Brooklyn Revisited: An Illustrated View from the Street 1970 to the Present[1]

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Urban ethnographers must understand that while we look at things using close-up lenses, most policy-makers, on the other hand, employ wide-angle lens to describe what is going on at that very same street level. In this essay the authors attempt to provide a contrast between those views in the context of the radically changed public perception of the New York City Borough of Brooklyn. When the authors began their sociological research (and social activism) in the late Twentieth Century, the neighborhoods in which they were active suffered from the spread of middle-class (white) flight and urban blight. Today, in the first two decades of the Twenty-first, the fortunes of these same areas have been reversed, but longer-term residents face new 'problems' in the form of gentrification and displacement. It is suggested here that a view from the street can provide a better sociological understanding of the bigger picture.
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Brooklyn's Image Then and Now

The image of Brooklyn as a whole, as well as its most well-known individual neighborhoods such as Bedford-Stuyvesant, Flatbush, and Coney Island, has always been a powerful independent force in creating and maintaining its concrete reality. Forty years ago these place names were stigmatized. Today, in 2015, Brooklyn and these areas are by all accounts in the popular media decidedly 'in' places. The Borough of Brooklyn currently occupies an elevated status as a gem in the crown of New York City as a Global City, and it is fast becoming a popular tourist destination in its own right. By almost every measure the 'Borough of churches' has moved far beyond 'renaissance' and 'revival' to enjoy a hard-earned, successfully promoted, chic and hip image that is presented to the rest of the world. As opposed to the 'bad old days' in the 1960s and 1970s the major challenges likely to confront local community and political leaders in the Twenty-first Century arise from such 'problems' as the rising cost of housing resulting from upscale gentrification by which investors compete for any available development space. A few decades ago the problems were exactly the opposite. No one at that time could have ever imagined a hip travel guide, *Lonely Planet,* would name Brooklyn as one of the top world destinations for 2007 (Kuntzman 2007). In 2015 the travel guide giant Fodor's advertised the first guidebook devoted only to the borough with this as its teaser:

> Brooklyn is the most talked about, trendsetting destination in the world. Fodor's Brooklyn, the first comprehensive guidebook to New York City's most exciting borough, is unlike any we've ever published. Written and illustrated by locals, it's infused with authentic Brooklyn flavor throughout—making it the go-to guide for locals and visitors alike. (http://www.fodors.com/brooklyn/ 10/6/14 12:07 pm).

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The Bad Old Days

As did the rest of New York City, Brooklyn barely survived the Great Depression and then prospered during World War II, but by the 1950s the size of Brooklyn's population and its enviable position as a national and international industrial center had peaked. The borough's decline began slowly and then accelerated, as business and industry looked elsewhere to invest. For many the bottoming out in Brooklyn was in 1957, when after winning the World Series for the first time only two years earlier the Brooklyn Dodgers left for Los Angeles. The loss of the beloved 'bums', the closing of the premier borough daily newspaper, the *Brooklyn Eagle*, and the closure of the Brooklyn Navy Yard were the most visible symbols of Brooklyn's decline that continued into the next three decades.

In *The New York Times* Gay Talese announced: 'Ebbetts Field goes on the scrap pile' (1960)

> 'Iron Ball Begins Demolishing Dodger Home and Raises clouds of Nostalgia - 1,317-family middle income HOUSING PROJECT IS DUE ceremony catching the spirit of the old Brooklyn… About 200 spectators, a brass band and some former Brooklyn Dodger players gathered to watch a two-ton iron ball hammer against this arena where, between 1913 and 1957, baseball was played in a manner never before imagined or recommended'.

At the end …

> 'Then the big crane headed with the speed of Ernie Lombardi into centerfield. When it reached the 376-foot mark, the workman swung back on this iron ball painted white to resemble a baseball. It came spinning toward the wall and, after a few shots, there was a hole the size of Hugh Casey. It will take ten weeks to destroy Ebbets Field'.

