towards the owners of the cafe.

Discussion and Conclusion

Ultimately, the local coverage of the attack is limited compared to the national coverage as listed by le Grand (2020). While the *Gazette* and *The Docklands* openly condemn the violence and the target of the attack, the *Citizen* considerably ignores the attack and takes an interest in it months afterwards, probably as a result of the media hype over it. In line with its severe criticism of the hipster figure, the *Citizen* does not victimize the hipster owners; its stance is quite the reverse. This wish to distance itself from the victimization of the hipster figure can be connected to this independent paper's own story. This distance can be traced back to the allegations faced by the *Citizen* of being a hipster paper. More generally speaking, this analysis encourages reflection on the status of the journalist, in particular in national papers, who have been pigeonholed as pseudo-gentrifiers by academic research (Moran 2007) and thus would be less likely to criticize their peers. This could explain why to their eyes, small businesses cannot be accused of gentrifying an area, while big brand name chains like Starbucks could.

Looking at the bigger picture, part of the results of this analysis of the local press coverage is very much in line with le Grand's findings on mainstream national papers (le Grand 2020a). Le Grand identified heavy bias in media representations of the attack according to the political affiliation of the national papers. The right-leaning press (such as the *Daily Mail*, *The Sun*, *The Times*, the *Daily Telegraph*, among others) used an alarmist vocabulary and/or portrayed the protesters as claiming to speak for the

working-class, despite being privileged middle-class. The sister tabloids—the *Gazette* and *The Docklands*—showed similar bias to these right-leaning newspapers, drawing upon an alarmist vocabulary, but also depicting anti-gentrification activists as folk devils, and hailing the hipster figure as a hero. This is once again in line with the idea of the hipster depicted in the press as a contested middle-class social type being both the object of praise and denigration (le Grand 2020b). This chapter has nonetheless shown that surprisingly these comments cannot be applied to the *Citizen*, a middle-class local paper. Whilst this left-leaning paper is not entirely in contradiction to its local counterparts—as proof of this, Class War is not being given any voice either—it can be singled out as still departing from the mainstream left-leaning national press. The attack was given almost no attention by this independent local press organ. Indeed, according to le Grand (2020a)'s findings on the one hand, but also to my analysis of *The Guardian*, left-leaning national papers expressed sympathy for Class War's concern over gentrification but still criticized the attack on the cafe.

Yet these differing outlooks have to be nuanced: Class War's aim—to give voice and represent working-class interests—totally failed to be represented in *The Guardian* and the *Citizen* alike. In the same vein, in both papers (but more generally speaking in the national and the local press), the voices of the working-class and minority pre-gentrifiers were completely ignored, even though the attack is morally and socially criticized.

In any case, the *Citizen* adopted a particular stance which revived the debate on the importance of the local press. The death of the local printed press has been announced many times over the last two decades (Temple 2015, Conte 2022, among others). It was also side-lined by the momentum of social media and it undeniably suffered from the COVID-19 crisis. Yet, there are reasons to think that this type of journalism plays a complementary role to the mainstream national media, all the more so when it falls under the independent press and what could be labelled as "community journalism." The *Citizen* could indeed be classified as "community journalism" since it also aims at both stressing its sense of belonging to the community and creating a community solidarity—directly perceptible through the use of the pronoun "we" (see also Sadoux in this volume). It is this purpose as well which in the end makes this paper an essential part of the news media landscape (Wahl-Jorgensen 2022). To follow up on this, future research on the distance of local independent journalism from mainstream journalism could be conducted on other case studies to draw conclusions on the exceptionalism of this stance—Sadoux's work (in this volume) proves that we still have much to learn from further research on citizen journalism and hyperlocal media.

This chapter has also confirmed Gin & Taylor's (2010) findings, namely, the media coverage, whether positive or negative, depends upon a wide range of factors, such as the phase in the movement and the framing of the issues. Temporality plays a paramount role in the three local papers: the closer to the attack the articles are published, the more negative the viewpoint is likely to be. When the articles are issued in the heat of the moment, emotion and violence are extensively commented upon. On the contrary, when the publication date is further from the attack, both a temporal and reflexive distance emerges, making the event appear less violent.

