

# URBANITIES

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Articles: In Kevin S. Y. Tan ‘Golden Mile Complex’ should always read ‘The Golden Mile Complex’  
Film Reviews: The correct spelling is Ruth Mandel

## ***High-rise Buildings and Social Inequality: Focusing on the Street Quarter of Mapo-ro in Seoul***

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In this article I discuss the cause and the effects of the increase in high-rise buildings in the ‘street quarter’ of Mapo-ro in Seoul, South Korea. First, I draw on official reports and *Seoul Downtown Redevelopment Master Plans* to explore why this phenomenon has occurred. Second, I investigate the sociocultural effects of high-rise buildings using evidence collected through an application of participant observation, that is, a new walking method for the study of urban street spaces. I suggest that the Seoul government’s implementation of deregulation and benefits for developers to facilitate redevelopment in downtown Seoul has resulted in the increase of high-rise buildings. The analysis also demonstrates that this increase has contributed to gentrification and has led to the growth of private gated spaces and of the distance between private and public spaces.

**Key words:** High-rise buildings, residential and commercial buildings, walking, Seoul, Mapo-ro, state-led gentrification.

### **Introduction<sup>1</sup>**

First, I wish to say how this study began. In the spring of 2017, a candlelight rally was held every weekend in Gwanghwamun square in Seoul to demand the impeachment of the President of South Korea. On 17th February, a parade was added to the candlelight rally. That day I took photographs of the march and, as the march was going through Mapo-ro,<sup>2</sup> I was presented with an amazing landscape filled with high-rise buildings. In the imposing skyline, the yellowish metallic light of the 40-floor skyscraper centre Lotte Castle-President was so strange and mysterious that it reminded me of a huge tower in a fantasy adventure film. So, I decided to investigate the sociocultural meanings of high-rise buildings. I put the plan into practice in my ethnographic study.



Figure 1. The Parade of Mapo-ro on February 17, 2017. Photo by Kim, Young-Jin

<sup>1</sup> I wish to express my gratitude to the anonymous reviewers for *Urbanities* and the Board for their comments and feedback.

<sup>2</sup> Mapo-ro translates as Mapo boulevard.

Scholars from various disciplines have pointed out that citizens' everyday life is not independent from the physical aspect of the urban space. The philosophers and literary critics Benjamin and Lacis (1979) suggest that everyday life in Naples is characterized by 'porosity' like the rocks and the structures of the city. The social anthropologist Pardo (1996) offers an ethnographic analysis of the everyday interactions among diverse socioeconomic groups in the city. The anthropologist Mock (1993) tells that the Hikone Castle, in the Edo period, symbolized the political leader's power in a very graphic way but today functions as a strong reminder to the citizens of the day-to-day connection between the city's past and present. Lastly, the architect Gehl (2011) specifies how the physical environment of streets such as height, speed and decorations affect pedestrians.

The present article focuses on high-rise buildings as one of the diverse physical aspects of the urban space. My aim is to study the sociocultural meanings of high-rise buildings looking at the street quarter of Mapo-ro in Seoul. In this specific context, the term 'street quarter'<sup>3</sup> refers to the surrounding areas of a boulevard. The street quarter of Mapo-ro is one of the areas that encapsulate the rapid increase of high-rise buildings in the city.

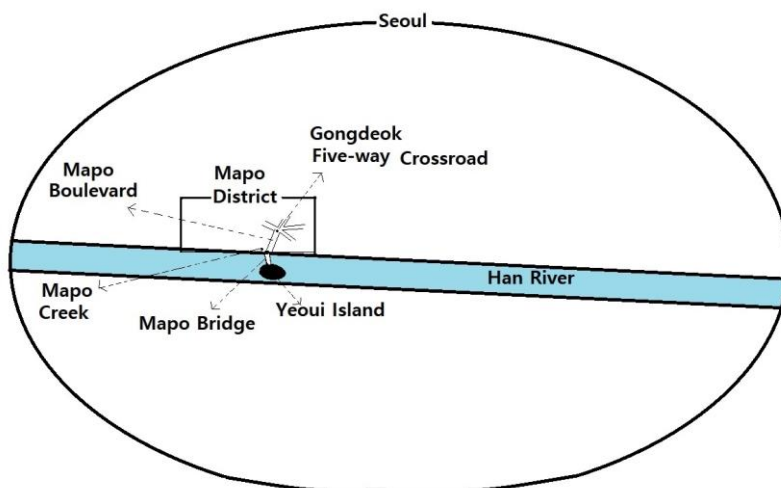


Figure 2. The Location of Mapo-ro in Seoul. Photo by Kim, Young-Jin.

Various researchers have shed light on the relationship between the social and the physical dimension in the urban space of Seoul. Gelézeau (2014: 178-181) provides a visual demonstration of how changes in housing styles affect everyday life in the streets by comparing photographs of the Singongdeok neighbourhood taken in 1996, 2000 and 2010. Sarfati's ethnographic research (2017) analyses the vernacular religious landscapes of Seoul taking into account both religious activities and the spatial transformation influenced by fast urbanization. My own research also aims to explore the sociocultural meanings of the built environment. The research project involved the study of the literature on the process of modernization of the street quarter of Mapo-ro, extended walks in the streets when I recorded

<sup>3</sup> 'Street quarter' is a legal term (Article 60 of the Building Act, South Korea).



my feelings and observations on the spaces and interviews with local people; they were residents, security guards, public officials, real estate brokers, and so on.

For the last four decades, high-rise buildings have rapidly increased in Seoul. We need to understand the effects of this built environment on everyday life. High-rise buildings require the investment of a huge amount of money and time. Therefore, once a building is completed, it is not easy to change or demolish it. Nevertheless, tall buildings continue to be constructed without knowing what impact they will have on social life. If such a trend continues, we may end up being trapped in a maze of our own making.

### **Walking as Participant Observation**

De Certeau (1984: xix and 97) points out that walking is an everyday practice and that it is tactical in character. For him, walking actualizes only a few of the possibilities set out by the established order and increases the number of possibilities and prohibitions (de Certeau 1985: 129-130). It has been argued that his discussion has triggered social scientists' interest in walking (Pauknerová and Gibas 2014: 174-175). Above all, 'visual ethnographic exercises' (Krase 2014: 154; Krase 2017: 77) contribute to our research as a method to collect documentation on the ground. Walking makes it possible to observe, describe and take photographs of the details, the rhythm and the flow of urban landscapes. For example, this approach has helped researchers to address vernacular landscapes in gentrified areas, ethnic enclaves, and so on (Krase 2012, Krase 2014, Krase and DeSena 2016, Krase and Shortell 2011).

On the other hand, there are anthropological studies that pay more attention to the practical dimension of walking. Pauknerová and Gibas (2014: 173-175) explore the urban space of Prague through walks. For them (2014: 175-176), walking means escaping the established routes and find new places, as well as being a research method that helps to document kinaesthetic experiences. For Gatta and Palumbo (2014: 260 and 246), walking is not only a method to explore places and interview people but also an activity to get in touch with an urban reality beyond its merchandised image. They suggest that we can understand, inhabit and domesticate the *entre-temps* of urban transformations by 'walking through', 'walking with' and taking part in 'organized walks' (Gatta and Palumbo 2014: 260).

The abovementioned researches classify walking as a new 'research practice', a 'mobility method' or a 'visual ethnography practice' (Pauknerová and Gibas 2014: 173-175; Gatta and Palumbo 2014: 246). Here, however, I deal with walking not as a new category but as participant observation. Specifically, the present discussion relies on my definition of walking as participant observation of street spaces (Kim 2015), which will contribute to a theoretical elaboration of walking beyond the existing tendency to consider walking as 'poor methodology', or as a lesser theoretical notion (Kohler 2014: 134).

According to Spradley (1980: 39), all participant observation takes place in social situations, each of which can be identified by three primary elements: *place*, *actors* and *activities*. Referring to Daphne Northrop's study (1978), he adds that a researcher does not always need to distinguish the different kinds of actors in a given situation (1980: 41 and 186).

So, a social situation can be the object of participant observation, whether or not the main actors are strangers. According to Spradley (1980: 41), in selecting a social situation it is not necessary to distinguish between types of actors; one only needs to know that people who are present are actors because they are engaging in some kind of activity, even if it is merely loitering.

A participant observer comes to social situations in order to engage and observe activities, people and physical aspects (Spradley 1980: 54). In the study of street spaces, a researcher can achieve both engagement and observation by walking, intended as a key street activity that can also be a way to witness and explore the street spaces. Many studies have investigated urban spaces using the method of ‘big urban walks’. Unlike these studies, I am interested in walking as a routine and repetitive everyday activity.

Shortell (2017: 133) pays attention to walking as ‘everyday mobility’. Although he does not explicitly say that walking is a participant observation method, he refers to the researcher who collects visual data from urban spaces as ‘a participant observer’; specifically, as ‘a participant observer in modes of everyday mobility, on foot and using public transportation’ (2017: 137). Shortell also notes that walking allows a multisensory experience (2017: 133), communication and interaction in public spaces, which is not much different from the aims of participant observation.

I gleaned multisensory data, collected my empirical material and engaged in diverse experiences while walking repeatedly in the street quarter of Mapo-ro from March to December 2017. At the same time, I visited several stores for daily chores or a snack. I patronised shoe repair shops, stationery shops, pharmacies, banks, bakeries, convenience stores, stalls selling street food, restaurants, cafes, and so on. Sometimes, I joined residents in community parades.

In short, I suggest that walking is not much different from traditional participant observation. Walking makes it possible for the researcher to take part in a vital part of street activities, collect data at the micro level and look at the street spaces from an emic perspective.

## **The Street Quarter of Mapo-ro**

### *The Development of the Street Quarter*

As the Korea Stock Exchange was relocated to Yeoui-island (Yeoui-do) in 1979, the island became a financial hub. Mapo-ro is the main passage connecting Yeoui-island to downtown Seoul. Mapo-ro is a 2,700-mile boulevard from Ahyeon three-way intersection to Northern crossroad of Mapo bridge (Sohn 2003: 185). In 1966, the Seoul government gave official names to 37 boulevards for the benefit of citizens and to promote Seoul as an international city (Seoul Government 1966: 56). Mapo-ro was one of them.

Today’s landscape of Mapo-ro has resulted from several government projects that have been carried out there and in the surrounding areas.

First, in 1963, the military regime that took power in Korea gave priority to a policy of ‘National Modernization’. Under this plan, Mapo-ro was repaved using new machinery and techniques (Mapo District 2014b: 13; Kim Do-In 2016: 14).





Figure 3. The Pavement of Mapo-ro of 1963. Source: Ahyeon-dong Office

Second, the US president Jimmy Carter visited Seoul in 1979. The previous year, the government had nicknamed ‘VIP Road’ the road that connects Gimpo international airport to Gwanghwamun through Yeoui-island and had invested about 260 million dollars in its renovation (Sohn 2003: 181). As Mapo-ro was included in this route, it was enlarged and repaved. Today, it is a boulevard that can be divided into two parts: one part is the 50-metre-wide 10-lane road from Mapo bridge to Gongdeok five-way intersection, the other is the 40-metre-wide 8-lane road from Gongdeok five-way intersection to Ahyeon three-way intersection (Seoul Government 2001: 154).

Third, the bridge that connects the Mapo district to Yeoui-island was completed in 1970 and further developed later. Originally called Seoul bridge, it was renamed Mapo bridge in 1984. In 2005, it was expanded from 6 to 10 lanes (Kim 2016: 156; Mapo District 2006: 100). The bridge contributed to making Mapo-ro a transportation hub together with the 1982-1986 Han River Overall Development Project, the opening of the Olympic Highway in 1986, the development of Yeoui-island between the 1960s and the 1970s, the opening of Metro Lines and the establishment of the Airport Train between 1996 and 2011 (Kim Do-In 2016: 161; Mapo District 2014a: 53).

Fourth, in 1967, the government drafted a plan for the development of Yeoui-island, which was a large government-owned land. In 1968, the government built the levee of Yoonjungjae on the island to prevent flooding and then, in the 1970s, constructed several luxury apartment complexes. At the same time, it relocated to Yeoui-island several national buildings, such as the Capitol and the KBS broadcasting station (Kim Do-In 2016: 66-67).

The island started to be considered economically important when the Korea Stock Exchange was moved there in 1979.



Figure 4. The Gongdeok Five-way Intersection in 1996. Source: Ahyeon-dong Office.

Lastly, between 1996 and 2011 several railway stations were opened at the Gongdeok five-way intersection (Seo 2016: 163 and 165). The station serving the Metro Line 5 opened in 1996, that for Metro Line 6 opened in 2001 and the Airport Train line station opened in 2011. On the other hand, the ground-level Gyeongui railway was removed from downtown Seoul in 2006 and opened as an underground line in 2009. The railway is now called Gyeongui & Jungang Line. Today, the area around the Gongdeok station is considered to be a ‘railway station sphere’.

At the same time, citizens’ activities can be observed that resist development policies. The station of the ground-level Gyeongui railway is scheduled to become a commercial area; however, this plan has been opposed by the ‘Citizen Activity for Gyeongui-line Public Space’ (CAGPS), which has appropriated the land. Besides, Mapo-ro is used as a venue for diverse political rallies. For example, on 21 April 2017 disabled people took part in a rally from Gwanghwamun to the Capitol, carrying protest banners against the national policies on disability.

### *The Increase of High-rise Buildings*

While the several development policies that I have outlined influenced the transformation of the street quarter, the redevelopment of Downtown Seoul was marked by an increase in high-rise buildings. In 1978, the Seoul government drafted the first redevelopment master plan for downtown Seoul and the next year added five blocks located in Mapo District to the target areas. Today, the project is criticized as one of the world's most aggressive redevelopment programmes (Kim and Yoon 2003: 543 and 559). The project is characterized by a clearance-based, market-driven and private sector-led urban renewal (Kim and Yoon 2003: 586).

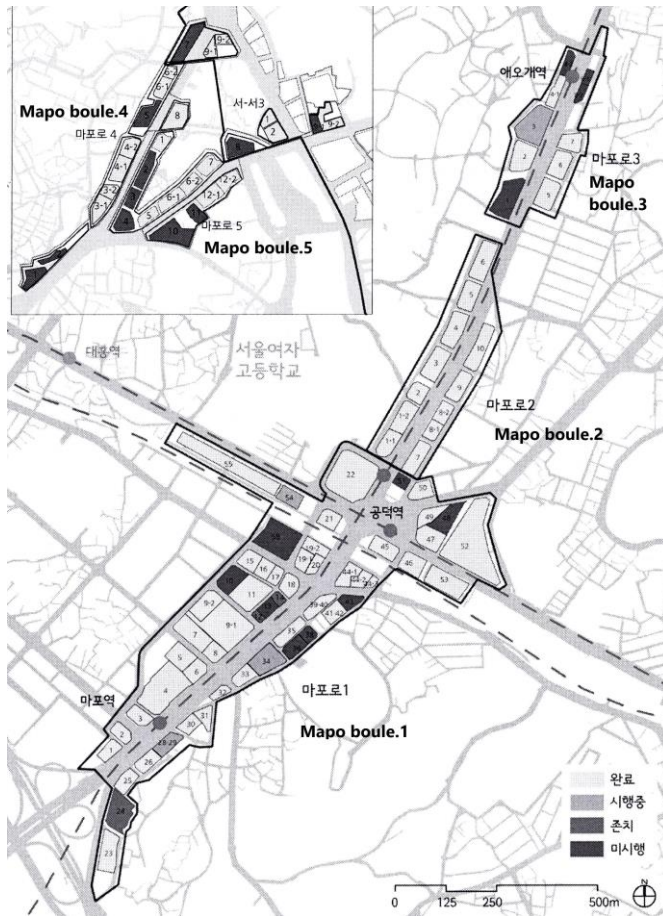


Figure 5. The Five Blocks of Mapo-ro. Source: Seoul Government (2016: 36).

In the Mapo District, 102 sections were planned for downtown redevelopment. Among them, Blocks I and II have respectively 53 and 12 sections; one building is generally built in a section. Here I focus on these two Blocks.

Block Name	Block I	Block II	Block III	Block IV	Block V	Total
Number of Sections	53	12	9	13	15	102

Table 1. The number of Sections in the Blocks of Mapo-ro. Source: Seoul Government (2001: 144), Seoul Government (2004a: 12).

Section Name	Block	designated (year)	permitted (year)	Completed (year)	FAR <sup>4</sup> (%)	BCR <sup>5</sup> (%)	Floors/ BSMT
Hyundai Build.	I	1979	1984	1986	648.86	43.75	15/4
Sinhwa Build.	I	1979	1984	1986	598.13	40.06	15/4
Daenung Build.	I	1979	1984	1986	620.81	41.93	15/4
Goryo Build.	I	1979	1983	1985	467.54	41.28	15/3
Iljin Build. <sup>6</sup>	I	1979	1984	1986	628.93	43.61	15/4
Sungji Build.	I	1979	1981	1984	583.89	39.09	17/3
Sungwoo Build.	I	1979	1984	1985	687.6	45.5	16/4
KEPC	I	1979	1984	1988	110.86	42.58	4/3
Jungwoo Mansion	I	1979	1982	1983	438.32	39.97	15/3
Samchang Plaza	I	1979	1984	1987	657.36	42.58	16/5
Dongseo Build.	I	1979	1983	1985	414.29	44.83	10/3
Shinwon Build.	I	1979	1980	1981	377.43	46.90	10/2
Mapo Post Office	I	1979	1986	1988	173.81	39.69	5/1
Gangbyeon Hansin Core	I	1979	1986	1992	648.08	37.59	18/2
Hansin Build.	I	1979	1984	1987	657.79	36.78	18/4
Dabo Build.	I	1979	1983	1988	607.00	38.0	18/5
Dowoon Build.	I	1979	1984	1988	479.42	33.33	15/4
Geosung Build.	I	1979	1983	1984	675.45	45.05	17/5
Jindo Build.	I	1979	1986	1988	669.47	49.28	15/5
Goryo Academytel II	I	1979	1984	1988	669.91	41.70	17/5
Changgang Build.	I	1979	1985	1988	669.94	38.67	19/5
SNU Alumni Hall	I	1979	1986	1988	182.40	36.80	5/1
Cheil Build.	I	1979	1983	1985	663.70	44.8	16/5
Poonglim VIP-tel	II	1979	1986	1991	644.81	36.41	18/4
LG Mapo Build.	II	1979	1984	1987	648.37	38.14	18/4
Credit Guarantee Fund	II	1979	1983	1985	719.50	38.95	20/5

Table 2. Completed Buildings before 1993. Source: Mapo District (1992: 316), Seoul Government (1994b: 73), Seoul Government (2010a: 267-310), <http://map.vworld.kr>.