Many years later Corey Kilgannon wrote of the end of the *Brooklyn Eagle* as a metaphor for the beleaguered borough: 'Folded But Not Forgotten, Brooklyn's Leading Daily'. When the paper finally folded — six months before the Dodgers finally won a World Series in 1955 — newspapers were on the decline in New York, Mr Hills recalled:

> 'It occurred to me I was working in a dying industry', he said. 'We heard there were guys with Ph.D.s working as copy boys at *The New York Times*, so it was discouraging. I went into P.R.'

They pored over the last edition of The Eagle, from January 28, 1955. Its front-page lead headline was 'Landlady Beaten to Death'. The story, about a 58-year-old Borough Park woman, began: 'Her skull and face bones battered and crushed by repeatedly brutal blows'. Another story was titled 'Tot Survives 11-Story Tumble'. There was a publisher's note informing readers of the folding of The Eagle, calling it 'the last voice that is purely Brooklyn'. 'All the other Brooklyn newspapers fell by the wayside years go', the note read. 'The borough seems doomed to be cast in Manhattan's shadow.'(Kilgannon 2005)

The devastating impacts of deindustrialization and disinvestment during the period were compounded by mortgage and insurance red-lining which further undermined local housing markets, and contributed to the rapid destabilization of many residential neighborhoods, especially those peopled by minority groups. Manufacturing and blue collar jobs that once supported Brooklyn's solid working and middle class families slowly escaped powerful local unions and fled to the American South, and abroad. One prime example was the closing of The U.S. Army Terminal in Bay Ridge and Sunset Park in 1961 with the loss of 40,000 well-paying jobs. Along with economic problems such as lower wages and unemployment came increased poverty, crime and accelerated middle class flight into the next decade and beyond.

The nadir of The Big Apple coincided with the Mayoralty of Abraham Beame and the New York City Fiscal Crisis which forced a virtual bankruptcy on the once proud, now demoralized citizenry. The headline October 29, 1975 of the *New York Daily News* 'FORD TO CITY: DROP DEAD, Vows He'll Veto any Bailout'. This Presidential announcement was shortly followed by the New York State takeover of the City's financial affairs by the Municipal Assistance Corporation, which lasted until 2008. The financial future of the city looked so bleak that Mayor Beame's Housing and Development Administrator, Robert Starr, suggested that, rather than cutting city-wide services, a 'Planned Shrinkage' policy be tried. The neighborhoods to be cut off from city services to save money were populated primarily by Non-Whites in The Bronx and Brooklyn. According to Joseph P. Fried (1976) in many Brooklyn neighborhoods increasing urban blight was correlated with the inflow of minorities, especially African Americans. One source of hostility to these new invaders are more racially militant blacks. Today complaints about gentrification and displacement but it had a parallel in the 1960s and 1970s. An interesting analysis and description of the 'negro removal' process is provided by Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward:

> 'Other federal programs, such as urban renewal, were turned against blacks; renewal projects were undertaken in most big cities to deal with the black invasion through 'slum clearance', by reclaiming land taken by the expanding ghettoes and restoring it to 'higher economic' use (i.e., to uses that would keep whites, and businesses in the central city)....
>
> ...seventy percent of the families thus uprooted were black.... But with local blacks becoming more disorderly and more demanding in the early 1960s, local government began to make some concessions. Urban renewal provides one example. By the 1960s, black protests were mounting against 'Negro Removal' in the guise of 'slum clearance'. (1971: 241-42)

What we currently refer to as 'displacement' was also taking place at the time, although in much more limited way, in the 1970s. According to a report of the National Urban Coalition in 1978, if you are elderly poor, or working class and live in an area undergoing rehabilitation, or in a suddenly fashionable neighborhood, you are a prime candidate for displacement by well-to-do suburbanites longing for the city life they left behind. The Coalition's study of forty-four cities showed that over half of the rehabilitated neighborhoods

had higher minority populations before rehabilitation began. ('Study Finds Suburbanites Displacing Poor in Cities', *New York Times,* August 2, 1978).