To conclude, whilst most publications demonstrate a nuanced press coverage of gentrification, academic research has overall ignored the role of the press as a catalyst of anti-gentrification resistance. The *Citizen* provides evidence that, in contrast to the mainstream papers, not only can local papers trigger anti-gentrification resistance, but also be full stakeholders in the process. Therefore, this chapter invites further reflection not just on local independent journalistic attitudes towards gentrification, but also on the anti-gentrification resistance they beget or they even display. To build on Cindi Katz's (2004) typology increasingly but moderately referred to in gentrification studies, this resistance can be categorized as resistance per se by distinction from the concept of resilience and reworking. Yet, to qualify this resistance, referring here to Hollander and Einwhoner's (2004) key features of the concept, the *Citizen*'s resistance could be conceived as an overt political action, with an outright sense of opposition, thus presenting itself as a touchstone of the concept of resistance. Lastly, as hinted at in the introduction, it would be of interest to examine the extent to which the press coverage, either at the local or national level, by having largely demonized this anti-gentrification act of resistance, struck a heavy blow against the way in which anti-gentrification resistance is broadly and publicly perceived. Consequently, this chapter suggests an avenue for future research on how the press coverage on anti-gentrification resistance may be shaped by the demonization of a one-off attack.

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About the Author

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15. Part 4: Discussion

Matthew Hardy

As we have seen, Simon Renoir, Stéphane Sadoux, and Marie-Pierre Vincent have contributed chapters to this book that address the media's coverage of resistance to gentrification. Each of the three has approached the topic from a different angle, and it is the combination of the three views that makes this section an important part of this work. Renoir examined a formal programme of the city of Denver to record stories of residents' everyday lives, Sadoux by contrast focused on a blog which recorded aspects of gentrification in the London suburb of Brixton, while Vincent analysed coverage of a violent protest in the inner London borough Tower Hamlets, as discussed in local newspapers from the adjoining borough of Hackney.

The three authors have interpreted "media" in a broad sense, encompassing blogs, websites, online videos, social media, and traditional print media. This rich news media landscape provides a host of opportunities for discussion of gentrification, and for various aspects of gentrification to emerge. The topic is an important one, since what most of us know of gentrification—indeed, of anyone else's life—is necessarily at second hand: it has been observed, interpreted, recorded, and reported, by others. As these chapters demonstrate, gentrification has become a familiar frame through which news and stories are represented, though one that Vincent argues elsewhere (Vincent 2021) can be seen as a positive as well as a negative, often by the same publication on different occasions.

The "media" in this section are not just those forms that we might have expected at the time Glass (1964) was writing her pioneering work on gentrification—newspapers, magazines, journals, radio, and television—but now includes a host of much more ubiquitous and one could say, intrusive, forms of self-expression. Social media is at most people's fingertips today in the developed world[1] and there are many other forms of media available, such

1 Between two-thirds (China, Japan) and four-fifths (UK, US) of the population have access to smartphones. Statista. https://www.statista.com/statistics/539395/smartphone-penetration-worldwide-by-country/. Accessed March 2023.

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as local news websites, blogs, the racism of NextDoor (Price 2021, 257–58), and many others. Finally, as the introduction to this book notes, "media" refers to the channels of communication but also to the actors involved in hosting, editing, creating content, and shaping narratives, thus emphasizing its dynamic and relational aspects.

More recently, social media has emerged as a key vehicle for the propagation and consumption of news. Indeed, it is when we consider the role of social media in reporting resistance to gentrification that questions emerge about the nature of such coverage. We know that the algorithms on which these platforms are based are designed to drive engagement through emotion (Tanesini 2022) by presenting material that gets a reaction from users and consumers (Bil-Jaruzelska and Monzer 2022), that the platforms drive polarization (Levy and Razin 2022), and that even the moderation of these posts itself may have aspects of surveillance and control (Bloch-Webba 2021). The aim is to increase dwell time on the sites to expose users to more advertising (Maslowska et al. 2021). This is achieved by presenting users with successively more extreme views, and by suggesting more extreme accounts to follow and groups to join, although this view has been challenged (Nguyen and Vu 2019). Social media users have even been identified as "useful idiots" or willing accomplices in spreading views seeded by hostile foreign powers (Jukes 2019; Starbird 2019).