<sup>4</sup> FAR: Floor Area Ratio.

<sup>5</sup> BCR: Building Coverage Ratio.

<sup>6</sup> The height of Poonglim VIP-tel (18 floors) is 63.31 meters and that of Iljin Building (15 floors) is 60.9 meters.



Table 2 lists buildings constructed in the two Blocks from 1980 to 1992. Among them, the Shinwon Building was the first to be given a building permit from the Seoul government. This fifteen-floor high-rise building is the Headquarters of Shinwon Group. Over the following decade, many office buildings were constructed there; among them, Sungji Building, or ‘Sungji Apartment-Shops’, is referred to as one of the buildings that introduced the concept of officetel to Seoul.<sup>7</sup> At that time, this 17-floor building had shops between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floors, offices between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> floors and apartments from the 11<sup>th</sup> floor up.

The process of redevelopment is roughly as follows: blocks or sections are designated for redevelopment, private investment is encouraged, applications are made for building permits, property is expropriated to be demolished and replaced by new buildings, and so on (Kim and Yoon 2003: 581-585). A big and new building can be designated as ‘retention section’ (a section to be kept as it is) even if it is located in the redevelopment Blocks (Seoul Government 2004a: 146).

Building Name	Block	Land Use	FAR (%)	BCR (%)	Height (m)	Floors/BSMT	Present Condition
Shintak Bank (Seoul Build.)	I	Office	212	35	19	5/1	To be rebuilt
SK Cheil Oil Station	I	Dangerous Material Storage	137	34	15	4/1	SK Yangji Oil Station
Red Cross	I	Office	148	21	22	6/1	Shilla Stay
Pungnong Fertilizer (Geonpung Build.)	I	Office	112	19	18	5/2	To be rebuilt
Seoul Garden Hotel	I	Hotel	1,108	70	55	15/3	Remodelled in 2014
National Council on Social Welfare (NCSW)	I	Office	390	37	29m	8/2	Renaissance Tower

Table 3. Retention sections of 1979. Source: Government of South Korea *Gwanbo*, No.8552 (May 24, 1980).

In 1979, there were 6 retention sections in Blocks I and II. Nonetheless, two of these sections were rebuilt: in 2002, the 8-floor NCSW building was replaced by the 23-floor Renaissance Tower and in 2005 the 6-floor Red Cross building was replaced by the 26-floor Shilla Stay. The Pungnong Fertilizer and the Shintak Bank are currently scheduled to be replaced by high-rise buildings.<sup>8</sup> Lastly, although the SNU Alumni Hall and the Post Office had been completed as 5-floor buildings by the downtown redevelopment project in 1988, the

<sup>7</sup> See, ‘Officetel’ in *Kyunghang* newspaper, 29/7/2011.

<sup>8</sup> See the newspaper articles, ‘A 24-story tourist hotel around Mapo bridge...the renewal of Garak-Samick Mansion puts on hold’ (*Moneta News*, 8/12/2016) and ‘Reconstruction of Seoul Mapo Garden Hotel to a 29-floor Tourist Hotel’ (*Yonhap News*, 10/4/2013).

buildings were later rebuilt; the former was rebuilt as the 18-floor building in 2011 and the latter was rebuilt as 16-floor in 2018.

Since the early 1980s, the Seoul government has repeatedly eased the regulations on the downtown redevelopment. In 1978, the redevelopment project established a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) limit of 670% and limited the number of floors to 15 (Yoon 2003: 136). In 1983, the FAR limit was increased to 1,000% and the height limit was abandoned (Sohn 2003: 187-188). As a result, the average FAR in the downtown redevelopment was higher than 600% per year in the early 1990s, and 900% per year in the late 1990s (Seoul Government 2010b: 24). The average number of floors of the newly constructed buildings was 17 in the 1980s and 19 in the 1990s (Seoul Government 2001: 82).

Section Name	Mixed-use	BLK	Completed (year)	FAR (%)	BCR (%)	Height (m)	Floors/BSMT
Masters Tower	Officetel, Shop	I	2000	951.46	39.88	91.80	26/6
Renaissance Tower	Officetel, Shop	I	2002	991.82	46.51	88.80	23/7
Sinyoung G-well	Officetel, Shop	I	2004	997.99	59.63	81.60	19/4
Hanwha Obelisk	Officetel, Shop, Apartment	I	2004	852.69	29.96	109.85	37/6
SK Hub-Green	Officetel, Shop	I	2005	1058.60	54.07	89.85	21/7
Daewoo Metro Dioville	Officetel, Shop, Apartment	I	2005	1082.93	55.41	104.70	30/8
Taeyoung Desian-LUV	Officetel, Shop	I	2006	894.49	54.73	64.15	17/7
Samsung Trapalace	Officetel, Shop, Apartment	I	2006	874.48	44.99	109.90	31/5
Daelim Acrotower	Officetel, Shop, Apartment	I	2007	763.43	58.15	79.64	20/5
KLHC ParkpalaceII	Shop, Apartment	II	2005	489.61	57.48	64.04	21/4
Hyundai Hyel	Officetel, Shop	II	2005	730.70	40.38	76.45	19/6
Daewoo World-Mark	Apartment, Shop	I	2011	448.66	55.36	60.9	20/7
Lotte Castle-President	Officetel, Shop, Hotel, Apart.	I	2009	1030.53	40.22	152.5	40/8
Jaram Build.	Officetel, Shop	I	2010	897.91	58.28	92.3	20/8
S-Oil	Office, Shop	I	2011	923.28	56.86	109.1	23/7
KCC Welltz Tower	Officetel, Shop, Apartment	I	2011	805.18	55.03	109.9	31/5
Silla Stay	Hotel, Shop	I	2015	996.15	57.92	91.8	26/3
SNU A. Hall	Officetel, Shop	I	2011	835.18	50.29	85.8	18/6
Hyosung Harrington (A)	Officetel, Shop, Hotel	I	2017	780.11	57.51	109.9	24/2

Table 4. Buildings Completed after 2000. Source: Seoul Government (2010a: 265-279), the unprinted document from Mapo-gu Offices, <http://map.vworld.kr>.



As the overdevelopment of downtown Seoul became a social issue, in 2000 the government reduced the FAR of the commercial areas to 200% (Seoul Government 2010b: 24). Nevertheless, the number of high-rise buildings continues to increase, as the government is offering FAR bonus to land donation for public use, to eco-friendly construction, to mixed-use buildings, and so on (See Table 4). In short, downtown redevelopment in Seoul has resulted in the increase of high-rise buildings.

*Landscapes, Heat Wave and the Smell of Exhaust Fumes*

The street quarter of Mapo-ro has many office and multi-use buildings, which affect the street landscapes both directly and indirectly. In the morning, the sidewalks of Mapo-ro mainly function as pedestrian passage ways. Between 8 a.m. and 9 a.m. Monday to Friday the streets are crowded with people going to work. They walk without glancing round. Regardless of the seasons, many wear earphones or hold a smartphone in their hand. In the hot summer, many hold in front of their face a portable USB-powered fan. Large buildings generally have a coffee shop or a convenience store ('Pyeonuijerm' in Korean) on the first floor. The coffee shops are opened between 7 a.m. and 8 a.m. and closed after 10 p.m. The convenience stores are open 24 hours a day.

The sidewalks of the street quarter look different during lunch time. Half an hour before noon, people start to appear with an employ card around their necks or holding a wallet and a smart phone in their hand. After about one hour, we can see many people with a large paper coffee cup with the logos of cafes like Starbucks, Hollys Coffee or Twosome Place which frequently appear as Product Placement (PPL) in Korean dramas. A cup of Americano coffee usually costs over 4,000 won in the cafes, the price of a coffee thus being almost equivalent to the cost of a simple meal. However, take-out specialty stores without seating arrangements sell coffee at half the price. Even after 1 p.m., these stores are crowded with people waiting to order. As I observe these comings and goings, the people walking with coffee cups look to me as if they were dragging heels, as if iron balls were hanging by their ankles. Even in the hot summer, it is not easy to see a female employee holding a parasol during lunch time. I think that they love the sunshine.

After 6 p.m., the sidewalks regain vitality. Some people walk straight to bus stops or metro stations. Others go to a pub or a restaurant in groups of four or five. If we follow them, we sometimes reach an underground hostess bar ('room-salon') or a karaoke establishment. At night, the buildings are brighter and more transparent because the ground floor walls are usually made of glass. So, pedestrians can see an information desk, security guards in suits, access control gates, the elevators in the lobby, and so on. The presence of ATMs is also emphasized by the bright lights that illuminate them.

The high-rise buildings generally block outsiders' access. However, one can tell whether they accommodate residential units or offices by looking at the lights in the windows. Lights in the residential units or officetels have an irregular pattern and different colours; some are yellowish, while others are milky white. The buildings that emit such lights at night are the Hanwha Obelisk, Samsung Trapalace, SK Hub-Green, Sinyoung G-Well, Lotte

Castle-President, Daewoo Metro Dioville, etc. In the office buildings, the lights are on in long rows of windows and they are all the same colour; also, the number of windows with lights on varies on each floor.

On Christmas 2017, the Seoul Garden Hotel and Shinwon Building were colourfully decorated with small lights framing the entrances. At the main entrance there were also banners declaring, 'The Love of Christmas' and 'Jesus Love You'. These decorations stimulated my interest in the local buildings. Through research, I found out that the Seoul Garden Hotel is a franchise of Best Western International, Inc., which has its headquarters in the U.S.A., and that the Shiwon Group promotes a Christian corporation culture and has a chapel in its headquarters. I also observed a few buildings, such as the Iljin building and S-Oil building, with the English words, '2018 Season's Greeting' written over the entrances. I found it interesting that the buildings did not carry popular greetings, like 'Happy New Year', but were decorated with greetings written in a literary style that is unfamiliar to ordinary Koreans.

Attention also needs to be paid to the metro and rail ventilation. In the middle of July, I have regularly felt strong heat waves coming from the metro ventilation opposite the pedestrian crossing between the S-Oil Headquarters and the Sinyoung Building. The heat waves were so strong that, when having to cross, I found it impossible to wait at the traffic lights near the ventilation; I took detours to avoid that crossing. The heat waves made me realize that the area around the ventilation outlets has underground spaces as vast as the tall aboveground buildings. This specific crossing is located near the ventilation outlet of the Gongdeok station, at the junction of three Metro lines and the Airport Train line. The station has five basement levels. These deep underground spaces emit heat waves to ground level with effects as negative as those caused by the shadows cast by the high-rise buildings and by the wind effect that they create. The air expelled at ground level by the ventilation outlets of these underground spaces is also polluted. Pedestrians, however, know little about the quality and quantity of the air. I think it reasonable that the demand for such information should be included in 'the right to the city'.

Moreover, metro platforms and corridors require many lights and air conditioning units. The operating costs are high, as lights, air conditioners and air cleaners are on throughout the opening hours.

The Dohwa by-street is another urban area that I tried to avoid. The traffic light between Dohwa by-street and Saechang road often causes traffic jams. Whenever I walked near cars waiting for the green light at the intersection, I was forced to inhale the fumes produced by their engine idles. The by-street is just 8 meters wide. The carriage road adjacent to the pedestrian path and the high-rise buildings on its west side contribute to the poor circulation of air. I found the smell of fumes in the Dohwa by-street stronger and more unpleasant than in the 8-lane (40meters) or 10-lane (50 metres) Mapo-ro.

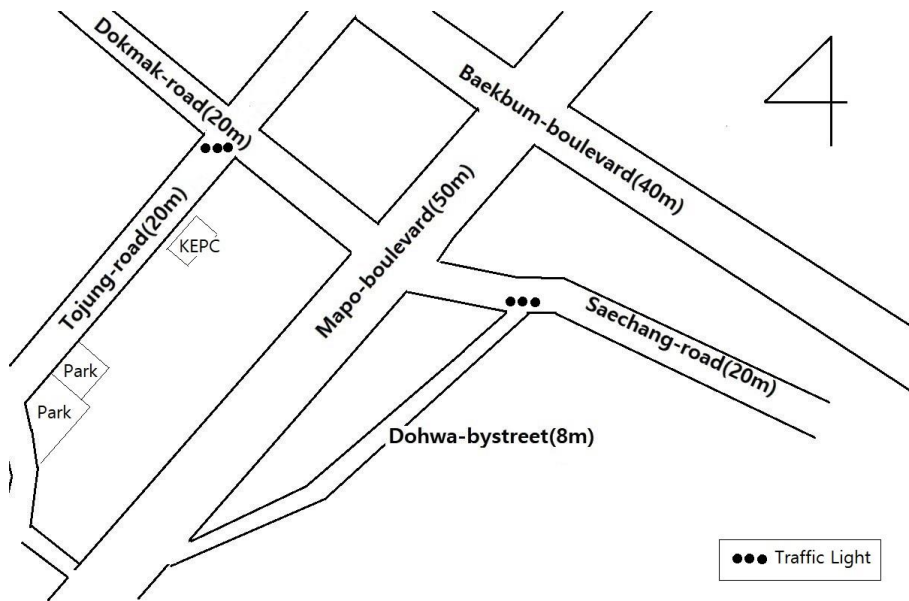


Figure 6. Dohwa by-street and Tojung-road. Photo by Kim, Young-Jin

In contrast, Tojung road has good sidewalks. The road is 20 meters wide, is tree-lined and there are roadside benches. Thanks to the trees, the road is cool in the Summer. On the east side, there are also two parks and the 5-floor KEPC (Korea Electric Power Corp.) building. The sidewalk in front of the public KEPC building is covered with uneven cobblestones for foot acupressure. In brief, the key differences between the Dohwa by-street and the Tojung road lie in their width, the existence or lack of roadside trees, their distance from Mapo-ro and in the presence or absence of high-rise buildings. In the interest of the health of the residents and merchants the size of the Dohwa by-street should be deemed unsuitable for its current purpose. It needs to become a road for pedestrians only.

### The Sociocultural Meanings of High-rise Buildings

#### *Access Control Systems and the 'Family Names' of Buildings*

Let us now look at the new social orders brought by the structural transformation in the street quarter of Seoul.

First, private gated spaces have increased. Office buildings generally have access control gates or a numeric keypad on the access floor. Therefore, it is difficult for a stranger to explore freely the inside of the buildings. The mixed-use buildings, too, do not allow outsiders to enter freely. In order to protect the residents' privacy, the redevelopment masterplan forced mixed-use buildings to separate the entry to residential floors from that to commercial and office floors (Seoul Government 2004b: 33). Today, in the area under study we can easily see gates marked with words such as 'Entry to Officetel', 'Entry to Apartments' or 'Entry to Hotel'. These entry gates have automatic doors with a numeric keypad and allow in only people who have an access card or know the correct numeric code. So, the stairs, corridors and rooms of these buildings have become closed spaces. We can often see a

postman who ‘rings a bell’ at the entry of a building to deliver a parcel; he must do this twice, at the gate of a building and at the door of the apartment where he has to deliver. These buildings broaden the gap between private space and public space.

Second, in this area buildings generally have ‘family names’. Each building bears a long family name or the logo of a corporation; for example, SK Hub-Green, Hanwha Obelisk, Lotte Castle-President, Samsung Trapalace, KCC Welltz-Tower, Sinyoung G-well, Taeyoung Desian-LUV (Luxury View Villadom), Hyosung Harrington Square A-building, and so on. Walking in the street quarter, we observe family names such as SK, KCC, Hyosung, Lotte or S-Oil attached to the walls of buildings, which indicates that most of the area is occupied by large corporations. On the other hand, the given names identify the buildings. In his book, *Building the Skyline* (2016), Barr discusses the identity of skyscrapers. According to him (2016: 184, 202), the skyscraper, because of its size, naturally presents an opportunity for grand self-expression that can be independent of financial considerations and can be used for multiple purposes, including advertising, ego-boosting, competition and conspicuous consumption. In the case of Mapo-ro, the buildings’ given names or nicknames tell us what identity the buildings want to have. Their given names are straightforward. For example, there are names to symbolize ‘well-being’, like G-Well or Welltz; to mean ‘centre’, like Hub, Trapalace or World-Mark; to indicate ‘higher height’, like Acro-tower or Tower; to signify ‘political power’, like President, Palace or Castle.

The high-rise buildings around Mapo-ro mainly accommodate franchises or company-operated stores on the ground floor. Interestingly, coffee shops, restaurants and convenience stores have no special names. The names of the franchise stores or company branches are usually composed of two parts. One part is the brand name of the franchise or the name of the headquarters such as Seven-eleven, Starbucks, the other is the location of shop such as Obelisk (building name), Gongdeok (neighbourhood name), Iljin (building name); for example, ‘Obelisk-store of Seven-eleven’, ‘Gongdeok-store of Starbucks’, ‘Iljin building-store of Starbucks’. These stores are run by a shop manager instead of an owner, do not have their own unique identity and tend to provide the same service as that of the head store. They keep to the management guidelines and have the same content in menu, price and interior design. It all looks familiar to me even when I walk into a store for the first time.

Thus, the street quarter of Mapo-ro has become an area where it is difficult to find a building without a family name or a franchise without a brand name, which usually signifies a family’s fame and wealth. These stores’ given names clearly signify their ambition, to be higher, richer and more powerful. Parallel to this, we observe that the coffee shops have replaced the social functions of the streets. People no longer wait for someone or chat with acquaintances in the streets. Instead, they use cafes for such social activities. Now, one has to pay a fee to engage in social activities that used to be carried out without cost in the streets. In short, in the street quarter social life has become expensive.