Many of the most respected urbanologists of the time strongly criticized these misnomered 'urban renewal', and related programs.[2]

We had hoped at the time of our most extensive community involvement in Brooklyn neighborhoods, essentially 'under siege', that our academic work would also provide the basis for a better understanding of the tenacity of some urban neighborhood residents to preserve and protect their communities, and conversely the willingness of others to destroy them. This was particularly important then given the well-publicized predictions of the inevitable physical and social deterioration of virtually all of the Nation's cities. This expectation at first was limited to Northeastern 'Rust Belt' metropolises, but expanded into all urban areas of the country including the 'Sun Belt'. At the time, the consensus on the point of eventual or even inevitable urban decay was so wide in scholarly circles that common-sense definitions of the time, inner city, transitional and decaying neighborhoods had become synonymous terms.

A powerful statement demonstrating this taken-for-granted notion of urban decay and hopelessness was given in 1967 by Eleanor Wolf and Charles Lebeaux. But it is just as relevant today. Not only did they see the inevitable devastation of inner cities, but suggested strategies for combating it as well.

By now everyone is aware of those changes in the population of the central city which have combined with a number of other factors to create the current concern about American urban life. In the pages that follow we will examine two kinds of responses to the so-called 'crisis of the city'. First, we will consider the efforts to halt, reverse, or otherwise exercise some control over the population trends of the city so that it will not become overwhelmingly the abode of disadvantaged people. We might describe these as efforts to affect the spatial distribution of 'haves' and 'have-nots'. Second, we will examine some of the present trends in our efforts to improve the situation of the poor, especially those efforts usually categorized under the heading of social welfare programs, but including education (1967: 99).

It is not difficult to understand how this widely accepted vision of the then present state of affairs, and the broad consensus among experts on the bleak future American cities was instrumental in the self-fulfilling prophecy of urban decay. As might be expected, a primary element of this pessimistic formula was the equation of nonwhite habitation with urban deterioration. Independent of racial bias and stereotyping, however, was the reality that during the period central city crime, poverty, and arson rates soared. It was also punctuated by urban riots in many major cities such as New York and Los Angeles.[3]

Although the situation has radically improved since we began our intensive sociological research and social activism four decades ago, this is how Krase described the urban scene in

[2] See, for example, Frieden and Morris (1968), Gans (1968), Greer (1965), Lupo et al. (1971), Norwood (1974), Piven and Cloward (1971) and Bellush and Hausknecht (1971).

[3] See Banfield (1974), Bellush and David eds (1974), Connery (1968), Conot (1967), Grodzins (1958), Hayden (1967) and Oppenheimer (1969). On riots see National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (1968) and Skolnick (1969).

1982:

> 'The inner recesses of many older American cities are at present remorselessly tormented places. When we observe the actions of those empowered to maintain the wellbeing of our urban areas, we see that the methods they employ are like radical surgery, without the use of anesthesia. Over the past few decades whole sections of cities have been obliterated by "urban renewal" without much regard for the once living human landscape Other areas have simply been cauterized by epidemics of arson and neglect. Still others are allowed to fester in anticipation of future treatment, as, for example, the 'planned shrinkage' practiced in New York. To some degree the "Anti-Urban Bias" in American middle-class culture helps to explain the triage biases of urban planners, developers and other urban experts toward their city and neighborhood patients. Even the current "gentrification" or "displacement" processes that occur are not exceptions to this general rule of symbolic warfare. The middle and upper-middle class gentry who take over select inner city areas may be thought of as the troops that occupy the territory after it has been scorched and purged of undesirables.' (1982: 2)