Vosoughi et al. (2018) famously identified that disinformation spreads faster than truth because it has more narrative strength and presents more satisfactory stories than the messy and often incomplete facts available through conventional reportage. Disinformation is socially constructed to be more simple, memorable, and with a stronger narrative arc, and with simplistic "goodies" and "baddies." In this world, the strength of a narrative is more important than facts in carrying a story around the world (Tandoc 2019). The narrative strength of falsehoods helps them to spread and to be spread by credulous social media users and those with a vested interest in extremist views. Some far-right politicians, such as the current US president Donald Trump (Kellner 2018) and former British Prime Minister, Boris Johnson (Oborn 2021), have understood this implicitly and built entire castles in the air of narrative, detached from basis in fact, with startling success. Those inspired by this section to research the representation of gentrification in social media will help build our knowledge of how gentrification is understood across society. While there is now a growing literature on the representation of gentrification within social media (Huang et al. 2021; Bronsvoort and Uitermark 2022; Walters and Smith 2022), it is an area that needs much more explanation, as increasing numbers of people

access news via social media (Forman-Katz and Matsa 2022). Certainly, it appears to present quite a considerable gap in our knowledge of the spread of information—and disinformation—about gentrification, one this section has helped to fill.

Simon Renoir's chapter examined the novel programme of the city of Denver, known as "I am Denver" project—perhaps an echo of the famous 2004 "I Amsterdam" branding project in the Netherlands (Stamp 2012; Deloche 2016). The project aimed to represent the lives of those felt to have missed out of the transformation of the city in recent decades, particularly those from minority groups and the Latinx community.

The videos are recorded by appointees from the local authority's "Chief Storytelling Office" with the aim, Renoir informs us, of slowing gentrification. The videos produced for the team nevertheless follow some conventional film-making tropes, using a close-up portrait shot to introduce each video, as a framing device to draw attention to the face and character of each resident. The stories are thus mediated and to a certain extent, standardized by the framing devices established by film-making conventions. As Lutherová (2021, 277) notes, "the film-making process is both an artistic as well as a scientific experience," and it exists within more than a century of artistic conventions, narrative means, and framing formulas. One cannot conceive of a film that exists outside these framing norms, as locked as it is within its own formulas as Barthes (1980) explored for still photography.

However, Renoir leaves open the question of whether the framing of narratives through filmic means like these is in some way a concession to privileged cultural norms. Instead, he asks whether the films can challenge the overwhelming tendency of media critiques of gentrification to be constructed through a middle-class lens. This conflict is at the heart of all three contributions to this section. The reader is left wondering whether the means of representing the various forms of resistance, through film, blogs, or in traditional local newspapers, requires in itself the adoption of typical framing conventions that in themselves code middle class, or at least, conventionally situated, artistic, journalistic, or narrative tropes.

Sadoux's chapter challenges the reader with a directly reported narrative of community resistance to gentrification as represented in a blog, the Brixton Blog.[2] The material is largely presented as a direct record of the editor's own voice, unmediated by much in the form of analysis or commentary. The reader is thus required to consider the positionality of the editor as a self-declared representative or interlocutor of the community and

2 https://brixtonblog.com/. Accessed March 2023.

to challenge their own preconceptions of how gentrification is felt, resisted, and represented in a form of media that is presented as the uninflected views of the community itself. Sadoux deftly avoids characterizing the editor's position, or analysing the class position of the writer and editor who is in some minor way an owner of the means of representation, and thus, perhaps, in a rather different class position than he imagines himself to be. For, as the reader gradually becomes aware during this section, the power to represent gentrification as an attack on the working classes, as a "normal" part of capitalism, or as a positive act of "regeneration," rests not so much with the owners of the means of production in the twenty-first century, but with the owners of the means of representation.

What do we really know of others' lives, and of their feelings, other than what is represented in the various media we, as readers and subscribers, consume on a daily basis? It is perhaps a surprise, nearly sixty years since Glass coined the term gentrification, that it has taken so long for a work to emerge that focuses on the representation of gentrification in the media. Sadoux's chapter is thus marked by extensive reporting of the words of the owner of the community blog, reporting his own position in his own words, and giving us a very valuable insight into the thoughts and experiences of the "gentrified," which we might otherwise only know through second-hand research. As I have written elsewhere (Hardy 2019), there needs to be much more research into the experience of urban development, starting with post-occupancy evaluation—a necessarily limited exercise—and extended to impact evaluation, not least since most new development inevitably represents some form of gentrification, due to the "fossilization" of forms of tenancy that would be unaffordable today to those who arrived at some point in the past.