### *State-led Gentrification*

The Downtown Redevelopment of Seoul affected the increase of the high-rise buildings in the street quarter of Mapo-ro. At the same time, land value soared, which was followed by the gentrification of both the surrounding areas and the street quarter. Let us look at this process.

The high-density redevelopment of the street quarter was closely related to the development of Yeoui-island, which was an empty lot until the mid-1960s. When the government relocated there the Capitol and the Korean Stock Exchange, the island was turned into an important area politically and economically. At the same time, Mapo-ro was given a new function as a passage connecting the island to downtown Seoul, and the government started to beautify the boulevard to show off Seoul as a modernized city. In spite of being located outside downtown Seoul, in 1979 the street quarter of Mapo-ro was added to the target areas of Downtown Redevelopment. The redevelopment project is still going on. The location of Mapo-ro, I note, contributed to attract government development interest both in the surrounding areas and in the boulevard.

The redevelopment is characterized by wholesale clearance and private investment (Kim and Yoon 2003: 581). Due to lack of public funds, the Seoul government offered favourable terms to developers in order to attract private capital (Kim and Yoon 2003: 587). Firstly, a developer could expropriate the whole land earmarked for redevelopment and for this it was sufficient to have the agreement of two-thirds of the land and building owners (Kim and Yoon 2003: 585). Yoon (1987: 57-61) argues that thus the redevelopment mainly benefited large corporations. Hackworth and Smith (2001: 466) point out that while the involvement of the state was often justified with the need to stop the decline, the effect was highly class specific. Scholars have suggested that the property expropriation for renewal are very unfair, but the law has not yet been changed in South Korea. Secondly, the redevelopment involved a dual compensation system. Compensation for the expropriated land was to be made in cash. Compensation for downtown redevelopment was to be made in kind, either in land or in buildings after the development was completed. This compensation system was criticized as unfair because the land price generally increased after the redevelopment was completed and all the profit went to the developers (Kim and Yoon. 2003: 585). Thirdly, the government has intensified the incentives for mixed-use construction in order to prevent, it was said, the hollowing of downtown Seoul since 1994 (Seoul Government 1994a: 116 and 122; 1996: 144-146; 2001: 145-146; 2004a: 84-87). For example, mixed-use construction could obtain a FAR incentive of 50% for buildings with residential units over 30%, of 100% for those with residential units over 50% and of 150% for those with residential units over 70% in 2004 (Seoul Government 2004a: 85).

After the Korean financial crisis of 1997, the country's economy underwent a slowdown and the demand for office buildings decreased. Nonetheless, high-rise buildings are continuously built in the areas around Mapo-ro due to policies, like FAR bonus, in support of the mixed-use construction. One thinks, for example, of the 40-floor Lotte Castle-President,

the 35-floor Hanwha Obelisk and the 31-floor Samsung Trapalace (See Table 4).<sup>9</sup> These policies were closely related to the Korean economic crisis of 1997. In the crisis' aftermath, the redevelopment masterplan of 2001 assumed that the temporary demand for residential and commercial buildings would increase, while the demand for offices would shrink. The plan pointed out that in order to revitalize development the government needed to lift some restrictions on land use and respond quickly to market demands (Seoul Government 2001: 163).

The development of mixed-use buildings also affected apartment prices. An apartment in a new mixed-use building is generally sold for higher price than one in an exclusively residential building. Notably, this happens because the price cap system for new houses does not apply to mixed-use buildings. Furthermore, as the mixed-use buildings contributed to improving the image of the surrounding areas, the overall land value increased. For example, in February 2017 a warehouse of the Daehan Floor Corporation, which is located on the west side of Mapo-ro, was sold for 105-million Korean won (KRW) per pyeong.<sup>10</sup> Opposite the warehouse, on the east side of Mapo-ro, there is the Seoul Garden Hotel; in 1998, the official land value of the site was 25 to 30 million KRW per pyeong — that is, 3 or 4 times lower than in 2007. In the case of the lots around the Gongdeok rotary, the land price was about 15 million KRW in 1998, when the Gyeongui-line near the rotary still run on ground level; in 2017, it was 7 times higher (Seoul Government 2001: 143).

As we have seen, despite the economic recession that followed the financial crisis of 1997, both the height of high-rise buildings and land values have increased in Mapo-ro. Thanks to the aforementioned incentives, some buildings even exceed the existing height limit. The columnists Alex Marshall (2013) and Barr (2016) have offered helpful ideas in their analysis of this physical change and its sociocultural impact. Marshall argues that income inequality promotes the proliferation of skyscrapers. For him, nations that have relatively equal incomes have few skyscrapers, whereas nations with great wealth and great poverty have more. There, citizens can put pressure on the government during the negotiation process between developers and the government over building height. On the other hand, Barr (2016: 202) draws on statistical evidence to argue the relationship between social inequality and skyscraper height. For him, periods of extreme inequality are associated with periods of extreme height. In the US, he argues, in a year in which the top 1% of the population earned more than 20% of the nation's income, additions to the skyline nearly doubled, increasing by about 12 floors. In South Korea, after the crisis of 1997 many companies were restructured and unemployment sharply increased. This roughly coincided with the period when buildings

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<sup>9</sup> 'Seoul Mapo District Announcement, No.2008-573: Permission of Plan Change of Urban Environment Redevelopment at the 22nd section of Block I, Mapo-ro'.

<sup>10</sup> The pyeong is the South Korean standard traditional measure for real estate floorspace. 0.3025 pyeong equal 1 square metre. See the article, 'Dahanjebun, the sale of real estate of Korean won 71,3 billion' (*Yonhap News*, 14/7/2017).



height increased in the redevelopment areas. There, on average, the height of buildings was below 17 stories until 1997, rising to above 20 stories after 1998 (Seoul Government 2010b: 22-23).

High-rise buildings bring about costs of various kinds that are not met by developers. As I have mentioned, they contribute to create a microclimate, casting shadows on the streets and causing ‘wind effect’. It is not only the icicles hanging from the upper floors that sometimes threaten to fall on pedestrians; a person who jumped from a high building fell on a passer-by, killing both. As we know, high-rise buildings generally have several floors deep underground; the necessary excavation can potentially cause damage to the adjacent buildings. However, high-rise buildings proliferate, for they meet the interests of certain classes. We have considered the various benefits offered by the government to large companies for the renewal of downtown Seoul, including property expropriation, FAR bonuses and tax benefits. A tall building exceeding in height the surrounding buildings is a visual representation of these incentives and of the wealth and power that made the construction possible.

#### *Citizens’ Activity in the Public Space*

The Gyeongui Railroad was demolished in 2006. The Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport (MLIT) owns the empty land. The Korea Rail Network Authority (KRNA) has the right of management. In 2007, the KRNA and the Mapo District agreed to create a commercial zone. In 2011, the E-Land Group was chosen as developer. A multi-purpose building of 20 stories was supposed to be completed by 2015. While the E-Land Group waited for the building permit, the KRNA allowed the Neuljang Cooperative Federation (NCF) to run a traditional market on the empty land.<sup>11</sup> When the KRNA asked the NCF to stop using the land, the latter refused to do so and, in November 2016, together with the CAGPS declared this public space to be the ‘26th Autonomous Region’. These two organizations have appropriated the space for their activities, claiming that the land should be used for citizens’ activities, not for the commercial purposes of large companies. Their argument is supported by scholars and activists who maintain that public space should be used by citizens (*Hankyoreh*, Oct. 7, 2017).<sup>12</sup> So, members of the CAGPS sell food, clothes or accessories. Also, a ‘gallery’ has been built with plywood, where photographs of local buildings to be expropriated and demolished are displayed and concerts are occasionally organized. However, the merchants usually have few customers and the activists have little interaction with the residents. As a whole, this public space looks like an isolated island and the landscape contrasts sharply with the surrounding areas and their tall buildings. Nevertheless, the activists continue to attempt to create new possibilities by investing time

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<sup>11</sup> For reference, ‘Neuljang’ means a large field where goods can be sold.

<sup>12</sup> See the newspaper article, ‘A year since that they were expelled for “Luxury Residence”... Ahyeon street carts are still alive’ (*Hankyoreh*, 7/10/2017).

[http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/society/society\\_general/813573.html](http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/society/society_general/813573.html)

and energy, as opposed to big money. For analytical purposes, their efforts to preserve this open space may be compared to those aimed at conserving spaces for social interaction.

## Conclusion

In the street quarter of Mapo-ro, the number of high-rise buildings has increased since 1980s and new buildings tend to be higher. When the overdevelopment of downtown Seoul became a social issue in the early 2000s, the government reduced the FAR limit. However, the number of high-rise buildings has continued to increase because the government offers several incentives to developers in order to attract private investment. In short, the increase in the number of high-rise buildings is closely intertwined with the government's FAR incentive policies.

Today, the street quarter is crowded with the buildings of large corporations and the commercial and residential buildings for the middle class. We have seen that the high-rise buildings have 'family names' that correspond to the names of large corporations. We have also seen that their given names are followed by words like 'higher', 'more wealth' or 'more powerful'. We have found that, like gated communities, the residential and commercial buildings are closed to the public, thus broadening the gap between private space and public space. Lastly, we have considered the activities of the CAGPS, whose members not only speak out for citizens' right to the public space but also put their ideas into practice.

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## *Dating Tokyo: De-alienation of a Metropolis through Intimate Spaces*

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In a metropolis, where movement is an inevitable part of everyday life, impermanence and alienation become two of its main characteristics. This is the situation in technologically oriented Tokyo, one of the world's biggest and most populated cities. The metropolis is fundamentally structured by flows that cause fleeting encounters between people and their environment. But as big and dynamic as the city is, Tokyo is also well known for the fine thread of much of its urban fabric, and for the unique qualities and human scale of its small, intimate places. The purpose of this article is to identify and typologically classify intimate spaces of everyday life in contemporary Tokyo and to interpret their key spatial characteristics. Focusing on the Taito Ward, an old downtown area, the article uses theories of play and activity to explore the tangible and intangible elements of the lifeworld. It applies visual methods to investigate concrete spaces in the ward where diverse personal possessions, as valuable traces of daily activity, can be found by recognizing their critical spatial characteristics. Subsequently, two main types of intimate places are identified: utilitarian (purpose-ful) and decorative (purpose-less). Their presence is common in leftover (or shared) spaces, typically on and along the paths and footways located between the low-rise buildings. The discussion concludes with suggestions of how to discern such meaningful places with the application of a Geographic Information System (GIS) to support their emergence and flourishing through planning and design practices.

**Keywords:** Urban artefacts, personal belongings, public space, visual ethnography, play.

### **Introduction<sup>1</sup>**

Recent trends in theories of place, place attachment and home have focused on practices and habitual activities as processes that structure the environments we inhabit (Dovey 1985, Cresswell 2013, Pred 1984, Blunt 2007, Werner et al. 1985). If these concepts — fluctuating, transient, and structured by flows (Sassen 2005) — arise from the reiteration of individual and social practices (Pred 1984), how important is the actual engagement with the physical environment in a contemporary city? This is one of the questions this article explores in the case of Tokyo, a city of conflicting realities with living spaces paradoxically small in an overall bigness (Radovic and Boontharm 2012) and a city that generates solitude<sup>2</sup> despite an undeniable crowdedness (Genda 2013, Miyazaki 2010). A dissonant image of the metropolis is most apparent in alleyways<sup>3</sup> of traditional *shitamachi*<sup>4</sup> districts. Commonly translated as downtown districts where the slow pace of life in quiet residential neighbourhoods are

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<sup>1</sup> We are grateful to the anonymous reviewers for *Urbanities* and the Board for their comments and feedback, which have contributed to improve the final version of this article.

<sup>2</sup> As an extreme example, *hikikomori* is an individual who has remained at home for six months or longer without interacting personally with anyone outside the family. These people have no friends and are isolated from society, even though they may be living in the middle of a teeming city. Source: <https://www.nippon.com/en/column/g00455/> (accessed on 05.02.2018.)

<sup>3</sup> The *roji* can be described as a mostly narrow and winding alleyway or neighbourhood unit in traditional wooden low-rise neighbourhoods, which no car can enter, and which are only wide enough to allow one person to walk or cycle through (Imai, H. 2013).

<sup>4</sup> *Shitamachi* literally means *lower city* and is associated with the common people's culture before the Second World War, the area for lower class people in a low-lying part of Tokyo that was prone to flooding.

juxtaposed with large-scale buildings. They keep their own separate logic and rhythm — unhurried, intimate and deeply personal.<sup>5</sup> Focusing on the dialectics between big and small, slow and fast, permanent and temporary, this research investigates the concrete urban situation of an old downtown area of Tokyo and its common spaces that abound with personal possessions and attest to the rich practices of everyday life. In Japan, temporary elements of urban space are called *afuredashi* (Sand 2013). Some of these elements are signs or symbols that help us navigate through the complex multi-layered and multi-levelled realm; some utilitarian, others purely decorative. Whether or not they are attached to nearby shops or houses, they often accommodate domestic items commonly kept inside the house. Blurring additionally the border between public and private space, they become a spatial extension of the home. A walk through these areas reveals the unforeseen face of the giant: the one that is fragmented across the city and wears the face of an individual, of a citizen, of a person engaged with it. The strong presence of Tokyoites' personalities in their physical absence is reflected in the abundance of belongings exposed to our sight.

In contemporary society, whether in public or in private space, the meaning and value of objects change as a result of the increased use of technology. With this dramatic change, the roles of (personal) objects (again in both private and public spaces) observed in this study, as well as their general physical and functional presence in urban environments, have also continued to change (Whincup 2004).

Some of the questions this research opens are:

1. What are the typical spatial relationships in which personal belongings in urban spaces of Tokyo appear? Are there specific spatial and architectural characteristics that afford<sup>6</sup> a higher number of personal belongings (and, therefore, the possibility for meaningful engagement with immediate environments)?
2. Which meanings become associated with these personal belongings exposed to public view?
3. Would it be possible to identify and assist the emergence of places with similar, positive characteristics through specific planning and design practices?

In order to answer these questions, detailed fieldwork was conducted with the application of visual methods. Personal belongings and possessions found in semi-public and semi-private spaces were photographed, mapped, and discussed. Spatial characteristics of the areas where artefacts were placed were then imported into a GIS and areas with similar spatial characteristics were located.

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<sup>5</sup> Many scholars support the view of Tokyo as a 'city of neighbourhoods' (Imai 2017).

<sup>6</sup> An affordance is what an environment offers or provides; it includes all transactions possible between an individual and their environment (Gibson 1979: 56-60).



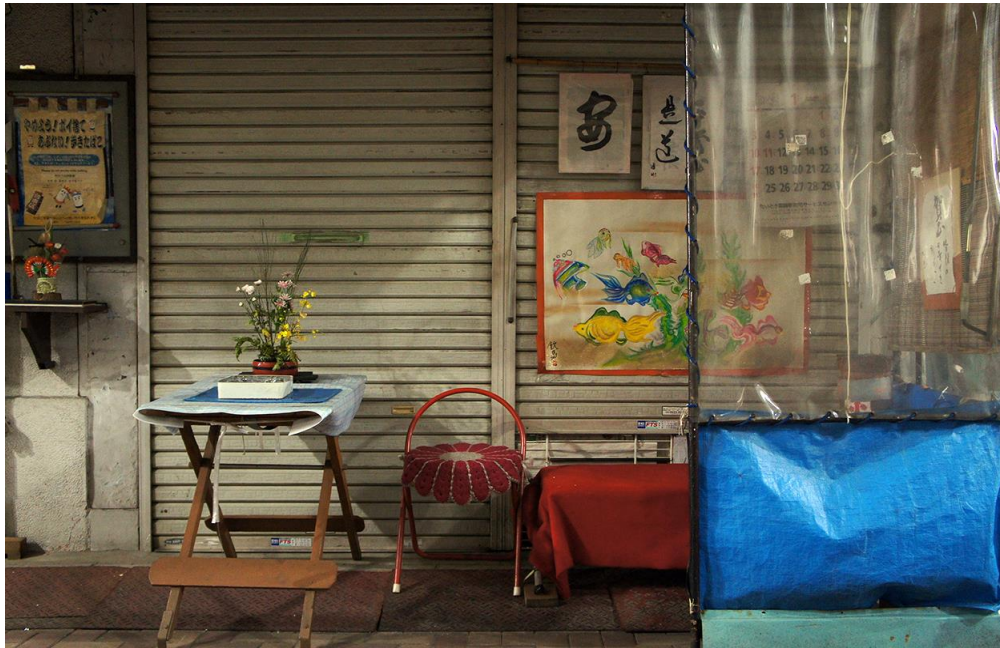


Figure 1. Personal Belongings in an Appropriated Space (Source: Vedrana Ikalovic)

The Taito Ward was explored as one of Tokyo's typical downtown precincts exhibiting distinct *shitamachi* characteristics and exposed to relentless transformation.<sup>7</sup> The construction sites in Taito are significantly and constantly changing the ward's image and although the meanings, which these elements hold, remain decidedly personal and individual, they are the agents in the production of a sense of community and identity on the neighbourhood scale.

The methodology for this research combines qualitative and quantitative techniques, and is suitable for multidisciplinary studies of urban spaces in rapidly changing metropolitan landscapes. It is also a way to support the emergence and flourishing of intimate places through planning and design practices.

## Theoretical Concepts

### *Traces of Play in a Lifeworld*

In order to establish a connection between objects, playful activities, and spatial characteristics of the selected area that accommodates them, three theories were applied. Firstly, as a setting for activities, the concept of the lifeworld that traces and exposes parts of everyday environmental experience and within lifeworld, the concepts of rest, movement and encounters (Seamon 2015). The photographed personal possessions were further classified and re-interpreted as urban artefacts or as objectified human needs (Leontyev 2006.). These objectified needs are forms of play and hobbies, such as gardening and flower arranging, are the most intimate manifestations of play in public spaces (Sutton-Smith 2009). Through these

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<sup>7</sup> According to the proposed Land Use Plan over 80% of the Ward, which currently accommodates small industries and low-rise residential units, is planned for commercial land use with a high building coverage ratio (BCR) and floor area ratio (FAR).

concepts, the connection between a subject (an individual) and object (an element in public space) was established and intimate places were further explored from the spatial perspective. Characteristics of the structures surrounding them were mapped and discussed in relation to the personal possessions.