Brooklyn Then

Brooklyn, long known as the fourth largest city in the U.S., is a city of changing neighborhoods. First settled by the Canarsie Indians and developing into a multilingual colony inhabited by both natives and Europeans. In a relatively short historical time Brooklyn became the home of many immigrant groups, old and new and of various social classes and religions. The numerous neighborhoods of Brooklyn were often segregated by these differences, but as a whole, Brooklyn remained a culturally diverse city. Post World War II migration patterns marked the beginning of challenges for Brooklyn. The development of highways and bridges, such as the Verrazano Narrows Bridge leading to Staten Island and access to New Jersey, the Long Island Expressway and the Belt Parkway, all leading to suburbs, assisted in accelerating white flight in Brooklyn. Thus, racial segregation increased as well as social class segregation accompanied by the movement of middle class blacks away from poor blacks (Miller, Seiden-Miller and Karp 1979). Along with Brooklyn's declining population and economic base, some neighborhoods like Bedford Stuyvesant, Brownsville, and Bushwick became national symbols of poverty and urban decline. Many newer, black and Puerto Rican migrants to Brooklyn had missed the economic boom, which had greatly contributed to the upward mobility earlier migrants.

By the late 1970s, the future of Brooklyn was unclear. On the one hand, a 'neighborhood movement' was underway nationally, and in Brooklyn took the form of grassroots efforts focused on quality of life issues such as upgrading parks and public housing as well as installing stop signs, traffic lights and improving street lighting.

A broad spectrum of civic, business and political forces were working with increased vigor to reverse the decline. They joined together in a number of coalitions and succeeded in helping to eventually reverse the borough's fortunes. By the power of their own will and

inspired leadership they mobilized resources and a stream of public and private investment began to at first trickle and then flow to Brooklyn. Seldom noticed is their contribution to the economic, cultural, and civic flowering of modern Brooklyn that accelerated in the 1990s and continues to this day. Without them, there would be no Brooklyn to resurrect.

By neighbors working together on local issues, and through citizen action, there was an attempt to integrate residents from racially segregated neighborhoods. On the other hand, racial conflict, racial steering, blockbusting, panic selling, and racial and social class change were also in progress. A demographic projection of Brooklyn by the year 2000 (Salins 1974) asserted that there would be a growing middle class, black community moving southward from central Brooklyn, whites would occupy brownstone neighborhoods, and poor neighborhoods of color would be located along the northeast from the East River to the Belt Parkway. Salins wrote,

> 'As Bedford-Stuyvesant and similar nearby brownstone neighborhoods are "rescued" from their present slum status, the pressure will have to be taken up by Bushwich and parts of Williamsburgh and Green Point to the north, parts of Crown Heights to the south and Brownsville and East New York to the east. This means that these areas, which are badly deteriorated and socially unwholesome today, have little hope of getting any better over the next three decades.' (1974: 18)

In support of Salins and around the same time as the publication of his article, the Sociology Department at Brooklyn College offered a Senior Seminar on 'Brooklyn Neighborhoods'. Although various neighborhoods were studied, the consensus was that if racial transition was not already underway, it would soon begin. There was general agreement with Salins. Canarsie was one neighborhood to demonstrate this thinking. The now classic study of Canarsie (Rieder 1985) made evident the struggles and stages of neighborhood change and racial transition, and which can be analyzed through Burgess' ecological model of invasion-succession (Park and Burgess 1925 [1967]). Moreover, what became clear was the contribution of unscrupulous realtors to neighborhood change. In some places they resisted change through racial steering (Pearce 1979), while in others they used fear tactics and engaged in 'block busting' thereby inducing 'panic selling' by homeowners.

Salins was not entirely correct, especially about Greenpoint. A small Latino/a community was already in residence by the 1970s and since then, the neighborhood has gentrified becoming whiter and relatively more middle class. A similar demographic shift has also occurred in parts of Williamsburg. Lacking an up close, on the ground perspective, Salins could not know that resident homeowners in Greenpoint and parts of Williamsburg were deliberately participating in informal strategies to resist the growth of neighbors of color (DeSena 2005). For Greenpoint and parts of Williamsburg, these tactics were successful and maintained largely white, working class communities.

We, the authors of this paper, both are public scholars or perhaps more aptly called 'activist scholars' who have comprehensively been studying these neighborhoods since the late 1970s. Throughout that time, our mixed methodologies have featured participant

observations and a variety of interviewing styles. In analyzing the processes of neighborhood change over an extended time, our methodology is also autoethnographic, since we often reflect on the many years in the field that allows for a long-term perspective on current trends.