The blogger himself doesn't examine his own reflexivity and this is perhaps an open question posed by this chapter. As with Renoir's short video film-making, might we see blogging as a middle-class activity? And if not, how do we define middle-class activities and proclivities? Is resistance to gentrification by middle-class actors necessarily illegitimate? Does the act of resisting gentrification lead to an engagement with the political sphere, which irrevocably leads to class mobility? Are we to imagine a constant policing of possible gentrification that would eliminate class mobility in its entirety? Or does gentrification circulate through all of us, "in a manner at once continuous, uninterrupted, adapted, and 'individualized' throughout the entire social body" (Foucault 1984, 61) in a Foucauldian landscape of power?

By contrast, Marie-Pierre Vincent's chapter presented a more framed—and thus, perhaps, more nuanced—account of resistance to gentrification

in the London borough of Hackney, crystallized in the 2015 protest and attack on the Cereal Killer Cafe in Brick Lane. As Vincent observes, this new venue was hardly the most expensive, or the most exploitative, or the most alien of the myriad of "hipster" venues that appeared in Shoreditch and the neighbouring area of Spitalfields in the last twenty-five years. Vincent hinted at, but didn't dwell on, the reasons that this cafe specializing in branded breakfast cereal alone among the area's venues attracted violent protest by a crowd throwing paint and brandishing flaming torches (Wilkinson 2016). The chapter focused on the reporting from three local print newspapers, two weekly and one monthly, from the adjoining London Borough of Hackney.

The cafe concerned remains on Brick Lane, a street that bounds the protected neighbourhood of Spitalfields with its seventeenth-century Huguenot houses and listed Hawksmoor church, from the very poor neighbourhoods of Tower Hamlets. For years, Brick Lane has attracted City of London drinkers in search of a curry, and for the last twenty-five years it has been lined with curry restaurants, though these have declined in number from their 2010 peak (Carey 2021; Alexander et al. 2020). More recently, the renovation and repurposing of the former Truman Brewery has attracted arts entrepreneurs and night clubbers alike (Pratt 2009). Many of the latter had taken advantage of the all-night bagel shops on the street, which reflected the area's Jewish history and were famous enough to appear regularly in London guidebooks aimed at tourists, described as "great fun and very cheap" (Shaw 1993, 307). So the arrival of a mob outside the Cereal Killer Cafe in 2015 was both laughably *retardaire* and in some respects a futile gesture that was perhaps more to draw attention to the activists than their purported target. Certainly, Brick Lane represents a frontier of gentrification between the bankers, financiers, and insurers of the City of London and the immigrant communities to the East, but it was a frontier that had been in existence for at least a generation and was well entrenched on both sides. In any case, as Vincent notes, the protest appeared to have backfired, with the cafe prospering, opening other branches, and then surviving until the COVID-19 pandemic closed it in 2020. At that point it became an online shop selling imported American, European, and other cereals.[3]

All three chapters present cases that are interesting and that help us to extend the boundaries of what might be studied, in terms of media themselves, and what might be considered gentrification. But each of them also poses a range of questions that need to be answered in future research. We need to know more about the positionality of each of the media actors

3 https://www.cerealkillercafe.co.uk/. Accessed March 2023.

involved. Does the engagement of local actors in resisting gentrification through film-making, blogging or reporting bring them into a more middle-class—more gentrified—world akin to the traditional publishing houses? Is the format of blogging—governed by rules set by one of the world's richest multinationals, Google—a gentrifying message in itself? Is it a "means of production" that anti-gentrifying activists should attempt to take control of, or is it enough to swallow the sites rules and then seek revolution from within? Can free newspapers supported by advertising, as so many local papers are today, challenge gentrification beyond the merely superficial reporting of occasionally focused acts of resistance? Is the attempt to "balance" stories of gentrification reported by Renoir and Vincent merely supporting a dominant narrative of gentrification?