### Lifeworld and Rest

Restlessness in a contemporary city, which comes along with the necessity to move, is changing lifestyles of urban dwellers and the character of public space (Simmel 2012, Dovey 1985, Deleuze and Guattari 1998, Lash and Urry 1994, Green 2002). Activities like sleeping, eating and putting makeup on in the train and changing clothes in parking lots are all common behaviours linked to the urban (and metropolitan) lifestyle that force one to move. Time-space relationships are changing, distances shrinking and consequentially intimacy, privacy, comfort and other attributes of home are gradually being displaced in the public sphere (Rybczynski 1987). These 'taken-for-granted patterns and contexts of everyday life through which the person routinely conducts his/her day-to-day existence without having to make it an object of conscious attention' (Buttimer and Seamon 2015: 149), phenomenologists call natural attitudes or the unquestioned acceptance of things and experiences of daily living (Giorgi 1970). In 'A Geography of Lifeworld', David Seamon uses three primary themes to uncover and reveal the wholeness of everyday life experience: movement, rest and encounter. Movement signifies any spatial displacement of the body initiated by the person himself or herself; it is an action made by the body. Rest is an experiential structure within a network of places an individual is familiar and comfortable with or a 'geographical world extending beyond the dwelling-place' (Seamon 2015: 70). Its specific physical extent and boundaries are not the concern as much as the overriding experiential structure, which makes them possible. An encounter is any situation of attentive contact between the person and the world at hand. Exploring the nature of encounters leads us to better understand how human beings attentively meet the places, spaces, and landscapes that inform their surroundings.

Elements found in alleyways (personal belongings and other arranged small objects) define places that are the extension of home into the public realm. Photographs of these 'extended homes' present residents' natural attitudes and their unintentional involvement with taken-for-granted places are traces of their playful activities. Further analysis of the physical environment containing different amounts of personal belongings reveals causal relationships between the physical characteristics of the environment and the intensity of encounters.

### Solitary Play

The presence of people in public space and their active interaction with it are commonly seen as a social indicator of 'good life' (Bradburn 1969, Diener and Suh 1997) and traces of play in public spaces are a sign of individuals' engagement with the physical environment and its qualities.

'Traces might also be found in trampled paths over grass or gravel, or as evidence of children's *play* in the form of temporarily abandoned toys. Traces could be

tables, chairs and potted plants left outside in the evening, which indicate a quarter where residents confidently move their *living room* into public space and leave it there. Traces could show just the opposite: hermetically sealed shutters and bare porches can indicate a quarter with no signs of life.’ (Gehl and Svarre 2013: 30) (emphases added)

Play is an ambiguous phenomenon studied mostly in the context of entertainment and in children (Bateson 1955, Judd 2002, Nasaw 2012, Marcus 1974). In this study, Sutton Smith’s list of activities that are identified as forms of play is applied to the exploration of public space<sup>8</sup> (Sutton-Smith 2009). The focus is on solitary play and private possessions, which are traces of solitary play in public space. The solitary activities include hobbies such as collections, gardening, flower arranging and handicrafts. Only subjective play or mind play (such as dreams and reveries) is more private. In this sense, a public area that accommodates solitary play becomes a place with a high level of intimacy or intimate space. In dense urban environments and contemporary cities solitary play is extrapolated from the inside (of the home) to the outside (the city), or rather to the border between inside and outside, to interstitial places, which are an extension of home. It has characteristics of both public and private because the activity itself is solitary but it occurs in a public space, out of the home. The person, or subject, is exposed through the traces of their activities and objects visible to others. These traces could be, for example, in the form of a small ensembles of tables and chairs surrounded with flower arrangements; washing machines, clothespins, hangers and laundry on clotheslines; baskets, brooms and sponges in the vicinity of water pipes and basins or collections of toys. Left or arranged in public space, these private possessions and personal objects become veritable urban artefacts and solitary play becomes the most intimate form of play, leaving tangible traces in the urban environment.

### Objects as Urban Artefacts

The conceptual distinction between the universe of people and objects has had an impact on material culture studies, commonly populated by anthropologists, archaeologists, psychologists and sociologists (Knappett 2002). This study explores this relationship from the urban perspective, through the relation between subject and object, where the object is something in the subject’s environment that represents the satisfaction of a particular need. Activity is what mediates between the subject and object; it is a human need that forms the structure of activity and the objects themselves are the products of activity. Tangible traces of

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<sup>8</sup> Among the presented list of activities, mind or subjective play (dreams, daydreams, reveries playing with metaphors) is mostly private. It is followed by solitary play (hobbies, collections, gardening, flower arranging, handicrafts etc.), playful behaviours (playing tricks and playing around), informal social play (joking, parties and leisure), vicarious audience play (television, film, concerts and theatres), performance play (playing music, being an actor and play voices), celebrations and festivals (birthdays, weddings and carnivals), contests (games and sports) (athletics, gambling and physical skill) in addition to risky or deep play (caving, rafting and extreme games). Contests and deep play are mainly public.

activity in a form of privately possessed appliances, small architectural elements, personal objects etc. were therefore observed as artefacts, as objectified human needs (Leontyev 1977, 2006).

Observation of ‘inexplicable protuberances and concavities connected to buildings and streets in the city’ (Suzuki as cited in Sand 2013: 88) occurred in Japan in the 1980s. Observationists of the Street Observation Society were looking for and interpreting traces of others’ interventions in the planned regularity of Tokyo. Members photographed uncommodified objects that are referred to as *bukken*<sup>9</sup> and saw themselves as bringing to light an urbanism already latent (Sand 2013). By simply recording, classifying and describing their discoveries, the observationists left the city itself as the primary frame, suggesting the potential existence of innumerable similar instances of the same classifications and schemes that archaeologists interpret — fragments for what they suggest of the whole to which they once belonged, not for the intrinsic interest or beauty of the fragment itself (Sand 2013).

The object made by some unidentified person or by natural accident, incidentally found, photographed and interpreted was significant for the exchanges or transactions rather than for the sign of use value. With a similar approach, this research observes and examines spatial characteristics of settings that accommodate objects placed by unidentified individuals. It discusses the ambience of the setting and level of intimacy created through the exchange between subjects, objects and play. It proposes a combined methodology for their further exploration and integration of planning for valuable and meaningful (irreplaceable) environments.

### *Public Spaces and Lifestyles in Tokyo*

Extrapolation of home into the public realm, which through appropriation accommodates domestic activities, is not a novelty in Tokyo. Exploration of urban lifestyles tends to emphasize the ideas of nomadic life and use of various public and commercial facilities as extensions of domestic functions<sup>10</sup> (Caballero and Tsukamoto 2006, Ashihara 1989, Yūko and Yokokawa 1995). These facilities provide spaces with attributes usually associated with home — privacy, intimacy, comfort, convenience, efficiency and self-expression (Rybczynski 1987, Sixsmith 1986).

When it comes to public spaces and activities in public spaces, in Tokyo, they are generally contrasted with Western concepts of public spaces commonly used for leisure and socializing (Dimmer 2012, Jinnai 1995). One of the conceptual keywords for understanding its urban space is the term *kaiwai* translated as activity space described and characterized by subjectivity, indeterminacy, and assemblage of individual experiences. As a phenomenon that

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<sup>9</sup> *Bukken* corresponds more closely to the countable concrete noun ‘property’ as it is used in the real estate industry. By the same token, it suggests what legal scholars call the *in rem* character of property: its foundation as a concrete relation between persons and physical things, as opposed to a relation, like a contract, between persons (Sand 2013).

<sup>10</sup> Such as trains, convenience stores, vending machines, noodle shops, public baths, coin washing machines, karaoke shops, love hotels and typically small apartments used only as storage and bedroom.

is more social than spatial, it is constituted by ‘the set of individual activities of people, or the accumulation of devices that trigger a set of activities’ (Ito as cited in Sand 2013: 32). The concept of *kaiwai* characterised Japanese urbanism through ways in which ordinary people appropriate space spontaneously and the kinds of places that accommodate and lend themselves to this spontaneous appropriation (Sand 2013).

Such places are customary in downtown areas of traditional Tokyo districts (Bunkyo, Arakawa, Taito, Sumida and Koto) where the character and overall atmosphere remains relatively unchanged despite damage caused by major historic disasters such as the Kanto Earthquake in 1923 and the Second World War, and despite relentless industrialization and modernisation of the city. The atmosphere of Edo is still present in these districts where Japanese historic landscape and cityscape continue to be preserved and maintained. Their main quality is in an overall network of narrow streets, paths and footways; the spaces for (individual) interactions where everyday life occurs and expresses itself; they are a boundary between past and present and the space that continues to exist as mental space and an alternative landscape of reminiscence (Imai 2013).

The research was set in the Taito Ward, a typical downtown precinct in the centre of the *shitamachi*. Taito is the smallest ward in central Tokyo, covering only 10.11 square kilometre, and the third smallest in a population with 197,977 residents, as of 1 May 2018 (Taito Ward 2018). Population density is 19,582 persons per square kilometre. The location is significant due to its central location since the Meiji Restoration (1868) when Edo’s name was changed to Tokyo and it became the capital of Japan (Figure 2).<sup>11</sup>

On one hand, it is a dynamic ward, with various industries (i.e. manufacturing, wholesale and retailing) and numerous small and medium enterprises. Such enterprises were, and remain, bearers of a slow-paced life style: most of the buildings accommodate small businesses, and the second floor still tends to be used as a living space with no separation between the dwelling and working places. However, the number of such establishments has decreased; as have the number of employees. The declining birth rate and problems associated with an aging society have caused discontinuation of successors, and affected the population of the Ward (Taito Ward 2018). The ratio of younger people to the total population is constant while the proportion of elderly residents is gradually increasing.<sup>12</sup> An increasing number of high-rise buildings and the constant influx of people also affect the pace of life and traditional patterns of engagement with the environment.

On the other hand, the location of Taito is distinctive because some of the most visited tourist spots are in its immediate vicinity (Figure 2). Asakusa area with 1400-year-old Sensoji

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<sup>11</sup> For disambiguation: the Edo Period is the period between 1603 and 1868 and Edo City’s name was changed to Tokyo in 1868 when it became capital of Japan and the Emperor as well as the seat of Government moved from Heian-Kyo (modern Kyoto).

<sup>12</sup> Based on the records from 2009 to 2013, the trend of long-term population decline will continue, as will a smaller birth rate and aging population. However, in Taito, the number of residents will continue to increase because of the influx of people, both foreigners and Japanese. It is expected to reach 200.000 by 2024 (source: Taito Ward 2018).



Temple, Tokyo Skytree,<sup>13</sup> (the tallest building in Tokyo and the second tallest tower in the world) and busy Akihabara station and its shopping district specializing in electronic goods (considered to be an *otaku* hotspot)<sup>14</sup> are all within walking distance. Ueno Park, which is located in Taito Ward as well, is the second biggest urban park in Tokyo and the most visited in Japan. It is home to various museums (Tokyo National Museum, National Museum of Nature and Science, National Museum of Western Art, Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, Shitamachi Museum) and other cultural facilities. The majority of public spaces in the Taito Ward are near these busy and bustling landmarks.

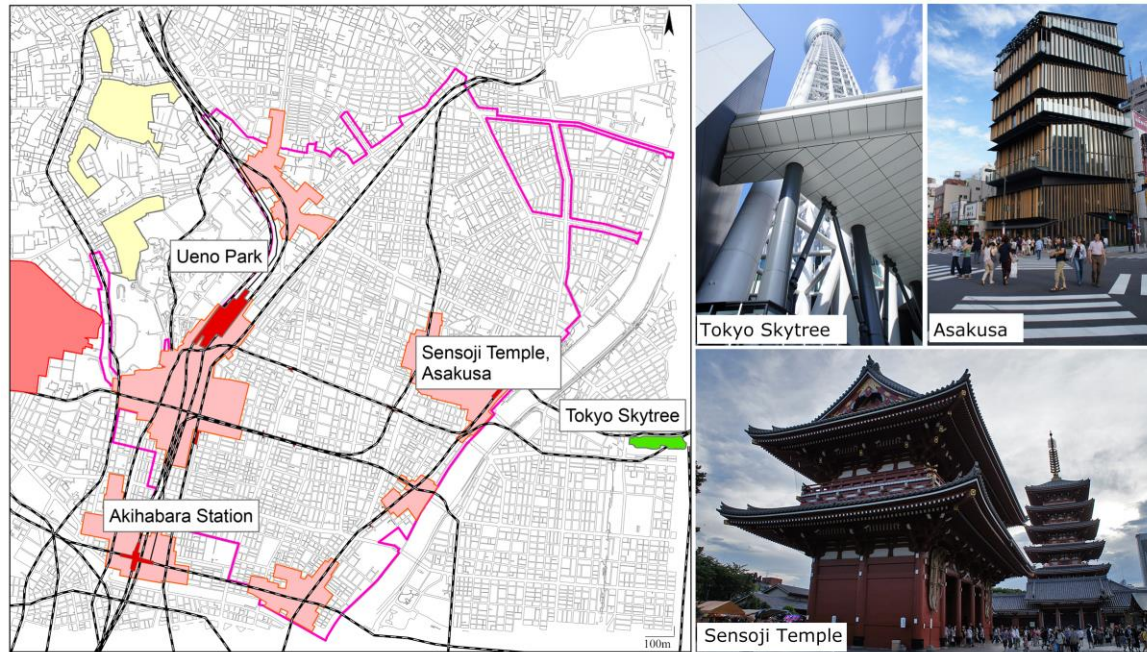


Figure 2. Big Taito. Left image: Map with the position of the Landmarks. Right images, Landmarks: (A) Tokyo Tower; (B) Asakusa Tourist Center; (C) Sensoji Temple (Source: Vedrana Ikalovic).

This friction (between small, slow, permanent and big, fast, temporary) makes the ward unique. It is the place where ‘bigness’ and ‘smallness’ meet the dynamics of constant physical transformation. Taito is big, Taito is small and Taito is (constantly) ‘under construction’.

## Methodology

Chaplin writes, ‘[...] social scientists who are also skilled photographers aim to produce images which have both documentary reach and aesthetic quality, these can — in combination with verbal text — generate a type of social science understanding which is very rich [...]’ (2002: 179). Scientific disciplines, like cultures, are not static but dynamic entities, continuously changing and developing (Pardo and Prato 2016). One of the fundamental

<sup>13</sup> Three and a half years after opening, Tokyo Skytree was visited by 20 million people. Source: <https://japantoday.com/category/national/tokyo-skytree-visitors-top-20-million-3-12-years-since-opening> [accessed 18.05.2017]

<sup>14</sup> *Otaku* is a Japanese term for people with obsessive interests, commonly in *anime* and *manga*.



components of cultural (also sociocultural and urban) anthropology is ethnographic fieldwork that usually includes participant observation and interviews. Ethnographic methods, however, include a range of other research techniques and approaches. Among them, visual methods are commonly used in studies to document various aspects of contemporary urban settings. Visual methods have been marginalized as being subjective and unreliable but since the 1980s images have started to become acknowledged, accepted and regarded as a meaningful element of ethnographic work (Niskac 2011, Pink 2013). Knowles and Sweetman (2004) provide an elaborate genealogy of visual methods through the use of photography and numerous texts reflect upon them (for example, Spencer 2010, Margolis and Pauwels 2011, Krase 2012, Banks and Zeitlyn 2015).

Commonly, subjects of photographs in urban settings are people and their behaviours observed in relation to others and the environment (Whyte 1980, Gehl 2011). In this research, photographs were used as a form of data to identify the intersections between people and their environment and to illustrate the general from the particular. Through the inventories of static characteristics and properties, the photographic images served as points of access to the social world, which they also archived (Knowles and Sweetman 2004).

Walking, as a metaphor for reading (De Certeau 1984), remains the best way to capture the contents of daily life placed in shared spaces (like extended homes). Street observation in Taito Ward started as study of ‘inexplicable protuberances and concavities connected to buildings and streets in the city, which, while purposeless, have been beautifully preserved’ (Sand 2013: 88). The streets of the ward’s commercial area (classified in Japan as ‘urban roads’) were photographed during five consecutive days in July 2016. The routes were mapped and recorded in order to geo-reference the photographs.<sup>15</sup> Taito’s 3-chome block,<sup>16</sup> with the highest number of urban artefacts, was then selected for the final stage of this research. The gathered visual data was used for interpretation and definition of spatial characteristics of intimate spaces. The intimacy of shared spaces was explored through the presence of elements commonly kept and used inside the house, in the privacy of the home (Collier Jr 1995). Focusing on daily domestic activities (Ahrentzen et al. 1989; Oseland and Donald 1993), the elements were defined through their placement in rooms of an archetypal house plan, such as living room, dining room and bathroom (Monteiro 1997). Figure 3 includes a complete list of urban artefacts, rooms of an archetypal house plan, examples of solitary play, and attributes of the home, which lead to the definition of types of intimate places and their characteristics.

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<sup>15</sup> With the ‘Map My Walk’ application, available on AppStore and GooglePlay.

<sup>16</sup> In Japanese Ku is a ward, Chou is a district, Chome is a block. [translated by the author]

URBAN ARTEFACTS	ROOMS OF AN ARCHETYPAL HOUSE PLAN	SOLITARY PLAY	ATTRIBUTES OF HOME	TYPES OF INTIMATE PLACES	CHARACTER OF INTIMATE PLACES
waterpipes basins buckets baskets brooms	storage attic garage	handicrafts  gardening	efficiency   convenience comfort	maintenance storage utilities	utilitarian
toys	hall balcony	flower arranging  hobbies		arrangement decoration painting	decorative
umbrellas flowerpots	kitchen living room bathroom bedroom	collections	privacy intimacy		
table chairs					
washing machine laundry clothespins clotheslines hangers					

Figure 3: List of Urban Artefacts, Rooms, Solitary Play and Attributes of Home, and Types and Character of Intimate Spaces (elaborated by Vedrana Ikalovic).