DeSena's research on Greenpoint-Williamsburg began as an undergraduate sociology major at Brooklyn College in the 1960s and then expanded into a doctoral dissertation. While in graduate school she was employed by a local community organization and participated as an activist while writing grant proposals and serving as a liaison with government agencies. In these roles, she had a firmly grounded view of community issues, obstacles and political machinations. This was the solid foundation for her career as a participant observer involved in scholarly research on Greenpoint-Williamsburg (2005, 2006, 2009, 2012).

At the start of DeSena's career, Brooklyn's reputation was not positive. In an episode of the popular television program *The Honeymooners* Norton declares, 'I live in Brooklyn USA the garden spot of the world'. That ideal, homey image portrayed in the program had drastically changed in the public mind by the late 1970s. Brooklyn was then widely perceived as spiraling downward, and the suburbs, or suburban like areas of the city, attracted middle and working class whites. In fact for Greenpoint-Williamsburg residents, neighborhoods in nearby Queens were more desirable residential locations. It became accepted local lore that success was indicated by moving to and, even better, owning a home in Maspeth, or Middle Village.

The unique, but contiguous, Greenpoint and Williamsburg areas contained several working class and poor neighborhoods. Williamsburg was relatively poorer with more residents of color and more public housing developments. Both neighborhoods are also waterfront communities nestled along the East River. By the late 1970s, the bustling factories that once lined the river, or were situated nearby, became victims of disinvestment and deindustrialization leaving behind only empty buildings. The waterfront and its surrounding area became a desolate post-industrial ghost town. Stores, shops, and bars catering to the legions of factory workers closed. It became a frightening experience to walk through the surrounding streets. The now famous Bedford Avenue subway train station was dark and empty. The rats literally outnumbered the people waiting for the L train. Williamsburg's Northside had few remaining businesses and retail establishments, and absolutely no banks. The liquor store cashier was encased in a bulletproof glass cage and served customers through a small opening. Residents had to travel to Greenpoint for services. The Southside gained a well-deserved reputation as a high crime area; in part because of drug dealing and the violence that accompanies it. Those in the know did not risk walking over the Williamsburg Bridge, fearing they would become another crime victim. By the 1980s, these neighborhoods, in a relatively unknown corner of Brooklyn had earned their gritty, decaying, and dangerous reputations.

Brooklyn Now

In contrast, today, the East River waterfront has been rezoned and a new community of mostly luxury high-rise developments, with some affordable units, has risen in Williamsburg. These towers include upscale stores and restaurants at street level. Greenpoint's waterfront

development is in an earlier stage of development. A commuter Ferry service already exists with stops in DUMBO, Long Island City, and Manhattan. Trendy, boutique hotels, clothing stores, and bars have taken root near the waterfront as well as on the other commercial streets within these neighborhoods. The previous small stores and businesses have been replaced by these and other corporate chains. Many older small businesses have been forced to close because of dramatic rent increases. The cost of living, in terms of food, housing and other services, has substantially increased pricing out the working class and poor. Even modest row houses are selling for millions of dollars. Gut renovations of older residential properties are common and luxury condominium and co-op developments sprout from any available single lot or assembled parcels of land. The old ethnic flavor of these neighborhoods has diminished. It is now more upscale, mainstream, multi-ethnic, selling artisanal products. Williamsburg in particular is known internationally for its youth (hipster) culture and as a host to artistic and musical events. This transformation has not obliterated Williamsburg's Latino and Hasidic Jewish communities where publically supported housing still dominates, but these lower-income ethnic neighborhoods have been newly branded as 'North Brooklyn'.

Krase's research on Crown Heights and Prospect Lefferts Gardens began as an accident. As a Research Assistant to Ronald D. Corwin in New York University's 'Greenwich Village Project' (Krase and Corwin 1968, 1969) he became intrigued with how local groups became recognized by public and private authorities as legitimate representatives of neighborhood residents. At the time he was living in a racially changing middle and working class area at the southern edge of Crown Heights that abutted the northern edge of Flatbush. It was very different from Greenpoint and Williamsburg in that it was virtually devoid of industry. Close to two large urban parks, the area was dominated by solid one and two family homes and many once-luxurious pre-war apartment buildings. The problem for this community was that as it changed from predominately white to predominately black, owners of real estate found it almost impossible to obtain mortgage and improvement loans as well as insurance. Unscrupulous agencies also saturated the area with inflammatory pamphlets and phone calls encouraging people to sell before it was 'too late'.