Indeed, as Renoir, Sadoux, and Vincent observe, the media coverage of gentrification is not uniformly revanchist (Smith 1996). From time to time, it both opposes and supports gentrification, depending on the type of gentrifier and the political position of the newspaper itself. So British tabloid newspapers can accuse Islington residents of being the "chattering classes" or "champagne socialists," and remark on former prime minister Tony Blair's journey on the "housing ladder" in Islington (Moyes 1997), but report gushingly when a young couple spend £500,000 on renovating a £1.25 million house in Canonbury in the same London borough:

> "Layla and Alex have worked to breathe fresh life into a tired Canonbury terrace. After a mammoth renovation they have created a home which they enjoy every day. And to them that represents an important win." (Bloomfield 2023)

Beyond these questions of the nature of resistance, I found the writing styles of the three authors to pose questions of historiography and reportage that themselves require interrogation in future study. Sadoux and Renoir concentrate on reporting the views of actors, whether bloggers or city governments, in their own words and presenting them for the reader to interpret in their own way, opening up a host of questions. There remains the opportunity for the narrative of resistance to frame the media actors' positions in class terms and within a complex media landscape, as Vincent has done. Indeed, perhaps we need a further volume on the business of writing about gentrification itself, and the positionality of the various writers themselves. Certainly, this section effectively raises many interesting questions and—as with all good writing—leaves the reader asking more questions than have been answered.

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16. Conclusion

Stéphane Sadoux, Marie-Pierre Vincent, Louise Dalingwater, and David Fée

In this collection of ten chapters, the editors of this book have sought to offer a new perspective on the study of gentrification. Cities and the wider issues of urban space have been abundantly studied by scholars in a range of disciplines and the process of gentrification has been explored since Ruth Glass coined the term in 1964. Yet the relationship between gentrification and the media remains very much unexplored territory. Although some academics became interested in the subject in the 1980s (Zukin 1982), it took several decades for the media's agency to be fully recognized.

In the chapters which make up this volume, gentrification has been analysed from diverse economic, social, and cultural perspectives in order to bring out the richness of possible debates in this field, applying different approaches from a comparative perspective across several countries. Notwithstanding the central role of the media in these considerations, the publication draws together a collection of chapters from different disciplines other than media studies, including history, geography, urban planning, sociology, and British studies. It seeks to reveal how these might further our understanding of the processes of gentrification and media coverage. By using the media, scholars can engage with a different type of material which differs from official reports and statistics as well as much-cited existing secondary sources. By providing a valuable source to document weekly or even daily reactions to exclusive urban change, the media, which is widely accessible to the general public, could be seen as a barometer of the debates on gentrification in a specific community at a range of geographic scales, from the national to the hyperlocal. This publication hopes to encourage further work from non-media specialists on this area of research. Set in distinct geographical locations, the chapters of this book focus on the media coverage of diverse, changing neighbourhoods and of the causes and consequences of such change. As such, the chapters critically analyse the role of the media in constructing and propagating discourses and narratives on gentrification and, in some instances, in fuelling gentrification or attempting to resist it. The content of this book reflects the increasingly broad range of media studied by scholars. As explained in the introduction, more attention has been given

to outlets other than the press since the 2010s (Bayramoğlu, 2013; Fowler 2018, etc.).

Each chapter intertwines gentrification and the media and approaches the relationship through the lens of one or several specific research objects, which contribute to making the gentrification process tangible. In her chapter, Wallace thus looks at gentrification from the perspective of crime reporting in the SoHo district of New York and its representation in the *New York Times*. Howard's contribution studies the representation of the New Orleans real estate market in the HGTV show *Selling the Big Easy* and from this angle, reveals how the harsh reality of the impacts of gentrification are obscured. Sadoux's chapter also focuses on planning and real estate in the district of Brixton, London to examine how hyperlocal media and citizen journalism portrays gentrification with a view to resist the process. Renoir's chapter pays heed to minority communities in Denver in order to explore how storytelling involving public participation can change the narrative on gentrification when local authorities seek to make the voice of marginalized groups heard. Here, digital media are used to offer a counter-discourse on gentrification. Baron's central focus is public space and the evolving newspaper discourse on gentrification within the public space, examined as part of the complex institutional processes associated with a Business Investment District in Washington, DC. Albert-Blanco bases his observations on gentrification from the focal point of religious diversity in the district of Ravel, Barcelona and highlights the ambivalent discourse of the media with regards to the visibility of religious practices in the neighbourhood. Joffre's chapter focuses on commercial activities and more precisely the impact of two restaurants on an area of Paris, which are looked at through qualitative methods employed in sociology. Girardin looks at the question of cultural heritage and its impact on gentrification discourses in Leipzig, Germany. Vincent's chapter views gentrification from the perspective of resistance practices in London's East End and their representations in local newspapers. Montaner studies the question of the construction of authenticity in gentrified districts in Paris and Barcelona to examine the representations of gentrification in newspapers and magazines.