The focus of visual analysis is on the intended purpose of private possessions and, despite the capability of photographs to generate multiple meanings, the ambiguity of meaning between picture maker and picture viewer is therefore diminished (Barthes 1978, Hall 1966).

The spatial characteristics of the surroundings (such as the scale of buildings, their functions, characteristics of paths and walkways, etc.) were then imported as factors into a GIS. The clusters of places that accommodate small buildings along narrow streets within the Commercial Land Use of Taito Ward were mapped with a Hotspot Analysis tool, which calculates the Getis-Ord  $G_i^*$  statistic where features with either high or low values cluster spatially. Finally, results of the qualitative and quantitative analyses were compared and discussed.

### Analysis and Discussion

The urban roads and buildings on their sides create diverse ambiances and afford different types of activities.<sup>17</sup> But despite an apparent intensity, the quality and meaning of the

<sup>17</sup> Urban roads in Japan are functionally classified into main arterial roads (primary distributor), arterial roads (district distributor), sub-arterial roads (local distributors) and access roads. Main arterial roads (primary distributor) give priority to automobile transport for regional and intercity services over long distance; arterial roads (district distributor) form the basic urban structure and provide services for major intra-urban traffic between the city and adjacent area; sub-arterial roads (local distributors) provide services to the generating traffic to/from arterial roads; and access roads which form the urban block and provide direct access services to/from building sites (JICA 2007).

activities that take place in main or arterial roads are low comparing to those on paths, and footways. Even if there is no apparent activity in those areas, objects and elements are ever-present, as their trace and evidence.

From the viewpoint of the concept of play in public space, people spend most of their time on the smallest of streets. Given the number of artefacts and their character, these places are considered to be the most personal and the most intimate open places in Taito and they are the places of play that accommodate solitary play (arranging, gardening, collection etc.) without exception.

### *The results of visual analysis*

While all four types of urban roads exist in Taito Ward, the most significant in terms of presence of urban artefacts are alleyways. On Taito-3-chome block specifically, a significant number of photographed urban artefacts are distributed along the paths and footways (or rather within shared intimate spaces), and hidden among the clusters of characteristic low-rise buildings. According to the activities, they are a result of the spaces that accommodate urban artefacts. These are divided into two categories, utilitarian (purpose-ful) and decorative (purpose-less). Both categories simultaneously derive from, and accommodate, solitary play and are thus mostly private; while only some of them afford informal social play (joking, parties, and leisure). The main differences between the proposed categories are: (1) utilitarian places accommodate but do not actually afford activities while decorative ones do (especially those of arrangement) and (2) utilitarian places are less intimate than decorative places.

Urban artefacts and their characteristics are visually presented in Figure 4 and transactions between the subject and object are further elaborated within each category.



Figure 4: Urban artefacts (elaborated by Vedrana Ikalovic)

Utilitarian (or purpose-ful) places are places that support utilitarian, practical actions and those that afford and accommodate movement (hobbies, handicrafts, flower arrangement,

maintenance, etc.). Three types of utilitarian places are recognized: places for storage (keeping items), places for maintenance, and extrapolated fragments of home (domestic devices kept and used out of the dwelling). Places for storage and maintenance are commonly located along the paths connected to the access roads, while fragments of home are inside the block, along the narrowest paths.

(a) Storage or ‘place to store’ is defined as a common space where people keep useful objects, tools, equipment and other small items commonly stored in a garage or attic. Sometimes they stockpile furniture or industrial machinery in commercial areas and small houses. Two types of storage were defined according to their relationship with the building: vertical storage (attached to the façade of the building) and horizontal storage (on the ground). The vertical objects were distributed in form of shelves and horizontal ones were divided into compartments. Solitary activities related to storage of handicrafts. Because of the items they stored, attributes of home that are attached to it are privacy, efficiency and comfort.

(b) ‘Place for maintenance’ is a common space equipped with elements used for cleaning and maintenance of public spaces. They accommodate small basins with water pipes, buckets and brooms; and are designed and planned in recent apartment buildings as well as in older buildings. In some cases, they were designed as small cleaning units and in others they were subsequently attached to the house. Spatially, they are on the private property but, depending on the size of lot, the leftover of the building footprint and its connection to the street, they are used for the cleaning of public space too. Inside the house these elements are commonly kept in a bathroom or in storage. Solitary activities related to maintenance are flower arranging (watering flowers) and characteristics of home attached to it are efficiency and comfort.

(c) ‘Extrapolated fragments of the home’ are utilities and appliances commonly kept in a hallway or in the bathroom (such as washing machines and shoeboxes). In some cases, they are planned and designed to be kept and utilized outside in a supporting infrastructure. This is common for group (or collective) housing and, in this case, elements are accessible from the ground level, but are elevated and separated from the street. Activities that take place in those areas create a home-like atmosphere (doing the laundry for example). Attributes of home attached to the ‘extrapolated fragments of home’ are intimacy, privacy, and efficiency. Visually, with the abundance of residents’ personal belongings (in this case hangers, clotheslines, clothespins etc.), the cityscape becomes appealing and lively.

Decorative (or purpose-less) spaces are those for hobbies such as gardening, arranging or decorating, handicrafts, and painting. All three concepts that reveal lifeworld — movement, rest and encounters — are associated with them. Purpose-less actions afford social activities, interaction, and they change visual features of the place.

(a) ‘Arrangements’ are ambiances with furniture (or improvised furniture) that afford socializing and usage (by others, including passers-by). They complement social activities lacking in other public spaces (stationary activities such as sitting, talking, etc.). In some cases, they are extensions of small shops or restaurants. Whether publicly or privately owned these small public spaces create local atmosphere and abound with personal belongings and

objects with meanings. Chairs and tables with flower-vases and paintings on walls are elements usually kept in a living room or kitchen (Figure 1). Furthermore, because of the spatial characteristics they can accommodate only a small number of people, which creates an intimate atmosphere. Physical attachment to the dwelling and interaction with owners adds to the domestic feeling. Solitary activities that take place in those ‘open living rooms’ are flower arranging, socializing and hobbies. Attributes of home associated with them are those of comfort and intimacy.

(b) ‘Decoration’ is a collection of various decorative items in shared space without specific use, left at the visitors’ disposal: a form of transaction or an exchange between the residents and observer. In a spatial sense, a collection of small items is usually attached to the building and situated close to the openings (doors and windows), sometimes to the fences and placed on the flowerpots or even air conditioners. Those ambiances are results of hobbies and arranging. Commonly, these decorative elements can be found in all rooms.

(c) ‘Painting’ is an action of changing the façade and changing the two-dimensional image of the place. It is an artistic expression, or self-expression, often noticeable from a distance. Similar to decorating, it is subjective play that does not afford further use. Spatially, it is two-dimensional, ‘flat’, and adds to the architecture and aesthetic appeal of the place, which contributes to its identity and authenticity. Solitary activities necessary for the creation of those ambiances are handicrafts. Inside the home these activities commonly take place in a hobby room (if existing) or in a garage. Paintings are usually applied to shutters or walls therefore this kind of activity is rarely possible inside the house.

Following the analysis and classification of urban artefacts, spatial characteristics of ambiances that accommodate them were analysed. The focus was on the relationship between the alleyways and buildings surrounding them.

Figure 5 shows the network of paths and footways and height of the buildings they are attached to. The urban artefacts are present in all paths, but the level of privacy is changing with the scale: the smallest and narrowest paths accommodate the most intimate personal belongings usually kept in bathroom or bedroom (such as laundry, slippers, etc.) while access roads accommodate useful objects kept in garage or storage (such as buckets, brooms or tools).





Figure 5: Paths and Footways in Taito 3-chome that accommodate personal belongings (elaborated by Vedrana Ikalovic).

From the visual analysis of intimate spaces, it is concluded that:

- The intimate shared spaces occur along the paths and footways that are within blocks, elevated and separated from urban roads.
- Personal belongings are left and arranged within clusters of detached low-rise buildings along the border between the path and the building or between the clusters of buildings.

The combination of these two types of elements (narrow paths and low-rise buildings) is denominated as ‘clusters of smallness’.

### *Spatial analysis in GIS*

In order to map ‘clusters of smallness’ in GIS, a Hotspot Analysis tool, which calculates the Getis-Ord  $G_i^*$  statistic where features with either high or low values cluster spatially, was applied. The tool operates by examining each feature within the context of neighbouring features. A feature with a high value is interesting but may not be a statistically significant hotspot — to be a statistically significant hotspot a feature will have a high value and be surrounded by other features with high values as well. Features in the  $\pm 3$  bins reflect statistical significance with a 99% confidence level; features in the  $\pm 2$  bins reflect a 95%



confidence level; features in the  $\pm 1$  bins reflect a 90% confidence level, and the clustering for features in bin 0 is not statistically significant. In Figure 6 the hot spots (light grey) and cold spots (black) reflect statistical significance with a 99% confidence level ( $\pm 3$ ) and the clustering for features depicted in grey colour is not significant.

Two clusters were significant in Taito (Figure 6). The clusters of Taito 3-chome block that were observed and studied with the application of visual methods were clusters with 99% confidence levels. Application of the software is therefore useful for the recognition of potentially significant intimate spaces and clusters of buildings that afford appropriation places that accommodate activities and solitary play. An identical analysis could be applied to other Tokyo wards (at the ward scale), in order to identify places with similar qualities. Furthermore, it would be possible to input additional spatial characteristics as factors (such as the height of the buildings, length of the sidewalks, buildings footprints, and so on) to refine the results. Depending on morphological characteristics of concrete wards, the analysis would be done at the ward scale, or at the finer scale of individual blocks and clusters.<sup>18</sup>

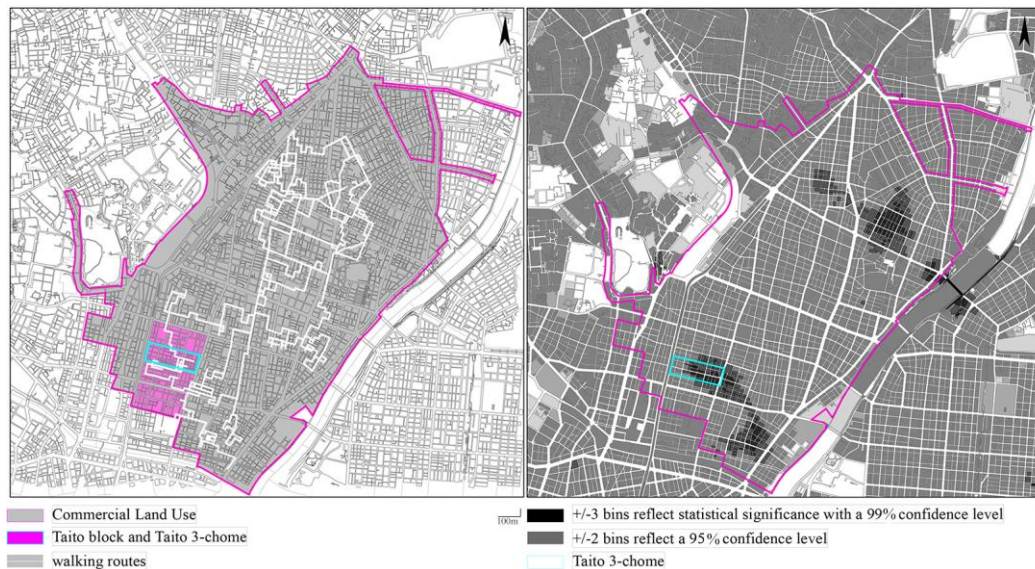


Figure 6: Results of Observation (left illustration) and results of Hotspot Analysis (right illustration) (elaborated by Vedrana Ikalovic).

## Summary and Conclusion

As we walk through the narrow paths and footways, where the smallness and slow pace of life coexist next to the images of constant transformations, dramatic physical change and the large size of the most visited tourist attractions, the abundance of belongings exposed to our sight tests our sense of comfort. We are constantly crossing an invisible border between belonging and not belonging. These places of interaction between self and other, between subject and

<sup>18</sup> Sizes of Tokyo Wards vary significantly. As an example, Setagaya ward covers 58.08km<sup>2</sup>, its population is 900,095, density is 14,414.34. It is approximately five times bigger than Taito in both area and population.

object, and between the individual and their physical environment were explored in this research from an urban perspective, with the application of theories of play and activity.

As a distinct downtown area with a strong dual character, the Taito ward and its intimate places were explored with the application of visual methods. Photographs were used for the analysis and study of meaning and purposes of personal belongings extrapolated from the intimacy of home into the public realm. The intimate spaces defined from the data collected in the Taito 3-chome block are divided into (1) utilitarian (purpose-ful) places that support but do not afford activities and solitary play, and (2) decorative (purpose-less) places that accommodate solitary play and, in some cases, socializing. Within utilitarian places are 'places to store', 'places for maintenance' and 'extrapolated fragments of home' and within decorative places are those of 'arrangement', 'decoration' and 'painting'. Spatially, both utilitarian and decorative places are physically attached to low-rise buildings and set out in leftover places, between the footprint of the buildings and narrow paths next to it. Combinations of these two characteristics were denominated as 'clusters of smallness' and were used for a Hot Spot analysis in GIS, which recognizes features within the context of neighbouring features. The two sets of data were then overlapped and it was evident that clusters of low-rise buildings with small footprints identified in GIS were those with the highest number of personal belongings identified by observations. It is, therefore, possible to recognize and select areas and blocks with the potential to afford solitary play and activities with the application of software.

In Tokyo, a city where movement and speed of life are challenging traditional definitions of engagement and place attachment, these spatial conditions have an irreplaceable value. They afford opportunities for encounters and complement existing socializing public spaces of the Ward. Furthermore, residents directly participate in the creation of 'charming' and 'beautiful' cityscape both individually and as a group through their habitual actions. However, places with a high number of urban artefacts are those that are under the threat of urban redevelopment as space for new high-rise offices and residential complexes increasingly appear inside the remaining *shitamachi* neighbourhoods.

This research highlights the complexity, feasibility and importance of ethnographic visual studies in contemporary urban settings that help us understand our urban world (Pardo and Prato 2016). Qualitative and quantitative methods are seen as complementary and the proposed methodology suggests how to embed intangible spatial qualities of fragile urban environments into regulatory and executive documents. It positions the quality of the urban environment ahead of economic growth (or, at least, next to it) in a technologically oriented environment and metropolis, which is essentially unsustainable. Urban dwellers, as social agents, are recognized as bearers of (cultural) sustainability through the creation and modification of their spaces (Krase 2012, Sorensen 2009). Their active, but informal, participation is one way to move towards desired spatial qualities and tolerance of already existing meaningful environments.

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## ***Localized Migrant Communities in the Absence of Ethnic Neighbourhoods: A Glimpse into Moscow's Ethnic Cafés<sup>1</sup>***

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This article addresses the question of whether one can speak of localized migrant communities in contexts without ethnic neighbourhoods. While recognizing that space plays an important role for the emergence and sustenance of migrant communities, we argue that the conventional neighbourhood-based understanding of localized migrant communities limits the research's potential and instead suggest shifting the focus to prevalent elements of migrant infrastructure; in particular, to ethnic cafés and restaurants. In an attempt to elucidate the vague term of a migrant community, we conceptualize it as densely tied fragments of social networks. The discussion draws on fieldwork in Moscow, a city that attracts significant migration flows from post-soviet republics, as well as from other regions of Russia, but has no ethnic neighbourhoods. The ethnographic study of migrant communities in ethnic cafés demonstrates how such localized migrant communities function and maintain themselves and what implications this spatial boundedness has for social relations. The article thus returns to a spatial understanding of migrant communities, but offers ways to avoid the 'dead-end' of neighbourhood-based research and strives to lay out ways through which to combine spatial and network-centred approaches. In so doing, and together with addressing an under-researched post-soviet context, the discussion contributes to current debates within urban anthropology and migration studies.

**Keywords:** Localized migrant communities, ethnic neighbourhoods, ethnic cafés, Moscow, Russia.

### **Introduction**

Localized migrant or ethnic communities have been an important subject for both migration studies and urban anthropology. Both fields were formed under the influence of the Chicago School of Human Ecology, which conceived of a city as consisting of neighbourhoods populated by specific social groups (Park 1915). The Chicago School scholars observed the formation of segregated monoethnic neighbourhoods — 'Little Italys' and 'Chinatowns', where newly arrived migrants settled in close proximity to their co-ethnics in areas that provided them with opportunities to live, work and satisfy other needs. This understanding of migrant communities was reinforced by the initiation and development of urban anthropology: looking to adapt ethnographic methodologies to the spatial complexity and heterogeneity of the urban setting, many anthropologists, who were accustomed to working in rural areas, turned to neighbourhood-based research as a means of circumscribing the field of their inquiry (Prato and Pardo 2013). Neighbourhood-centricity in migrant community research remained influential for several decades.