Although there was already one long-time neighborhood organization in the area at the time, it was concerned only with maintaining its one-family only zoning status. A few less formal tenant organizations were also active in some large apartment buildings but their main concern was preventing blacks from moving in, even as landlords, complaining of rent controls and high borrowing costs, increasingly neglected maintenance and security. As a renter in the neighborhood at the time, and an Instructor at Brooklyn College (where DeSena was a student) Krase was asked to advise the Board of Directors of a new local organization, the Prospect-Lefferts-Gardens Association, about how to deal with increasingly visible signs of blight. This organization also had a decidedly pro-integration agenda. In current jargon it would be called 'Multicultural'. Krase spent many years as an officer of this and other local groups helping them to organize block and tenant organizations. He also tried to knit them together into effective activist groups in order to attract the attention of elected officials, and obtain grants from public as well as private agencies. After moved to another area in 1985,

Krase maintained his ties with local groups via Brooklyn College and committee service to Community District 9 which serves Crown Heights and Prospect Lefferts Gardens.

Like Greenpoint and Williamsburg, the major challenges facing the residents of Crown Heights and Prospect Lefferts Gardens today are very different from the 1970s and 1980s. Ironically, the success of those who fought against neighborhood decline seems to have been the culprit. These, mostly black, neighbors and activists have preserved their valuable housing stock that is near large parks and cultural centers. The area also has several easy public transportation connections to Manhattan. Over time the neighborhood has increasingly been attracting the attention of young middle and upper middle class, mostly white, families and singles. Many of these new gentrifiers have been priced out of the rental and housing markets in the more highly even 'super' gentrified sections of Brooklyn like Williamsburg.

During the 12 years of the Bloomberg New York City Mayoralty, and since, residential construction has grown both in terms of numbers and height. This is especially true of the northern Brooklyn waterfront. After 9/11 many feared the decline of the central city (Manhattan) due to fear of further terror attacks, but Gotham has more than recovered.

Today, the city's popularity is making it hard for many long-time residents to keep up with the rent. And Bloomberg himself appears to have played a major role in that transformation. Real estate developers say the biggest reason they built bigger and taller was because Mayor Bloomberg projected the sense that the city had a future, and that the future looked bright (at least to them and the people able to afford the 360-degree views from atop their towers; Schuerman 2013).

For Bloomberg's first deputy mayor for economic development Dan Doctoroff 'Growth is good' while at the same time admitting '… that making the city more attractive has also made it less affordable. That was why, he said, the Bloomberg administration crafted an affordable housing program early on', though he added, 'It's not a perfect answer' (Schuerman 2013). This was confirmed by a 2009 study by the Center for an Urban Future which showed that tens of thousands of middle-class New Yorkers left due to the high cost of living (CFUF 2009).of

In 2005 New York citywide zoning revisons were issued by the Planning Commission that compounded the problem. These changes, sometimes referred to as 'up-zoning', impacted heavily on Crown Heights and Prospect Lefferts Gardens, and even more so on Greenpoint and Williamsburg. The new zoning rules allowed for residential construction in areas once restricted to commercial and industrial activities. These new uses are seen as a direct threat to the character and social fabric of many neighborhoods. They have also made the availability of affordable housing even less by attracting high-rise high-density residential development close to neighboring parks in Crown Heights, and in North Brooklyn, along the extensive waterfront with exciting views of the Manhattan skyline.