Despite the different approaches and the interdisciplinary nature of this volume, a number of common themes can be identified across the chapters. The following pages provide a summary of these cross-cutting topics and suggest paths for future research which may stem from the work presented in this edited volume.

Exclusiveness of Urban Change

It is hoped that the various chapters in this volume contribute to illustrate the exclusive nature of gentrified spaces, that is to say how certain socio-economic groups are excluded from the perceived benefits of gentrification. Many of the chapters depict how the media addresses the exclusiveness of urban change in a range of neighbourhoods. This exclusiveness has been documented by Lindner and Sandoval (2021) who have contributed to investigating some of the processes whereby exclusionary urban transformation is sparked off and accelerated. They show that so-called neo-liberal urban renewal strategies rely on the shaping of seductive spaces and exclusive communities.

Some of the chapters in this volume echo this socio-economic exclusiveness. Wallace's chapter however reveals that not only has gentrification led to the exclusion of working classes but also more affluent social groups such as artists and pioneering gentrifiers who have been forced to move out of Soho since the 1970s. Sadoux's chapter focuses on the voice of Brixton residents as reported by citizen journalists. It throws light on how residents in this district of London have been confronted with successive waves of gentrification.

The chapters also illustrate a more recent strand of academic research which has sought to bring class, ethnicity, and/or religion into the study of the media-gentrification nexus as explained in the introduction (Makagon 2010; Rucks-Ahidiana 2018; Tolfo and Doucet 2021). Albert-Blanco's contribution which focuses on faith and religion shows how gentrification processes can either support plurality or lead to exclusion. The chapters illustrate how the media may well warn its readers on the dangers to the community of gentrification and the risk of it driving out indigenous communities. Howard, Renoir, and Joffre's chapters focus on ethnicity. In his analysis of commercial gentrification, Joffre confirms the conclusion of Rucks-Ahidiana that race and class are actually rarely properly addressed by the media when analysing the impact of gentrification. When it does, in a French context, social class trumps race, which is presented very much on a superficial level. Renoir's chapter is much more upbeat about inclusiveness and shows how digital media can give a voice and indeed a platform to marginalized ethnic minorities and counter the dominant media discourse, be it anti- or pro-gentrification. In the wake of social movements which highlight racism and discrimination such as Black Lives Matter, this can be seen as a positive shift in the media, especially digital media.

Representing Gentrification in Space and Time

When the media document, describe, and discuss gentrification, they deal with two distinct yet complimentary scales. The first one has regard to time: the content produced by the media often provides a fine level of granularity, by producing discourse on urban change on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis. In doing so, the media can highlight specific events and key dates, within longer phases of the gentrification process. Such milestones can, for example, include the publication of influential planning policy by local authorities or other public or semi-public bodies (Baron or Girardin's chapters); the opening of a bar or restaurant (Joffre); the organization of various forms of resistance, including protests (Vincent or Sadoux) as well as the production of critical perspectives by local authorities themselves (Renoir). By engaging with media content as primary sources, scholars may be able to account for the discourses produced not only about a given period of gentrification in a specific neighbourhood, but also about the range of views expressed about particular milestones, some of which may not have attracted sufficient attention to have been mentioned, let alone scrutinized by gentrification scholars who ignored media content. Scholars with an interest in extending the range of research that has sought to define the various phases of gentrification may also wish to focus on the media, in an attempt to clarify what may be interpreted as a sign of future gentrification. Such work may, for example, seek to explain when and why the media start to take a keen interest in the alleged gentrification of an area.

The media also provide material to think about gentrification from a spatial perspective and more specifically in terms of the specific scales at which the process is believed to occur or that are seen as emblematic of exclusive urban change. The smallest spatial unit which authors have focused on in this book is the bar or restaurant (in particular Joffre, Vincent, Sadoux). At this micro scale, land-use is crucial and becomes instrumental in understanding media discourses on gentrification: the bar, restaurant, pub, or club is a barometer of worldliness, an indicator of everydayness, a marker of the placers of sociability which are found in a given neighbourhood.