In 1981, Caroline Brettell published an essay that described her experience of studying Portuguese migrants in two cities, Toronto and Paris. Trained as an anthropologist, she sought a 'Little Portugal' in both locations and was successful in finding one in Toronto but not in Paris. She puzzled over the question of whether the Portuguese in Paris could still be considered a community: settled across Paris, they neither had well-developed associations nor maintained strong co-ethnic personal networks. The question remained without a clear answer, but her

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essay was emblematic of the problems faced by migration scholars at the time: there was a growing literature documenting disperse migrant settlement (Chacko 2003, Skop and Li 2005, Johnston et al. 2008, Avenarius 2009), which challenged a conventional neighbourhood-based understanding of migrant communities and raised the question of whether the dispersed settlement of migrants meant they in fact no longer formed a community *stricto sensu*. This called for the necessity of revising the concept of a migrant community, but did not lead to a serious scholarly discussion and a migrant community became a rather vague concept. Some scholars still use it as a synonym for an ethnic neighbourhood (Pong and Hao 2007, Smajda and Gerteis 2012), others see a community through the lens of various organizations and events (Van Tran 1987, Weibel-Orlando 1999), while still others use it to signify all migrants of the same ethnic identification or origin living in a receiving city or state, no matter how dispersed or concentrated they may be and irrespective of how they are connected to one another, if at all (Stanger-Ross 2006, Tsai 2006, Chaichian 2008). A number of authors use the term with several meanings (Zhou and Li 2003, Fennema 2004) or else do not provide a definition, taking the category ‘ethnic community’ for granted (Menzies et al. 2007, Cerezo and Chang 2012). An alternative approach that has gained increasing traction among migration scholars, however, entails a network understanding of community (Markowitz 1992, Winters et al. 2001). It stems from the work of community scholars who aimed at ‘liberating a community from the space’ (Webber 1963; Wellman and Leighton 1979) and at establishing a distinction between community and neighbourhood (Everitt 1976). Studying a community with this approach entails looking at a ‘structure of primary ties’ (Wellman 1979: 1207), independent of their localization.

Following this logic of ‘freeing’ the concept of community from a spatial basis, Zelinsky and Lee proposed heterolocalism as a model that refers to ‘populations of shared ethnic identity which enter an area from distant sources, then quickly adopt a dispersed pattern of residential location, all the while managing to remain cohesive through a variety of means’ (1998: 281). Parallel to this, migration scholars coined the expression ‘transnational community’, as sustained by new technologies of communication and transport (Levitt 2001, Vertovec 2004, Basch et al. 2005, Levitt and Jaworsky 2007). With the advent and development of the Internet, research into online migrant communities has expanded (Navarrete and Huerta 2006, Komito 2011, Schrooten 2012). Space, it seems, has lost much of its significance for the concept of a migrant community.

However, there are two arguments against an entirely ‘spaceless’ conceptualization of a migrant community. The first concerns a recent twist in the field of community studies: as Bradshaw argues (2008), space still matters, at least for specific kinds of communities, as propinquity may allow certain transactions to be settled at a lower cost — and even, in some cases, to occur at all. Spatial concentration and mutual economic activities are features of an ethnic enclave (Portes and Manning 1986). Neighbourhood-based social networks are shown to influence the trajectories of youth (Galster and Killen 1995). Secondly, migrant infrastructure plays an important role in fostering migrants’ connections that, in turn, function as a basis for migrant networks (Drucker 2003, Bunmak 2011, Ferrero 2002). Migrant infrastructure, which

is run and attended by migrants, almost necessarily appears in newly-adopted locales and can be tied to ‘migrant neighbourhoods’ or function within ethnically diverse districts of the city. One of the first and most common types of such infrastructure is ethnic cafés and restaurants (Gitmez and Wilpert 1987, Drucker 2003).

We consider these two arguments significant enough to revisit the discussion of localized migrant communities, which has not happened so far in migration studies. To move beyond the hackneyed discourse of localized migrant communities as ethnic neighbourhoods, we address this issue in the research context of Moscow, a city that has significant migration flows but no ethnic neighbourhoods. We discuss the results of our ethnographic study of migrant communities in ethnic cafés looking at how these localized migrant communities function and maintain themselves and at the implications of this spatial boundedness for social relations. The analysis contributes to the field of migration and urban studies, as it addresses issues within the as yet under-researched post-soviet context.

### **The Research Context**

Russia is now considered the main receiving country in the post-soviet migration system (Ivakhnyuk 2012, Brunarska et al. 2014) which formed after the collapse of the USSR. It offers a visa-free regime of travel. Since the Russian ‘oil boom’ of the 2000s, the lion’s share of migration is of an economic nature. The Central Asian states are the main countries of origin of migrant workers. In 2017, among the 4.8 million foreign citizens in Russia who officially declared work to be their purpose of entry, around 3 million were from three countries: Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan (Main Directorate<sup>3</sup> 2018). The strongest magnet for both international and internal migration in Russia is its capital, Moscow (Mkrtchyan and Karachurina 2014, Mkrtchyan 2015, Main Directorate 2018). In 2017, out of a total population of almost 12 million, around 3 million foreign citizens were registered in the city, 1.7 million of whom declared work to be their purpose of entry (Main Directorate 2018). Annually, Moscow attracts about one fifth of all international migrant workers coming to Russia (Florinskaya et al. 2015). In spite of hosting a large number of ethnic migrants — both internal and international — Moscow has no ethnic neighbourhoods (Vendina 2004), which is explained by its heritage of Soviet urban structures and institutions that aimed at social mixing along different axes (Demintseva 2017).

### **The Research Design**

The discussion is based on ethnographic work conducted in two types of migrant communities in Moscow. The first addresses communities of migrants from Samarkand, Uzbekistan, focusing on five ethnic cafés in three locations. The second concerns an Islamic community and focuses on two cafés close to one of Moscow’s mosques, in an area that has a high concentration of Muslim infrastructure. The results described in this article are part of a five-month qualitative project that entailed a study of 80 ethnic cafés in Moscow based on

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<sup>3</sup> This is short for ‘Main Directorate for Migration Affairs of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia. Statistical Information on the Migration Situation’.

observation and interviews with the owners, workers and visitors.<sup>4</sup> Each of the two authors worked in one type of migrant community, which resulted in 50 hours of ethnographic work and 16 journal entries. This type of fieldwork can be referred to as a series of ethnographic case studies (Fusch et al. 2017). In each café, the researchers developed contacts with the owners or managers who served as gatekeepers. These relationships — together with regular visits — provided the basis for the fieldwork.

The cafés were considered ‘ethnic’ if they satisfied three conditions: 1) provision of ethnic cuisine; 2) presence of ethnic migrants among visitors (at least, at certain times or with some level of regularity); 3) presence of ethnic migrants among the café’s workers. During the project, we mainly focused on migrants who typically face the most xenophobic attitudes in Russia; specifically, international migrants from Central Asia and Transcaucasia and internal migrants from the Northern Caucasus (Mukomel 2014). Interviews were conducted with migrants irrespective of the length of their stay in Moscow and independent of their citizenship status. Following a network approach, in this study we define a community as a portion of a social network that possesses a high density of ties. To understand network density, we paid attention to the level of acquaintance between visitors at cafés, which was expressed through greetings, handshakes and conversation ‘at the table’. We also asked our informants about the people they know in a given café, how they came to know each other and how they interact. Following this logic, not every ethnic café was deemed a base for a community.

In what follows, we harness the potential of comparative ethnography describing two types of café-based migrant communities in Moscow and providing details on the nature of the ties they involve, how they are structured and function. Being based on different grounds, each allows for a delineation of the main principles of localized migrant communities’ maintenance and brings to the fore the complex relations between ‘communities as networks’ and ‘space’.

## Research Results

### *Communities of Migrants from Samarkand*

Samarkand is a city in Uzbekistan which, as a consequence of the complexities of both pre- and Soviet Central Asian history, is considered to be one of the main centres of Tajik culture (Abashin 2002). Among its inhabitants — and consequently among those who migrate to Moscow — there are significant numbers of both Tajiks and Uzbeks. Mechanisms of chain migration (MacDonald and MacDonald 1964) contribute to the formation of communities of Samarkandians in Moscow. We will show how these homeland-rooted communities — localized in special Samarkand cafés — function. For our study of communities of migrants from Samarkand, we chose three sites in Moscow: 1) a café in a marketplace located in the southwest of Moscow; 2) three cafés in a marketplace located in the northwest of Moscow; 3)

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<sup>4</sup> This project was carried out in January-June 2013 in cooperation with MSSSES (the Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences) as part of a course on ‘Qualitative methods in sociology’. Alongside the authors, the project participants were A. Alkhasov, E. Belan, E. Bik, P. Dyachkina, M. Erofeeva, E. Kiselev, S. Kukol, M. Motylkov, A. Muradyan, I. Napreyenko, K. Puzanov, K. Smolentseva and Professor I. Steinberg.

a café in a commuter residential district in the northwest of Moscow. The communities around these three spots are weakly connected with each another, since visitors to these cafés remain strongly connected with one Region or a district of Moscow; there, within those bounds, they conduct their life.

### Communities' Structure

Each of the three communities has a 'core', which contains the closest, most frequent and most intensive ties, and a 'periphery', where the ties are weaker (for example, people who visit irregularly or rarely). The core consists of Samarkandians whose native tongue is Tajik, but who also speak Uzbek. This marginal position allows the core to be 'kinfolk' to both the Uzbeks from various parts of Uzbekistan, and to the Tajiks, who form the broader periphery of the community.

The 'core' members have influential positions in the cafés. They usually work or live close by and visit these establishments much more frequently — at least once a day — than the 'periphery' community members. They see the café as 'home turf', where they enjoy the benefits of sitting down to relax, carry out negotiations and issue orders — the latter often include special tasks given directly to waiters without involving the café's owners or managers (for example, to buy something from a shop nearby). They are well aware of what is going on in the community and café; thus, during the fieldwork, many of them knew about the study even before their first contact with the researchers. Even though they do not own or run the cafés, they behave as 'majority shareholders' and see the café as an enterprise into which they have put an investment, though not necessarily a monetary one:

When we were discussing how the café had added an awning and some little tables on the street, G. [one of the members of the community's core] said: 'Yeah, I've got some great prospects going on here.' He related how he'd been there since 7:30AM that day, and how each morning he brings the café workers mille-feuilles or some other pastries (journal entry, 05.06.2013).

Such a position allows the 'shareholders' to modify the café's work to meet their own demands, to propose and carry out changes. Thus, 'core' members of a Samarkand community asked the owner of one of the cafés, who was from Chechnya, to take on a certain individual as a cook — one who would need to be paid quite well (by the establishment's standards) — and the owner accepted their request.

Here the usual dish is rice pilaf — they made a special agreement with the café owner to invite a 'well-known pilaf specialist', who takes \$100 a day as his pay. They prepare twenty kilograms of rice, which is enough for a hundred people. Out of that hundred, M. [one of the members of the community's core] knows if not all of them personally, at least all of their faces. At 11:30AM they start serving the pilaf, and by 12:30PM it is's already gone (journal entry, 08.06.2013).

The 'periphery' is essential for the running of the café as a business venture; it provides the necessary volume of orders. Additionally, the periphery provides the geographical footprint of the community, which serves as a means to increase the community's sense of its own

significance and pride based on its resources and ‘sphere of influence’; informants allude to localities outside of Moscow to boast how far away people are ready to go for a specific café. The periphery also offers a potential for growth to the community, since it possesses new resources that may interest the core.

### Community Functionality

The usual pragmatic nature of social networks of migrants in Russia (Brednikova and Pachenkov 2002), with regard to acquiring employment, accommodation and various official documents, holds no relevance for the Samarkand communities currently under discussion. This can be explained by the fact that the communities’ cores consist of individuals from the ‘old’ migration of the 1990s, for whom all such preliminary questions were long ago resolved. Instead, Samarkand communities perform other important functions. They serve as a reference group and as a substitute for a neighbourhood community, and represent ‘Samarkandians in Moscow’.

Samarkand communities include those who have had a common experience that is perceived as deviant among the sending and receiving societies, but which is not uncommon among migrants in Russia. Such an experience becomes a subject of discussion and subsequent ‘normalization’<sup>5</sup> within a migrant community. During the fieldwork there were two paradigmatic examples of such an experience: having two wives (or having stable, long-term though not necessarily formally registered relationships with two women, one in Moscow and one in Samarkand) and refusing to help someone build their career at the marketplace. We found that having a relationship with two women in two countries may be often discussed and both rational and emotional arguments are made in favour of such an arrangement. Alternatively, the matter is not discussed with any seriousness; it is instead couched in jokes. Either way, this situation serves as a means of confirming once again that an individual is not ‘abnormal’. Furthermore, it is also a means for the community to test its uniformity and integrity with regard to personal views and norms.

Another topic of heated discussions, which is characteristic of marketplace-based communities, is helping one’s fellow countrymen to attain high positions quickly (for example, to open their own shops). The currents flowing between Samarkand and Moscow marketplaces have reached a level of saturation in which the upper positions in marketplace hierarchy have become more or less entrenched. Immigration is ‘growing old’, and migrants who came to Moscow long ago and have achieved a certain status are beginning to question the expectations and circumstances imposed by their ‘sending’ society with regard to helping newcomers. In conversations held in the community, the lack of desire to help ‘freshmen’ becomes legitimized through claims that newcomers break the rules of reciprocity and go against the grain of established hierarchy — whereas social control, it would seem, does not always function flawlessly:

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<sup>5</sup> This term was introduced in the 1950s to indicate a principle for service development for disadvantaged groups and later became a theoretical perspective (Wolfensberger et al. 1972, Parker et al. 2002). Here, we use it to refer to the process of a re-evaluation of experiences which were hitherto considered deviant.

Sitting together at the table, G. and N. complained that people had become disrespectful: they would arrive from abroad, say ‘be a father to me, help me out’, then you would help them and in half a year’s time they would no longer even give you the time of day (journal entry, 03.06.2013).

He keeps his nephews in check [...] ‘Because it’s easy for them to go astray here’; if they argue, he reminds them, ‘Where did you come here from? Did you speak Russian then? Who taught you? Who was your teacher?’ (at which point G. grabs at his lips while speaking and acts like he’s ripping them out — a symbolic gesture, as if he were tearing from the lips of his nephews the words that he didn’t like) (journal entry, 05.06.2013).

Communities in cafés serve as neighbourhood communities, which is typical among migrants from Central Asia and hard to find in Moscow. One Friday evening in the café in the northwest was remarkable in that on one of the tables at which the ‘core’ community members were seated, there was a bottle of cognac and homemade little dumplings. The dumplings had been prepared and sent to the café as a gift by the wife of one of the men seated at the table. While it is a usual practice in Central Asia to bring such food gifts to neighbours (Abashin 2015), it is not implied nor always intelligible in ‘Muscovite’ individualistic conceptions of neighbourly relations. Coupled with xenophobia, it sometimes happens that an offering given to one’s neighbour ‘with one’s respects’ is rejected, in which case migrant communities in cafés come to the rescue and act towards the would-be gift giver as fitting ‘neighbours’ who, instead, accept the gift of food.

Communities may take on the representative function of ‘Samarkandians in Moscow’. When official representatives and diaspora organizations are severed from the real people whom they endeavour to represent, communities become noninstitutionalized representatives. This is exemplified by the way in which the café functions as a ‘lost and found’ centre for Samarkandians:

One time a man from Samarkand lost his handbag containing his documents at the airport. The bag was found by a man, also from Samarkand, who brought it to this café. U., through his network of connections, found the owner, reached him on the telephone and returned the passport and automobile registration papers (journal entry, 07.06.2013).

As we have seen, Samarkand communities are a space of symbolic or conceptual safety based on social networks that include people with experiences similar to one’s own, who can help in gaining a foothold and a semblance of ‘normalcy’ and can allow one to function with confidence in relation to others in ways that may not otherwise be possible; for example, in relation to one’s neighbours. Here, space play an important role; communities based in cafés across Moscow do not overlap much; a café’s location close to the workplace (in the case of marketplace cafés) or the place of residence (in the case of café in commuter districts) allows for more frequent visits from migrants who work long hours and have few days-off; thus, it fosters more intense communication and the maintenance of a community.



### *The Islamic Community*

There are several ‘clusters’ of Islamic infrastructure in Moscow, including mosques, prayer rooms, halal food stores, bookshops, cafés, and so on. These places can be either run by official Islamic institutions (connected with the Spiritual Directorate of Muslims in Russia) or appear to have no connection with such institutions. Officially- and unofficially-run ‘clusters’ highly overlap in terms of location. One interesting site is located near one of Moscow’s four mosques, in an area that includes two cafés, a canteen next to the mosque and a restaurant across the road that has a special prayer room. The members of the community spend their time in the canteen, the restaurant and around the mosque (for example, in the mosque’s yard).

Two factors inherent in Islam influence this community’s emergence: practices of coming together as a congregation and the principle of Islamic ecumenism. In accordance with the first factor, believers gather at least once a week for Friday *salat* in a mosque. In keeping with the second factor, an Islamic community is conceptually multi-ethnic; thus, it can include ethnic migrants from various regions of Russia — including post-soviet states — as well as Muscovites.

#### Community Structure

As a result of the aforementioned dynamics, the Islamic community is internally heterogeneous. People enter it from all walks of life, different migration experiences, ethnic identifications, social class and religious views. To what extent are these potential dividing lines reflected in the actual community?

The framework of this community is fashioned by former residents of the eastern part of the Northern Caucasus with widely varying stories of how they immigrated; the typical case, though, consists of having arrived in Moscow from the Caucasus seven to ten years ago. The boundaries between the groups in this Caucasian<sup>6</sup> ‘core’ are traversable. Most groups consisted of individuals from same republic, or from various republics in the North Caucasus. The boundary between them, as the core of the community of migrants from Central Asia, is ‘bright’ (Alba 2005).

For a snapshot of a ‘peripheral’ community member from Central Asia, let us look at a migrant from Kyrgyzstan. Although this man works in the eastern portion of the city, he rents an apartment with other Kyrgyz in the centre, near a mosque, in order to facilitate regular trips there for prayer. He said that it was still early for him to begin associating with others in the mosque because his knowledge of Russian was poor. Informants from the Caucasus mentioned how in their circles there were no migrants from Central Asia because ‘friends are chosen by mindset and each people group has its own’. Additionally, the cafés are attended by a number of migrants from Muslim countries across Africa, including from Sub-Saharan countries like Senegal and Guinea. They form their own special group, with various degrees of integration into the community. A., a migrant from Guinea, goes to the mosque most of all to pray and does not view it as a source of social capital; conversely, U, a migrant from Senegal, uses the mosque

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<sup>6</sup> Hereinafter Caucasian refers to people from the Caucasus.

as to find dependable work and as a location for leisure activities and pastimes:

He's forty-one years old, though he doesn't look it. In 2006, he came to Russia from Senegal and stayed in a university dormitory [...] with others from Senegal. [...] he spends all his free time at the mosque, where he associates with individuals simply on his own initiative, prays, and looks for work. Nearly all the work he has found has been through the mosque. Do they ever scam him out of his money? He did recount one instance, but it involved a Ukrainian not connected with the mosque. Muslims, he believes, don't run scams (journal entry, 24.05.2013).

