

**English**

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## **The impact of gentrification on communities and urban development.**

The definition of the concept can be the following according to the *Géococonfluences* site : “Gentrification refers to a particular form of gentrification (derived from the term *gentry*) of a working-class area, involving the transformation of housing, shops and public spaces. It's a social transformation that translates into a material and symbolic transformation of space. It's also a process of appropriation of a working-class space by social groups generally drawn from the middle and upper classes, while at the same time dispossessing working-class residents”. As we can see, it's a concept that involves a social and spatial dimension which means that it's a key issue in urban and social geography.

The term was first defined by sociologist Ruth Glass in 1964. She used it to describe the process she observed in London, but it has become a global phenomenon, indeed, gentrification is happening everywhere, in big cities like Paris or New York or even in smaller towns. Studying the process of gentrification is a necessity to understand the more global changes in the urban development and structures of cities around the world.

For this presentation, we first wanted to understand the mechanisms of this phenomenon and what are concretely the impacts, on both urban development and communities in other words the locals inhabitants of the affected areas. In clear, how can gentrification reshape a city ?

In this presentation, we wanted to make sure that we have a critical thinking on the phenomenon, using different examples and sources.

Therefore, we will explore three main points :

First, how gentrification works, the steps of the process and how it concretely changes neighborhoods. Then, the positive impacts and how it can improve cities and the way of life of residents. Finally, the downside of gentrification with the different aspects that harm communities and lead to a classist world, where the working class is wiped off the map.

First, gentrification usually takes place in neighborhoods that can be qualified as “neglected” or “shady”. Indeed, those neighborhoods are often populated by working class communities and their crime rate is higher than the average, which can be explained by the poverty rate being higher than average. Often, the immigrant communities are also more present in these areas, gentrification can therefore have a racial dimension.

The buildings are often old or run-down and there’s less investment from the city in sectors like public transportation and facilities or school. Therefore, these areas are usually affordable for low-income families or students.

We can take Brooklyn or Harlem in NYC as an exemple. In the 1970s and 80s, many parts of these districts were considered unsafe. But they were also cheap compared to Manhattan, which attracted people who couldn’t afford to live elsewhere like the working class.

The next step of gentrification is that richer people —often young professionals “yuppies” or “hipsters”—start moving in these areas because of the cheap rents and the “charisma” of the neighborhoods. These areas are often close to the city center, which is convenient for young residents. These new residents open cafés, art galleries, or small businesses, giving the neighborhood a new vibe, not so aligned with the old atmosphere of the neighborhood. As a result, the old inhabitants of the area are not the target of these new places and are dispossessed of their own living space. Thus, the area becomes more attractive to developers and the middle class, who are beginning to invest more and more in the area, driving up rents. But this transformation often comes at a cost: the original residents are pushed out.

We chose the case study of London as a typical example of a city transformed by gentrification.

London is one of the most striking examples of gentrification in the world. Over the past few decades, many neighborhoods have undergone dramatic changes, transforming from

working-class or neglected areas to trendy, upscale districts. Shoreditch, in East London, is a notable example. In the 1980s and 1990s, Shoreditch was known for its industrial character, with abandoned warehouses and a reputation as a dangerous district. However, artists and young professionals began to move in, attracted by the affordable rents and creative potential of the area. By the early 2000s, Shoreditch became a centre for tech startups, shops, art galleries, and fancy restaurants. Property prices have risen, making it one of the most expensive neighborhoods in the city today. As these changes brought a certain economic growth and a lot of new opportunities for entrepreneurs, they also displaced many longtime residents who could no longer afford to live there. Likewise, traditional businesses, such as local pubs and cheap markets, were replaced by luxury shops and chain stores, leading to the disappearance of the area's original character. This pattern of gentrification isn't limited to Shoreditch. Areas like Brixton and Hackney have experienced similar transformations. These changes reflect a larger trend in London, where the demand for housing and investment often comes at the expense of community and cultural identity.

By understanding these economic and social factors, we can better grasp the drivers behind gentrification in London and develop strategies to manage its impacts.

Secondly, we will discuss the positive impacts of gentrification, what are the benefits for cities and urban development and how it can upgrade the way of life of some residents.

The article "Gentrification Pros and Cons: A Double-Edged Sword" by Robert F. Smith suggest 16 benefits of gentrification : Neighborhood Revitalization , Increased Property Values, Economic Growth, Enhanced Infrastructure, Reduced Crime Rates, Diverse Dining and Entertainment Options, Environmental Improvements, Preservation of Historic Architecture, Increased Community Pride, Social Mix and Interaction, Attraction of Talent and Creativity, Better Education Opportunities, Improved Public Transportation, More Access to Healthcare Facilities, Positive Perception and Image and Increased Property Tax Revenue.

Gentrification can bring significant benefits to struggling areas by fostering economic growth. When new residents move into a neighborhood, their spending stimulates the local economy. Businesses thrive as they gain more customers, and the influx of economic activity often encourages the establishment of new businesses. Additionally, developers see potential

in these areas, leading to the renovation of older buildings or the construction of modern and luxurious infrastructure. This transformation benefits the city financially, as increased property values and commercial activity generate higher tax revenues. These funds can then be reinvested in public services, such as schools, public transportation, and community facilities, further increasing the quality of life for residents. Therefore, gentrification has a positive impact on urban development in cities.

Another positive outcome of gentrification is the creation of safer and cleaner neighborhoods. As more money flows into the area, investments are made in infrastructure and public safety like renovated streets or improved lighting. There is also an increased police presence which can contribute to a significant reduction in crime rates. Restored and well-maintained buildings improve the appearance of the neighborhood, making it more welcoming and safer for everyone. This revitalized environment encourages residents to feel more comfortable walking around, even at night, and attracts tourists who might previously have avoided the neighborhood.