Most of the chapters present gentrification not as a static process but as a continuum across space and time. They cover examples of gentrification ranging from the 1970s and the early 2000s (see chapters by respectively Wallace and Girardin) to the present day (see chapters by Montaner, Albert-Blanco, or Vincent for instance), and examine its emergence and expansion

using a multi-scale grid of analysis (street, district, or whole city level). They indirectly highlight how it is more often fuelled by production (public policies) than consumption factors (individual actions), beside media attention. The former include many instances such as New York city's planning department and zoning choices (see chapter by Baron), the city's urban regeneration of the district of Plagwitz in Leipzig (see chapter by Girardin), the city of Paris's commercial policies (see chapter by Joffre), City Hall's destruction of public housing in New Orleans (chapter by Howard), and the city council's plans for the *Institut des cultures d'islam* (chapter by Albert-Blanco). They deliberately kick-start the process of gentrification or unwittingly help it shift to a different stage. These institutional actors follow on or sometimes combine with individual practices by artists looking for cheap areas (Wallace), customers attracted to a trendy venue (Vincent), or (potential) homeowners looking for a bargain in a depreciated housing market (Howard). Far rarer are examples of institutional actors seeking to halt or redirect gentrification as in Denver (see chapter by Renoir). This ranges from Sadoux's depiction of outright and proactive opposition of hyperlocal media to Renoir's use of digital media to give a voice to marginalized communities, and Baron's depiction of the ambivalent position of the *Washington Post.*

Place-Naming and Misnaming

A number of the chapters included in this book have also highlighted the importance not merely of place-making, but also of place-naming as a marker, indicator, or consequence of the gentrification process. A substantial amount of existing literature has highlighted the fact that place-making is certainly not a neutral concept and that it has in fact been considered a key element of gentrification (see for example Degen and Ward 2022, 112). In a number of chapters included in this edited volume, authors have examined gentrification and the media in terms of place-naming. Wallace has thus shown that the media made a significant contribution to the notoriety of SoHo as a neighbourhood and a name. In his chapter focusing on Raval, Albert-Blanco has highlighted the fact that the media reported the misnaming of the neighbourhood ("*Ravalstan*") in order to highlight an alleged change in the ethnic background of its population. Further research might therefore involve a scrutiny of such factors and the role of language in naming and making places through the media when the focus is on the gentrification process.

The Media as Gatekeepers

Another central theme which unites the chapters is that of the media as gatekeepers of gentrification and/or anti-gentrification. The chapters thus complement previous research on the media's editorial clout mentioned in the introduction (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996; McCombs 2005). As with many issues, newsworthiness is the name of the game in media discourse on gentrification and the media defines what is noteworthy. The various chapters have contributed to show that the determinants of newsworthiness are diverse and can include the media's political stance and editorial policy. The ways in which the newsworthiness is made visible are also diverse. Indicators can include the presence of a piece of news on the front page of a newspaper, the length of an article devoted to a particular event or issue, or the fact that a series of pieces are devoted to it over a period of time. Through Joffre's chapter, this volume has also shown that the section in which a piece is published can have a significant impact on the tone of the text: gentrification may not be addressed and discussed in the same way in a "society" versus "cultural" or "lifestyle" section of newspapers. Such comparative studies could be pursued, drawing from a wider range of media sources and examining other neighbourhoods and cities throughout the world.

By contributing to defining newsworthiness, the media contribute to the visibility of some changes and, conversely, to making others less obvious or even to obscuring them. In other words, the media select markers of urban change. They set the agenda on what they consider to be a process of gentrification or what has been gentrified, sometimes making intriguing choices (see chapter by Montaner). While the term is often used alongside hipsters, "bobos," or other close connotations, it is seldom clearly defined. In some cases, any reference to it may even be avoided by some media that seek to sidestep the issue for fear of being accused of fuelling the process (see chapter by Howard).

The Media's Agency

Across the chapters, the media's agency is also often discussed. The media is presented as a stakeholder in the public debate especially as the media often has its own interest at stake. It may well be that they are part of the process of gentrification, hence the necessity to present gentrification in a positive light (see chapter by Vincent). Or it may back a particular interest group and have a specific interest to support this group, or indeed share

common values and political views. In which case, the media will be likely to take an anti-gentrification approach through storytelling and facilitate empowerment (see chapter by Renoir and Vincent). In some cases, the media are deliberately used by public authorities as a tool to combat psychological gentrification (Renoir). The extent of the impact of media on policy could be subject to further research, particularly in terms of defining and testing the possible indicators that would allow us to assess and measure this degree of influence. Whatever the stance it adopts (sometimes opposing stances are evident (see chapters by Baron, Howard, and Joffre), the media shapes urban development by offering an attractive portrayal of it or simply homing in on a district. Not only can we therefore see a distortion and possible intensification of gentrification as a result of media coverage but in addition, gentrification may actually be shaped by the media or contribute to its future further development or destruction. Nonetheless, some contributions to this volume have highlighted the fact that the media's agency can be inadvertent (Wallace).