This case is particularly important since U. had initially relied on his fellow Senegalese in Moscow, but over the course of seven years, his social circles changed, and now they are primarily Muslim and multi-ethnic, and he keeps in touch with their members at the mosque. During our conversation, U. greeted those who came into the café in Russian and then switched to a language the researcher did not recognize, then back to Russian. As it turned out, the second language had been his native tongue; he had taught a greeting in it to one of his Caucasian employers, and thus the researcher was able to witness an exchange of greetings between an Ingush<sup>7</sup> and a Senegalese in the Senegalese's native tongue. Nevertheless, usually, the non-Caucasian migrants tend to be located either at the community's periphery or beyond its bounds, and their use of the mosque as a source of social capital varies significantly. Moreover, among the community members, there are some Russians who have turned to Islam and they form a separate peripheral 'cluster'.

The community is also heterogeneous in terms of 'Islamic sects'. The most evident religious discrepancy is between Salafis and Sufis, reflecting a conflict that is characteristic of Islamic communities across Russia and stems in part from different interpretations of Islam and different attitudes toward religious innovations and past traditions. It also stems from distribution of power, as Sufis are associated with the Spiritual Directorate of Muslims — which officially represents Muslims on the governmental level — while Salafis are considered to be rebels (Varshaver and Starodubrovskaya 2017). Both groups are well represented in the community; most community members, however, are located either somewhere in the middle of this ideological continuum or do not delve into the finer points of theology.

The community attracts a wide variety of individuals, from hired labourers to businessmen of all levels; from 'oligarchs', whose personal motor fleets the café owner describes with gusto, to petty traders. Class boundaries in this community are contextual and far from prominent. At one table, there might be only businessmen if they are conducting affairs. In cases where ethnicity is tied to a particular activity, a social circle may be homogenous according to both criteria. Nevertheless, if individuals know each other and there is a topic up for discussion (religion is the general and most heated topic, judging by the number of conversations about it), then social class ceases to play a role; especially since integration — both social and ethnic — plays an important part in Islamic discourse, according to which the *ummah* must be united. It is this factor that presumably encourages integration and mitigates

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<sup>7</sup> One of the ethnicities of the North Caucasus.

the formation of social boundaries.

### Community Functionality

The Islamic community is a tight, closely-knit one, and it could not be so were it not so functionally effective for its members. We have identified at least three ways in which the community ‘works’ for its members in a positive fashion.

First, the community functions as a labour market. Alongside unofficial conversations related to employment, there is a ‘bulletin board’ where information on job opportunities appears from time to time. Besides more or less formal means of job seeking, the community unites and increases the level of trust among mosque-goers who are connected with each other in their workplace. This creates more opportunities for peripheral community members to be re-hired and to bring along their acquaintances, who thus have a higher chance of being hired.

Second, the community is connected with various charity institutions that help to improve conditions for Muslim migrants who might otherwise ‘go adrift within Moscow’s machinery’. There is an official charity run by the mosque. There are also unofficial charity funds through which mosque-goers can pool their money to provide for those in need. For example, the owner of one of the cafés receives money from people in his circle, which he then uses to feed poor mosque-goers at his café:

X. has several personal friends or acquaintances who chip in so that X. can feed the poor from time to time. [...] And leading up to Eid al-Fitr they try to feed everyone for free every day. [...] the charity efforts are organized through the café ONLY by people who have some close connection with the owner. He says that he’d rather not put up a collection box for sadaqah<sup>8</sup> because then people might claim that he was using the money improperly and he doesn’t want to have to take that responsibility (journal entry, 22.05.2013).

Third, the community embodies the formulation and support of norms and values, which is particularly important for migrants in a context of urban anomie. To maintain the Islamic system of norms, community members talk to each other about God in Islam, retelling the *hadiths* and the *sunnah*, as well as discussing the problems that they encounter in their own lives with an end to interpreting them through the prism of Islam and understanding how to proceed correctly, in accordance with Islam’s guiding principles.

These three functions of the community, when superimposed, lend the community a high level of internal ‘concatenation’, while the Islamic discourses — consistent and effective — multiply this concatenation. This description of the community suggests that space matters: a mosque attracts mosque-goers, who then meet in cafés where informal communication takes place. Contrary to the expected absence of social boundaries in the community according to the *ummah* principle, people form specific subgroups. However, the boundaries are permeable.

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<sup>8</sup> The sadaqah are alms collected and given out according to specific rules.

## Discussion and Conclusion

In this article we have revisited the discussion surrounding migrant communities and have argued that space does play an important role for their emergence and maintenance. We suggest that the concept of localized migrant communities can be used beyond the context of ethnic neighbourhoods as ‘urban villages’ (Krase 1997) in connection with migrant infrastructure and, more specifically, with ethnic cafés and restaurants. This approach allows us to tackle the question of whether we can speak of localized migrant communities in situations without ethnic neighbourhoods.

In line with the existing literature, we concede that the interrelation between migrant communities and migrant infrastructure is not straightforward (Bradshaw 2008); migrant infrastructure can be an economic enterprise (Rath et al. 2017), not always conducive to the formation and maintenance of social ties among migrants (Varshaver et al. 2014). Bearing in mind that not every ethnic café serves as a basis for a migrant community, in this study we have seen two different types of relations between them, depending on who initiated a given café’s emergence. Firstly, communities can organize cafés for themselves. Secondly, café owners can set up their business targeting at specific community. The first type of relation refers to the two market-based Samarkandian cafés, where communities arise at the intersection of corporate and homeland-oriented relations, so that their members, originating from the same city and already acquainted from Uzbekistan, work at the marketplace ‘shoulder to shoulder’. Under the influence of demands for a public catering service, appropriate individuals are found who can create such a business. Interestingly, in these two cafés, the café-businessmen were not the ‘core’ members and were not from Samarkand. The second type of relation refers to the non-marketplace Samarkandian café and the café across the road from the mosque. The non-marketplace Samarkandian café came about as a business venture after its non-Samarkandian owners ‘sifted through’ various target audiences, tried working for the ‘Bukharans’,<sup>9</sup> but in the end ‘seized upon’ the idea of the Samarkand community, which became their target audience instead. The café next to the mosque was set up for mosque-goers by a Muslim businessman who wanted his fellow businessmen to have access to *halal* food, be able to conduct meetings and pray.

Given the complex relations between ethnic cafés and migrant communities and our will to avoid the trap of a simple substitution of an ‘ethnic neighbourhood’ with an ‘ethnic café’, we use a network approach (Wellman 1979, Wellman and Leighton 1979). A network approach towards café-based communities entails a focus on the social ties that connect those who frequently visit a café. The density and intensity of social connections, in turn, imply solidarity, trust, collaborative actions, reciprocity, information exchange and shared norms and values (Weibel-Orlando 1999, Kandori 1992, Portes 1998, Putnam 2000). For many, migration from rural areas in Central Asia, Transcaucasia and the North Caucasus to an urban centre such as Moscow raises challenges that cannot be addressed through a previously-rooted ‘set of norms’ and for which the ‘mainstream core’ of the receiving society (Zhou 1997) does not provide a

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<sup>9</sup> These are migrants from Bukhara, which is another ‘Tajik’ city in Uzbekistan along with Samarkand.

readymade substitution. To deal with these challenges, a café-based community becomes a space for the creation and maintenance of norms and values relevant to the new situations of its members. As this study shows, discussions over ‘complex issues’, whether on the basis of religion or other systems, plays a significant role within communities. From these discussions, we can tell that the norms and values within these migrant communities may differ from both receiving and sending ‘sides’. Even in the case of a highly transnational Samarkand community, it emerges that its café-based fragment separates itself from the Uzbekistan-based one, which contradicts the view of a transnational community as homogenous in terms of norms and values and highlights its conflict-inducing nature (Coe 2011).

The localization of such fragments of social networks in cafés has important implications. First, localization allows for gatherings and, thus, for the strengthening of the existing ties and the emergence of new ones. The cafés under discussion are located either close to community members’ workplaces — as in the case of marketplace-based cafés — or are conveniently located on their everyday routes — as with those close to the mosque. Many members of the community are of an older generation and do not rely much on online communication, preferring instead to come, sit down and talk. This is how they replicate settings from their regions of origin: for migrants coming from Central Asia, where the neighbourhood-based *chaykhana* is a centre of local social life (Kochedamov 1957), a community in a café is a recognizable model. Connected with this, the second implication is that a café-based community can play the role of a local community for migrants who arrive from contexts with developed neighbourhood ties (*mahallah* in Uzbekistan) to a megalopolis that lacks such arrangements. In spite of xenophobic relations towards migrants and the absence of their co-ethnics among Muscovite neighbours due to the city’s dispersed patterns of settlement, migrants strive to reconstitute ‘neighbourhood-like’ ties through their interactions with café-based communities. Thirdly, although these localized communities do not transform into organizations, they perform the function of representing ‘groups of migrants,’ as we have seen in the case of the ‘lost and found’ function of a Samarkand community café. They do so in a context in which diasporic organizations claim their right to represent ‘ethnic groups’ at an official level but in fact have limited interaction with migrants (Varshaver and Rocheva 2014). Consequently, cafés that accommodate migrant communities have the potential to serve as ‘community headquarters’.

Looking at migrant communities as networks that are ‘anchored’ in elements of migrant infrastructure reveals aspects which would not otherwise be seen. A conventional spatial understanding of migrant communities takes ethnic neighbourhoods for granted and becomes lost in a research setting characterized by dispersed migrant settlements. A conventional ‘network understanding’ of migrant communities does not entail a spatial dimension. Instead, we suggest an approach that combines a network research angle and urban ethnography, thus contributing to blurring disciplinary boundaries within the social sciences. Moreover, this approach allows for the consideration of both micro- and macro-dimensions and offers opportunities for developing a multi-sited ethnography. As these issues are widely debated in current urban anthropology (Prato and Pardo 2013, Prato 2016), we believe that the analysis



offered here contributes to the development of the field.

Having demonstrated that ethnic cafés and restaurants are a very convenient entrance point for a researcher seeking localized communities in contexts without ethnic neighbourhoods, we should concede that the choice of elements of the migrant infrastructure can be a limiting factor. Cafés — considered a ‘male’ space by the majority of migrants coming from the regions under study — are attended first of all by men. Female and male social networks do not always overlap (Hagan 1998), therefore a study of female localized communities would require a different element of migrant infrastructure as an entrance point. Similarly, a focus on ethnic cafés would probably not suffice for a study of communities of migrant youth. Clearly, the choice of specific elements of migrant infrastructure is a crucial and defining step for any study within this framework.

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## ***Introduction: On Gentrification***

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Our journal, *Urbanities*, has always been receptive to innovative approaches to urban studies, especially those which increase the value and appreciation of qualitative methods and theory. In this regard, this ‘Special Section’ on Gentrification has an interesting history. It began with the submission to *Urbanities* of a poem about gentrification. At first, my senior co-editor Italo Pardo and I were taken aback but after reviewing Kee Warner’s evocative ‘Back on the Northside by keexote Winter 2018’, we decided to place it firmly within a ‘normal’ social science context by having it preface a selection of equally innovative, short, pieces on the subject. In our second article, Judith N. DeSena criticizes the rapidly growing store of research on gentrification that, unfortunately, continues to ignore the importance of women in the phenomenon. In it she demonstrates the many ways by which the lack of attention to women leaves a large void in understanding both the causes and effects of gentrification. The title of the next contribution by Sarah Siltanen Hosman, more than adequately prepares the reader for its important contents; ‘Allston Christmas: How Local Rituals Reproduce Neighborhood Temporality and Deter Gentrification’. In her photo-enhanced essay, for example, she notes the value of local traditions and practices in neighborhood defense. Our fourth selection, ‘Perceptions of Residential Displacement and Grassroots Resistance to Anchor Driven Encroachment in Buffalo, NY’, is a fine example of ‘normal’ social science research practices. It was crafted by Robert Silverman, Henry Taylor, Li Yin, Camden Miller and Pascal Buggs. One finding from their insightful work was that ‘Residents perceived change brought on by institutional encroachment as relatively unabated and unresponsive to grassroots concerns’. The multimodal ethnographic article which follows by Alberto Rodríguez-Barcón, Estefanía Calo, and Raimundo Otero-Enríquez, ‘Commercial Gentrification in a Medium-Sized City: An Ethnographic Look at the Transformation Process of the Historic Centre of A Coruña (Spain)’, is somewhat of a parallel to Silverman et al, which emphasizes the need to study middle-sized cities and the commonly unstudied potential role of touristic development as an engine of gentrification. Our concluding contribution is a well-constructed, and critical, review of DW Gibson’s *The Edge Becomes the Center: An Oral History of Gentrification in the Twenty-First Century* (2015) by Leonard Nevarez. For Nevarez, the book reminds him of Chicago’s chronicler Stud Terkel’s oral history method, and is ‘Both illuminating and frustrating,’ but ‘... ultimately just one subjective account of gentrification, drawn from an increasingly singular setting, contemporary New York’.

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*Back on the Northside — by keexote, Winter 2018*

**A Poem by Kee Warner**  
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I  
stopped by  
Rosalinda's a few years back  
and her oldest son reminded me  
how we once packed the liquor board hearings  
demanding they shut down the scourge of bullet-ridden nightclubs  
Now that Highland has become Highlands  
there are more liquor licenses than ever, he said,  
I came home the other night and found a drunk guy  
passed out on my front porch  
and the dude was, like, fluently White!  
The future landed  
on the Northside  
like a Kansas farmhouse on Lollipop Land  
Scottish village is a sedimentary layer  
beneath stands of apartment towers  
The sandstone facade of the Tallmadge Building  
is brushed clean and new windows sparkle  
a tea house and yoga center loiter the sidewalk along Zuni

Before Peña imagined a great city  
we planted seeds for new life  
lending out tools and weatherizing  
redrawing zoning lines  
installing new curbs  
Remember the street party  
when low riders and b boys paraded West 32nd...  
We cheered as dozers knocked over  
the broken-down gas station on the corner  
gone were the junkers, chainlinks and dobermans  
but we did not want to push out the old families  
clustered around Our Lady of Guadalupe and Mt. Carmel  
the Capilluppos and Ortegas  
We knew we didn't hold the levers of control  
but thought that someone did  
Then Denver took off

like a sea monster rising out of the deep  
shimmering scales, fire and smoke  
massive tail roping through the wave tops  
laying blocks flat  
reconfiguring at the pace of Pixar

Now I sip IPA in a brewpub of first order on 29th  
Instead of falling up in a vertigo spin  
I look across thirty-five years, thousands of miles  
and it seems as natural as the riffing rock guitar  
strangely become background music

As normal as the young dads with cropped beards  
and striped cotton shirts with their toddlers in tow  
savoring an evening craft beer  
in their neighborhood of choice

The Northside unfolds another chapter  
as real and imaginary  
as each one before.  
Traversing the creative destruction  
of a city on the make  
only a super-sized ego can claim much credit.  
my small role, only a trace  
a singular point of view

like the abandoned flour mill that towered north of the railyards  
where winds blew through unhindered

a solitary, windowless sentinel harboring graffiti Inferno

What endures in my mind and body of memories  
are flavors of tamale and calzone  
voices, scars, faces, and stories

Stretching across and connecting as the old twentieth street  
viaduct once spanned Platte Valley  
gliding above the glint of steel tracks  
Station.

from St. Pats to Chapultepec  
curving toward Union

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## Women and Gentrification: A Call for Further Research

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Research studies on gentrification have focused primarily on social class, race, and ethnicity. Little attention has been given to women and gender. This essay is an attempt to indicate women's power in shaping the urban landscape. In doing so, it examines women's contributions to the process of gentrification, and critiques urban theory for ignoring women. Finally, it reveals that women's discontent with suburban living is a facilitator of gentrification. Women's actions in the process of gentrification require further investigation.

**Keywords:** Gentrification, gender, power, urban feminism, women.

Studies on gentrification have multiplied exponentially in urban studies, but have largely been inattentive to a gender analysis. Some scholars have called for a focus on gender along with race and class (Bondi 1994, 1999 and Lees et.al. 2013 to name a few). This article revisits discussions of women and gentrification, and examines women's struggle for equality, and their relation to the city. Within this context, women's activism is brought to light.

Gender analyses of gentrification are under-represented in scholarship. Researches on gentrification focus mostly on social class with some studies including race and ethnicity. Those which examine gender have come mainly from geography (Lees et.al. 2013; Bondi 1994, 1999; Kern 2010, 2013). Bondi (1994) posits that women favor central residential locations which make possible employment, reduced commuting costs in time and money, and adjustments to gender roles within the family. In direct contrast to the post WWII era, family units are also altered for small family size with few children or no children, enabling the affordability of higher priced housing. This is also supported by a survey of cities in Norway conducted by Hjorthol and Bjornskau in which for women, 'Living in inner parts of the city is convenient for organizing everyday activities' (2005: 363). Bondi also asks,

...insofar as women's preferences are reflected in decisions resulting in gentrification, an important question remains: does the expression and realization of these preferences reinforce, reduce, modify, or leave unaltered existing gender divisions within the home, or in any way encapsulate new conceptions of masculinity and femininity? (2005: 196).

Government, as a component of the political economy, often develops policies to foster gentrification in specific neighborhoods. One example is an investigation of Rotterdam, the Netherlands (Berg 2013). In a deteriorated portion of the city, the plan for revitalization is gentrification. Old housing is replaced with larger, more expensive structures. An appeal is made to young, middle class families, build your own dream house'. The main strategy is to establish a child-friendly city. Research on North Brooklyn's waterfront demonstrates a similar process (DeSena 2009). Local government rezoned the area from industrial to residential. Luxury housing has replaced dormant, decaying factories to create a 'new' community.