Several new groups have been created and joined with existing organizations to fight this new 'blight'. These new developments have also exacerbated racial and class divisions in the areas. Property owners seeking to sell, landlords, and newer people with less sentimental attachment to the old neighborhood see positives in development and gentrification. The more vulnerable, especially renters, fear increases and eventual eviction if the residential upscaling

continues. Still others with social conscience are concerned for the vulnerable, or fear the loss of their ethnically and economically diverse communities. Still others, such as African American groups see new developments as part of a process of ethnic cleansing.

In the same way that Salins attempted to predict 2000, there are presently projections for 2030 (http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/pdf/census/projections_report.pdf). Brooklyn is expected to continue to be the most populated borough approaching its historical high. However, the school-age population is expected to decline somewhat. Brooklyn will continue to have the largest elderly population in the city reaching a new high in 2030. These data suggest that the current boom in Brooklyn will continue, but perhaps suggesting a changing environment to meet the needs of its population. Krase and DeSena will be among the elders.

When we presented this paper in 2015 the word 'Brooklyn' was no longer synonymous with negative terms connoting the failure of America's urban policies.

Instead Brooklyn was 'in'. It was 'hot'. It had ceased being another sad example of failed urban policies, but instead it was an exciting 'brand'. Exactly how and why this turnaround happened is beyond our ken but we can offer a few insights into the phenomenal transformation. As noted by Vance Packard (1972), the United States has always been a residentially mobile nation. The difference today is that instead of fleeing cities like New York, they are flocking to it.

The disinvestment, capital flight, that facilitated the white flight and urban blight period during which higher status, predominantly white residents, replaced by lower status, predominately nonwhite residents, has by all appearances been reversed. Today there is an acceleration of flows of reinvestment capital resulting in gentrification by which lower status, predominately nonwhite residents, replaced by higher status, predominately white residents in virtually the same neighborhoods. This reversal of fortune might be explained by Jane Jacobs thesis in *The Economy of Citi*es (1969). There she posited that investors would wait until the low point of real estate prices before taking advantage of the opportunity for investment (see also Jacobs 1961).

Political economic theorizing mimics the classical ecological process of urban development and decay with notions of the in- and outflows of capital. Burgess' zonal model of Chicago can easily be modified for other major global cities. The key to understanding the pattern of concentric zones is the value of the center for different kinds of activities. When the center has a positive value people and activates compete to be close to the hub. The most successful competitors will wind up near the center and the least will be distributed further away. If the value of the center becomes negative the distribution of winners and losers is reversed.

Globalization and neoliberal policies have also been essential for Brooklyn becoming an integral part of New York City's as a 'Luxury City'. New York has long provided both tourists and social scientists with a complex mosaic of social worlds. Globalization has also attenuated the historical disparities and residential class divisions. The neoliberal critiques of Harvey (2007), and Brenner, Peck and Nik (2010) show that the organization of spaces and their embedded social practices are dominated by those who control social and economic

capital. As to the consequences of making the city more competitive in the global economy Harvey asked:

'But, competitive for what? One of the first things Michael Bloomberg did was to say "… We only want corporations that can afford to be here". He didn't say that about people, but, in fact, that policy carries over to people. There is an out migration from New York City of low-income people, particularly Hispanics. They're moving to small towns in Pennsylvania and upper New York State because they can't afford to live in New York City anymore.' (Harvey 2007: 10).

According to Greenberg, the Bloomberg administration sought to 'brand' New York as a 'Luxury City' by attracting finance, information technologies, biotechnology, and media industries (2010: 29–30). The goal was to '… build a physical city that appealed to these global elites, by attracting high-end retailers, hotels, stadiums, and residential towers…' (2010: 31). Instead of a dream neoliberal city: 'The scale and pace of market- rate, "luxury" real estate development under Bloomberg, alongside regressive tax policies that favor businesses and "workers that can move", … Successive waves of gentrification and increases in the cost of living have pushed out mixed use, working class districts — from Harlem to Willets Point to downtown Brooklyn' (2010: 39. See also Mollenkopf and Castells 1991).