Moreover, gentrification can sometimes lead to a cultural revival, preserving and celebrating the unique identity of a neighborhood. On the architectural side, some historic buildings that might have otherwise been neglected or demolished are now carefully restored, allowing the area to maintain its heritage. Moreover, the arrival of new cultural institutions, such as theaters, art galleries, and performance spaces, brings vitality into the community and enhances the creativity of the city. Events and festivals organized in these spaces not only attract visitors or tourists but also allow the old inhabitants to have access to culture and art, which perhaps wasn't the case before. Indeed, as new people with different backgrounds and professions move into a neighborhood, they often bring new ideas, skills, and interests that can enrich the community. For instance, areas like Brooklyn in New York City have seen a blending of cultures, where artists, entrepreneurs, and longtime residents contribute to a unique mix of traditions and innovations. This diversity benefits everyone and often comes with the creation of new shared places such as community gardens or shared workspaces. The blending of culture, instead of the disappearance of one, is a challenge that can be successful in some places, proving that gentrification can be a benefit for communities.

Despite its advantages, gentrification has significant drawbacks, particularly for the original residents who often suffer the negative effects. The main problem is the displacement of old residents. Indeed, when rents rise in a significant way, many individuals and families who have lived in the area - often for years - find themselves unable to deal with the rising prices of housing or even everyday goods. Landlords, attracted by the opportunity to take advantage of wealthier new inhabitants, may evict renters to renovate or sell properties at higher cost. This technique is particularly problematic for low-income families and minority communities, who are the hardest hit by this problem. In San Francisco, for example, the boom in the technology industry drove rents up so dramatically that many residents were forced to leave the city, altering the social fabric of entire neighborhoods.

We saw in the second part that gentrification can allow a blending of culture but most of the time, the downside of gentrification is the loss of community identity. As wealthier residents move in, they often bring cultural preferences and lifestyles that differ significantly from the traditions of the original community, which is often foreign. Family-owned businesses, ethnic restaurants, and local cheap shops that once defined the character of the neighborhood are frequently replaced by chain stores, high-end cafes, and luxury boutiques catering to the tastes of the new residents. This transformation can make longtime residents feel alienated, as the places and traditions they associate with their home disappear and they feel dispossessed of their own home. Indeed, over time, the neighborhood may no longer feel like “theirs”, eroding the sense of belonging that is central to a community’s spirit. The article “Gentrification as a driver of social and racial tensions : the case of Brixton” by Amélie Bertholet published in 2013 address the issue of gentrification in Brixton, a predominantly Jamaican neighborhood : “Today, there are still many examples of socio-spatial segregation in Brixton. For instance, cheap and cheerful shops primarily serving the Jamaican community, which sometimes close because of rising rents for commercial premises and the effects of the financial crisis, now find themselves cheek by jowl with chic boutiques and relatively expensive franchises”. Here, A. Bertholet talks about socio-spatial segregation, which is the main consequence of gentrification and a global issue that is found more and more in cities around the world, and questions the spatial existence of working classes. It seems that poor people are pushed away from cities, relegated to the remote suburbs.

Indeed, gentrification exacerbates economic inequality, often exposing and deepening the difference between rich and poor. When wealthier newcomers move into a neighborhood, they often enjoy better infrastructure, trendy shops, cafes or restaurants, and improved public services. Meanwhile, long-time residents can find it difficult to adjust and can't afford those new amenities. These changes often leave them excluded from the new services due to high costs or a sense of cultural mismatch. This imbalance can lead to feelings of frustration or resentment, sometimes even escalating to racial tensions or conflicts. To sum up, the economic benefits of gentrification are rarely shared equally, turning the neighborhood into a vivid illustration of social inequality. Wealthier areas and struggling ones often sit side by side, with limited interaction or understanding between the two groups.

In response to these inequalities, movements against gentrification have grown in many cities, as people work to protect their neighborhoods and longtime residents. These movements often include protests, community meetings, and efforts to push for laws that keep housing affordable. For example, in Barcelona, locals have protested against the rise of tourism and expensive new buildings that force residents out. In the United States, cities like San Francisco and New York have seen groups fighting for stronger protections for renters and more affordable housing. New York City has for instance forbidden the existence of the location platform Airbnb, which was becoming a problem because locals couldn't find places to live. Another example can be Boyle Heights, a Latino neighborhood in Los Angeles, where activists have opposed the opening of art galleries and high-end stores, seeing them as signs that wealthier people are taking over. These efforts show how communities are coming together to demand fairer changes that don't leave anyone behind.

To tackle the problems of gentrification, some simple solutions can be put in place to help everyone. Firstly, cities can create different laws to limit rent increases, so people who have lived in a neighborhood for a long time don't have to move. Another solution is to support affordable housing projects, in which developers are required to build less expensive apartments for low-income families. Helping small local businesses, by giving them money or reducing their taxes, helps preserve the neighborhood's identity. In addition, neighborhood residents need to have a say in any changes, so the city can ensure that new plans suit everyone, not just new residents. This can be done through petitions or public meetings. These measures can help neighborhoods develop without leaving anyone behind.

To conclude, gentrification is a process with both positive and negative impacts. While it can lead to economic revitalization and better infrastructure, it also raises issues of social equity, displacement, and cultural preservation. To create cities where everyone can thrive, it's important to understand how gentrification affects different people and the urban structure.

As cities continue to evolve, the subject of gentrification raises some questions: Can urban development be inclusive, allowing both sides to exist in the same place? How can cities preserve the unique character of neighborhoods while encouraging progress? Exploring innovative solutions, such as community land trusts or rent stabilization policies, might offer a pathway to more equitable urban transformation, ensuring that no one is left behind in the race for progress.

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