A number of chapters can also encourage scholars to question the status of those who produce media content and the networks in which they are involved. They may, for example, be in contact with specific stakeholders, such as real estate developers. The discourse disseminated by the media may therefore be influenced by the viewpoint of stakeholders with whom media content producers are regularly in touch with. Conversely, other opinions can be silenced when those who hold them are not necessarily in touch with the media. The relationship between networks and the shaping of newsworthiness may therefore in itself become an interesting issue for future research.

As Hardy points out in his discussion however, the identity of those who produce media content could be subject to scrutiny, not least because, in his view, the power is nowadays in the hands of those who own the means of representation, rather than production. This edited volume encourages the further exploration of agency, voices, and activism—a theme which was already central to a previous edited volume on gentrification published in this series, although it did not specifically focus on the media (Lindner and Sandoval 2021).

Unleashing the Potential of the Media as a Corpus for Gentrification Studies

The chapters in the book demonstrate how fruitful the study of the relationship between media and gentrification from a multidisciplinary and comparative

perspective is and how it warrants further academic exploration. The various chapters included in this volume illustrate the influence of a scholar's background and discipline on their outlook. As a town planner, Baron relies on this method and her work is a useful reminder of the relevance of critical discourse analysis in the field, even though it is still rarely used. The use of the media in gentrification studies is therefore an incentive to think about the theoretical and methodological apparatus needed to strengthen the field.

Further research might use media-based corpora to think about the different and most likely complimentary ways in which specific disciplines or fields would go about collecting, analysing, and interpreting the same body of primary sources in order to study gentrification. The focus of such research would thus be on methodology, the specific ways in which various disciplines look at gentrification and the media. Looking to the future, one might also want to consider the fact that contemporary media are producing some of the primary sources which future historians will most likely turn to, in an attempt to interpret the past. Thus, and if we think about this in terms of digital humanities, perhaps we should also think about the question of how archives are built, whether the sources are durable, etc.

Redefining Gentrification, Refining the Definitions of Gentrification

In his chapter, Joffre suggests that there can be a significant discrepancy between what academics and the media identify as gentrification. Our knowledge and understanding of what gentrification actually involves in the twenty-first century may greatly benefit from being redefined in the light of media-based corpora. Research that would allow us to reconsider the way gentrification is defined in this way is particularly important given that, as Hardy points out, the power, today, is in the hand not of those who have the means of production, but of those who have the means of representation. In her discussion chapter, Brown-Saracino powerfully reminds us that looking at gentrification and the media allows us to raise crucial questions: what do the media convey about gentrification and what understanding of the process does it present to viewers? In many ways, Hardy and Brown-Saracino both highlight the importance of thinking about the media discourses on gentrification from the perspective of reception, rather than merely from the perspective of their production. Future research in the field could address this particular issue.

Gentrification studies are now established as a distinct field of academic research, that brings scholars together in an attempt to further our knowledge

of a complex process that transcends the boundaries of disciplines. In this sense, gentrification studies are no different from other fields, that lie at the crossroads of other disciplines and fields. Rather than suggesting that gentrification media studies could be considered as an emerging, and therefore, new field of research, we believe that scholarly enquiry into gentrification and the media can make a significant contribution to strengthening the field of gentrification studies.

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Gentrification is extensively discussed in the media, where coverage can describe changing neighbourhoods and analyse the causes and consequences of such change. The media are also arenas in which the voices of those who advocate or resist gentrification can be heard. How can this profusion of content be examined? What methods can be used to critically address the role of the media in constructing and propagating discourses on gentrification? Central to this book is the idea that new research should engage with the theoretical and methodological issues that emerge when media products are used as a corpus to study gentrification.
This edited volume considers a range of means that are used to shape and publicize representations: contributions investigate printed and online newspapers, websites, blogs, television programmes and social media. It also aims to highlight the diversity of players who produce and disseminate media discourses on gentrification.

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