Perhaps the epitome of newfound admiration was a feature in *The New York Times* 'Styles Section' in which Brooklyn's equally imaginary and legendary qualities such as the ill-defined 'authenticity' of Williamsburg and Bedford Stuyvesant had been illustriously commodified. In 'The Brooklyn Brand Goes Global' (2014) Abby Ellindec wrote:

> 'To urban planners and dwellers around the world, Brooklyn represents renaissance and success, said Jay Gronlund, founder of the Pathfinder Group, a branding company in Manhattan. "Other cities like Paris are saying, 'We want to do something like what Brooklyn did and establish ourselves as a mecca for young people'," he said. The world has become so much smaller and global, and these younger people are very aware of what's happening in London or Paris or Berlin — they're aware of what's happening in Brooklyn. It's become a benchmark or role model for other similar places in other cities'.

Post Script

This modest presentation is really a rather brief précis to a much larger work in which we are constantly engaged as activists as well as scholars. In a larger work to come we are 'revisiting' these two more and less well known Brooklyn neighborhoods: Crown Heights/Prospect-Lefferts Gardens, and Greenpoint/Williamsburg. As already noted, we have been personally active in them for almost half a century and about which we have extensively published (DeSena 2005; Krase 1982, Krase and LaCerra 1992). Here, we have tried to provide a picture of New York City as a whole as well as Brooklyn 'Then' (1970-80) during their worst years, and the post-2000 'Now'. We tried to demonstrate how these iconic neighborhoods struggled during a tumultuous period, while paying close attention to the persistently contentious issues of race and social class. Since our perspective is taken essentially from the

street level as opposed to looking down from the proverbial ivory tower, it will also be necessary to discuss the different approaches we employed in our urban neighborhood researches and analyses. At the time of our initial studies we both were, for want of better words, 'community organizers' in reluctantly changing neighborhoods.

We end our essay here with a few recent observations and related images of the changing neighborhood conditions in Greenpoint and Prospect Lefferts Gardens. In Greenpoint, DeSena had a recent conversation with Doris who is a life-long white working class resident of the area. With her husband and two children she was living in a rental apartment in a house owned by one of her in-laws. Now, however they are facing eviction because the owner is selling the house. As to her residential crisis she remarked:

> 'I'll have to leave Greenpoint. I looked at an apartment, $1950 for four tiny rooms. I was told to go to Bushwick. I'm not living in Bushwick! My father in-law has apartments, but they have rented to those people for years. A friend of mine is also being evicted for the sale of her house.'

The two images below are visual examples of impact of the economic and political forces at work in what Doris might see as the destruction of her neighborhood.

Fig. 1 - *Apartments for Rent, 2015* — Photo by Judith N. DeSena

These notices of apartments for rent in the window of a local Greenpoint real estate agency are indicative of the rising cost of rental housing in the area.

Fig. 2 - *Variety Store Going Out of Business, 2015* — Photo by Judith N. DeSena

Convenience retail stores that served Greenpoint's working class community are rapidly closing due to increasingly high commercial rents as the area rapidly gentrifies.

In Crown Heights, a new organization, the Movement to Protect the People (MTOPP) came on the local scene in 2014. Led by a fiery middle-class African American woman in Prospect Lefferts Gardens, MTOPP fought the development activists felt would decrease affordable housing for the less affluent and people of color in general. During the summer of 2015, Krase joined a tour given to an activist urban planner they had engaged to create a more just plan for their neighborhood. The following are two images from that tour.

Fig.3 - *Construction Site in Area Rezoning for Residential Development, 2015*
Photo by Jerome Krase.

Low-rise commercial buildings along Empire Boulevard, which bisects Crown Heights and Prospect Lefferts Gardens, are being demolished to make way for what locals feel will be high-rise luxury residential and mixed-use structures.This development site is a short distance from low-rise residential housing primarily middle and working class African American and Afro-Caribbean families.

Fig. 4 - *Typical Residences One Street Away from Empire Boulevard, 2015*
Photo by Jerome Krase.

These well-kept substantial low-rise homes on a quiet residential street are less than fifty yards away from the re-zoned properties on Empire Boulevard. It is not difficult to understand why homeowners and renters on this street are some of the most vocal opponents to New York City's plans to transform the neighborhood.

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