Regarding women who work in neighborhoods undergoing gentrification, Kern (2013) investigates the Junction neighborhood in West Toronto and explains that boutique businesses

for middle class women consumers have replaced an urban industrial environment. Women working and possibly living in the Junction find themselves in a precarious position as the neighborhood continues to gentrify. Kern examines how these women mitigate and manage the threat of ongoing gentrification. They present conflicted responses to signs of retail gentrification, and place value on marginality, independent businesses, and mutual care. They formed women-centered, informal networks and filled social service gaps, while remaining sensitive to the likelihood that gentrification will displace small businesses and thus, their own workplaces. These findings raise questions and concerns about the future of women's entrepreneurship.

Women's entrepreneurship was also studied in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Patch (2008) examines street gentrification through 'faces on the street'. These are women entrepreneurs who provide surveillance and foster new relationships 'since a key purpose of a face on the street is to befriend strangers' (p. 109). Unlike Kern's study in which retail gentrification threatened women entrepreneurs, Patch views small businesswomen in Williamsburg as promoters of gentrification, welcoming strangers and serving as friendly representatives of a changing neighborhood. They created quasi-public spaces for women within their storefronts.

Using the lens of local activism, another perspective on women and gentrification is offered. North of Patch's research site is the neighborhood of Greenpoint. Greenpoint has experienced environmental injustices with more of its share of toxic producing industries and environmental polluters. One example is an oil spill from a refinery that leached into the Newtown Creek and flowed into the foundations of the homes of nearby residents. There was obvious concern about diseases and property damage that would result from a failure on the part of the oil company to contain the leak. In their analysis of the community activism that took place around this issue, Hamilton and Curran (2013) indicate how long-term residents 'school' gentrifiers about their long-standing struggle since the 1970s. Attention to the issue from the media and State government came with increasing gentrification. Long-term residents were able to frame the challenges of this problem as a common concern for all residents; this was an attempt to create a coalition among residents regardless of social class and length of residence. The authors declare that long-term residents were successful in their endeavors in that they were able to maintain the working class, industrial, immigrant character of this part of the community, while also moving forward the issue of clean-up. It is concluded that,

In this case study, a committed group of long-term residents and gentrifiers, along with Riverkeeper and elite allies at various government agencies and scales, compensated for each other's imperfections and created a successful 'ecology of agents' (<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0042098012465128>).

My own research has documented various trends of neighborhood stability and change in North Brooklyn which includes gentrification and large-scale development (DeSena 1990, 1999 2005, 2009; Krase and DeSena 2016). Analyzed in these studies are women's informal and formal activism, and their skillfulness at mobilizing the community around issues such as toxins, schools, affordable housing, green spaces, and feeding the poor. These studies examined both working class women and women gentrifiers with each group participating in 'parallel



cultures'. At the same time, regardless of social class, women are the 'switchboard' (Goodman 1989) in neighborhoods. Information comes through them and they strategize and take action.

Yet, these studies are relatively few within the context of the larger field. In fact, it has been argued that there is a 'missing feminist revolution' (Stacey and Thorne 1985) in urban studies. Essays which focus on women and their relation to the city shaped the field of urban feminism. An example is the now classic volume, *New Space for Women* (Wekerle et al. 1980). This compendium of essays addresses a number of topics as they relate to women's lives and women's needs, such as a reconceptualization of housing design for family types other than the nuclear family, and a feminist critique of architecture and urban planning. Around the same time, the journal *Signs* published a special supplement, *Women and the American City* (Stimpson 1981). The volume broadens the discourse and incorporates discussions on women's local participation and spatial constraints.

Moreover, historically, urban theory is a male paradigm. The Chicago School and its tradition is dominated by men and continues to investigate men in the city, as members of the gang (Thrasher 1927), as hobos (Anderson 1923), corner boys and college boys (Whyte 1943), defenders of the neighborhood (Suttles 1968), and blue-collar workers (Kornblum 1974). Even the more recent 'code of the street' (Anderson 2000) emphasizes men's milieus. When women are discussed, they are extensions of the men under study. Community studies which focused exclusively on women are not emphasized. *Sally's Corner* (Presser 1980), for example, follows unmarried mothers in New York City and examines their coping strategies as their responsibilities increased with parenting. Similarly, *All Our Kin* (Stack 1974) and *Norman Street* (Susser 1982) investigate the informal strategies developed by women to address poverty, and how support systems of family and friends play a major role.

As urban theory shifted attention to the political economy, the perspective directs interest and research consideration away from aspects of social life where women are more readily seen. The focal point moves from ordinary people and everyday life to power brokers within growth machines (Logan and Molotch 1987, Gottdiener 2010, Harvey 2010). Even the urban culturalist perspective (Borer 2006) does not give explicit thought to women, even though the paradigm would be appropriate for such research. The activism of ordinary women drops out of view (Jacobs 2016, Naples 2014, Marwell 2009).

Over time, more urban feminists seized the responsibility of investigating women within an urban context. *How Women Saved the City* (Spain 2001) is an example of an historical investigation of the contributions of women in shaping the urban landscape at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The focus is on the creation of 'redemptive places' in which middle class women assisted single women, immigrants, and African Americans adjust to life in urban America. Spain also poses the question to urban scholars, 'What happened to gender relations on the way from Chicago to Los Angeles?' (2002). She critiques the development of urban theory which ignores women. Spain cites the contributions of women to the development of the city. In Chicago, she highlights the settlement work of Jane Addams and Julia Lathrop, and the documents and publications created from their work at Hull House. This movement was given no mention by the Chicago School. As urban theory transitioned to focus on Los Angeles (LA) as a model, the efforts of urban feminists continued to be snubbed. Spain emphasizes the

achievements of Dolores Hayden, architectural historian, and Jacqueline Leavitt, urban planner, both of UCLA. Their contributions were overlooked as the LA School progressed.

In summary, the relative lack of urban research focused specifically on women suggests what Lofland describes as the ‘thereness’ of women (1975). Women are merely ‘there’, part of the scene like window dressing, but not part of the action. The research camera has failed to zoom in on them.

Furthermore, women’s relation to the suburbs is a catalyst of gentrification. The post-World War II era ushered in a major spatial transformation in the U.S. To a large extent it is a period of building highways and bridges leading to suburbs, and presenting one’s success and acquisition of the American Dream by residence in suburbs. A number of factors made suburbanization successful. Developers of suburban communities lured families through advertising campaigns, (<https://www.google.com>) creating the desire for home ownership that offered more private, indoor and outdoor spaces, with trees and grass relative to the city. Driving was also deemed more preferable to taking public transportation in getting around. The financing for suburban homes often came through government mortgage programs for veterans of the War. At the same time, cities were experiencing the migration of Blacks from the South, spurring racial tensions. Within this context, public education in cities was perceived as losing quality. These circumstances lead to massive white flight from cities to suburbs. As an example, New York City lost about a million people between 1970 and 1980 and with them their tax revenue, a factor in creating the fiscal crisis.

The ‘good life’ in the suburbs did not fulfill the dream for all. Feminists, who were college educated and advocates of the Women’s Movement, found themselves raising children in suburban communities. Betty Friedan, author of the classic *Feminist Mystique* wrote in a chapter titled, ‘The Problem that has No Name’,

The problem lay buried, unspoken, for many years in the minds of American women. It was a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning that women suffered in the middle of the twentieth century in the United States. Each suburban wife struggled with it alone. As she made the beds, shopped for groceries, matched slipcover material, ate peanut butter sandwiches with her children, chauffeured Cub Scouts and Brownies, lay beside her husband at night — she was afraid to even ask herself — ‘Is this all?’ (1974: 11).

Her work stirred a national conversation regarding ‘women’s place’.

Urban feminists questioned, ‘Is the bloom off the suburban rose?’ (Fava unpublished). Fava wrote in ‘Women’s Place in the New Suburbia,’

This chapter begins with the premise that suburbs constitute a different environment for women than for men. As geographic extensions of our male-centered society, suburban environments offer a secondary place to women, a place inhibiting the full expression of the range of women’s roles, activities, and interests (1980: 129).

She goes on to indicate how the low density of the suburbs inhibits women's mobility and opportunities in general. Time and distance are features in decision making regarding employment, shopping, and socializing.

Following this and similar feminist critiques of the suburbs, the debate takes a different turn contending that 'Women's Place is in the City' (Wekerle 1984). In this article, Wekerle asserts that urban issues are women's issues. Women's increasing labor force participation created greater demand for amenities and proximity to them which is found in cities. Thus, the suburbs are failed environments in meeting the needs of women. Additionally, she wrote,

Women are a major impetus for the revitalization of North American cities. The dramatic increase in women's participation in the labor force in the seventies has created a new demand for urban housing and for services that can only be found in cities. At the same time, it removes the full-time services of women 'to manage household consumption' (1984: 11).

She goes on to cite economist Eli Ginzberg who asserts that neighborhoods that supported dual-career families are drivers of gentrification and revitalization of the city. Thus, Wekerle's article is early recognition of the influence that women have on the process of gentrification.

It becomes clear from these essays that feminism and changing gender arrangements have been major contributors to population shifts in the urban landscape. Urban feminists acknowledge that suburban living at best limits women and at worst isolates and oppresses them. In making residential choices, many women reject the suburbs and opt instead for living in the city. This is also the case for women with children, regardless of family type. These choices produce a process of gentrification. Preference for city living is further supported through economic restructuring in which work for women is more readily available and more easily accessible in the city.

This essay is an attempt to call for further research on women, as well as additional research on gender, gender relations, and gender identity with regard to the process of gentrification and neighborhood change. It concludes with a quote from a study of women in Barcelona.

Female consciousness...promotes a social vision embodying profoundly radical political implications...To do the work society assigns them, women have pursued social rather than narrowly political goals. When it appears that the survival of the community is at stake, women activate their networks to fight anyone—left or right, male or female—whom they think interferes with their ability to preserve life as they know it (Kaplan 1982: 566).

Kaplan's statement is a reminder of women's power in shaping the city. And for this reason, they should be central to research on gentrification.

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## *Allston Christmas: How Local Rituals Reproduce Neighbourhood Temporality and Deter Gentrification*

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Allston, Boston's student neighbourhood, has experienced durable trends of both economic upscaling and decline, existing as a 'hybrid neighbourhood'. As a hybrid neighbourhood, Allston has experienced trends such as a dramatic increase in condominiums as well as decreases in median household incomes, alongside the exodus of an industrial economic base and growth of local universities in the neighbourhood. Therefore, Allston has not experienced traditional gentrification at the pace or to the extent as would be suggested by urban literature, but rather has experienced moments of upscaling and moments of decline, marked by distinct cohorts of residents, 30 years apart, who understand themselves to be 'pioneer' gentrifiers. Allston's student presence, especially the annual ritual of 'Allston Christmas' and turnover of rental leases, perpetuates the cultural narrative that Allston is 'young', specifically to mean student-oriented, and, therefore, not amenable to middle-class tastes and upscaling. Allston Christmas is marked by a visual and physical disturbance of sidewalks as renters discard mattresses, furniture, home goods, and other items. Coupled with precarious housing conditions, such as house fires, rat infestations, and building code violations, Allston Christmas, as a ritual and rite of passage, has deterred additional upscaling in the neighbourhood and perpetuated its cultural narrative of youngness. The continued narrative of youngness and limited upscaling have perpetuated Allston's hybrid status, by emphasizing its instability, transience, and precarious housing. Finally, Allston's hybridity and Allston Christmas contribute, with other factors, to a local experience of temporal sameness—or the feeling that the neighbourhood has not changed significantly.

**Keywords:** Gentrification, housing, neighbourhood rituals, hybrid neighbourhood, students.

### **Introduction**

During a conversation with Cameron, a 21-year old undergraduate student living in Allston, I inquired about his daily experiences. He explained that he lives in a central part of Allston and often stops at the diner at the end of the street (@Union Café) to grab breakfast and coffee before jumping on the subway to go to class at Boston University. Later, while interviewing Robert, a 56-year old local business owner who moved to Allston while attending college, I asked about his most vivid memory of Allston. He thought carefully for a minute and stated:

My most vivid memory ... In spite of the fact that I've owed businesses here for such a long time, living here as a college student on Park Vale Avenue [off Glenville Ave.]. I would get up in the morning and there was this diner that was on Harvard Avenue where @Union is now ... I used to go and have breakfast there and get on the T [subway] and go to BU and talk to my roommates. I had a great time living here as a college student. It was very safe, it was affordable. The first apartment I ever lived in, I was a young adult, and all of a sudden I had the responsibility of paying the rent every month.

The parallels between these experiences, 30+ years apart, articulate several unique aspects of Allston. As a neighbourhood, Allston has experienced a temporal sameness, marked by enduring trends of both economic upscaling and decline that shape local narratives of place. Specifically, cultural narratives of Allston as a young neighbourhood have steered undergraduate students to Allston by drawing on Allston's identity as Boston's student

neighbourhood. In relying on narratives that frame Allston as a student neighbourhood, and in engaging in rituals that highlight Allston's student presence, neighbourhood actors have perpetuated Allston's status as a 'hybrid neighbourhood' and thereby deterred gentrification.

Allston is a neighbourhood in Boston, MA known for its young, especially university student, population<sup>1</sup>, lively nightlife, trendy restaurants, and underground music scene. Allston appears ripe for gentrification, or 'An economic and social process whereby private capital (real estate firms, developers) and individual homeowners and renters reinvest in fiscally neglected neighbourhoods [or towns] through housing rehabilitation, loft conversions, and the construction of new housing' (Perez 2004: 139), especially as Allston's hip milieu intensifies, and given its proximity to downtown, local institutions (Allston is bordered by three major universities and one major hospital) and public transit. However, Allston's propensity for gentrification has been discussed in popular conversation since at least the 1980s, as local newspapers published exposés on students who feared being priced out of Allston. Yet, by measures typically used by scholars, Allston has not gentrified, or at least not at the pace and/or extent that literature might suggest. Rather, Allston has experienced durable trends of both upscaling and decline, existing as what I call a 'hybrid neighbourhood.' Additionally, 82% of students at Boston universities who live off campus live in private residences<sup>2</sup>, indicating that students significantly affect Boston's private housing market. Based on 18 months of ethnographic fieldwork, interviews with 67 neighbourhood actors and analysis of historical and Census data, I examine how neighbourhood actors grapple with Allston's hybridity and utilize cultural narratives to orient Allston's history and future, which, in turn, have deterred gentrification and reproduced an understanding of temporal sameness. After outlining Allston's historical trajectory, I turn to Allston Christmas as one mechanism that has deterred gentrification by making visible Allston's transience, instability and precarious housing market.

### **A Hybrid Neighbourhood**

First referred to as 'Little Cambridge' (Marchione 2007), Allston was a 'streetcar suburb' where those who worked in downtown Boston lived. In the early and mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, Boston's Auto Mile developed and thrived in Allston and attracted sizeable populations of immigrants. However, Allston saw a decline in its auto industry during the 1970s, as many repair shops and dealerships moved to nearby suburbs. As Boston saw the exodus of its industrial and auto production economies, several universities in Boston grew during this time, buying up industrial spaces in Allston. Today, Allston is known as Boston's student neighbourhood, as 'Allston Rock City,' reflecting its vibrant underground music scene and as 'Allston Rat City,' in reference to the large rat population and gritty, dirty environment.

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<sup>1</sup> The City of Boston began collecting data on where students live in 2015. According to the 'City of Boston Student Housing Trends 2016-2017 Academic Year Report,' Allston has the second largest concentration of students. The median age in Allston is 26 years old, younger than the city of Boston (2016 ACS).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

	<b>Gentrified Neighbourhoods</b>	<b>Declining Neighbourhoods</b>	<b>Allston</b>
<b>Residential Changes</b>			
Higher rents than non-gentrified neighborhoods	Yes	No	Yes
Increase in Owner Occupancy	Yes	No	No
<b>Population Changes</b>			
Highly educated (greater % with BA than other neighborhoods)	Yes	No	Yes
Higher household income than other neighborhoods	Yes	No	No
Increase in white population	Yes <sup>3</sup>	No	No; decrease
<b>Commercial Changes</b>			
Upscaling of retail (boutiquing)	Yes	No	Yes—to a degree

Table 1. Comparison of Gentrification, Decline, and Allston

As the ‘student ghetto’<sup>4</sup>, yet also a neighbourhood lamented for its ‘Brooklynization’<sup>5</sup> with some of the highest residential rents in Boston, Allston has experienced change that can be characterized as a type of hybridity. As outlined in Table 1, Allston’s trajectory has been a mix of trends toward economic ascent and decline. Urban literature suggests that Allston would have experienced reinvestment following the deindustrialization of its auto industry and the subsequent growth of immediately surrounding universities, yet Allston has not gentrified to the extent or at the pace suggested by existing literature. Neighbourhood actors utilize cultural narratives to make sense of a neighbourhood that has experienced durable economic ascent and decline, including a 2000% increase in condominiums and increasing median rents, higher than that of Boston, paired with two decades of decreasing median household incomes, while household incomes in Boston increased, and continued higher renter occupancy rates than the city. These cultural narratives entrench local inequality and perpetuate an exploitative housing market, especially for undergraduate students with limited housing options.

Additionally, since at least the 1980s, Allston’s housing has been overwhelmingly renter occupied, with rents, on average, greater than those for the city as a whole. Classifying the changes Allston has seen since the 1980s is less clear, however. Local media have lamented

<sup>3</sup> With notable exceptions, (e.g., Hyra, 2008; Pattillo, 2007).

<sup>4</sup> Hofherr, J. & Salomon, S. (August 4, 2015) *What to Make of All those Allston Stereotypes*. Retrieved February 8, 2016 from <http://www.boston.com/real-estate/community/2015/08/04/what-make-all-those-allston-stereotypes/xKwYMsUC6Rqz0GCNX8ztpK/story.html#sthash.EsD8klK5.dpbs>

<sup>5</sup> Harris, D. (April 26, 2015) *The Brooklynization of Allston Begins*. Retrieved February 8, 2016 from [http://www.bizjournals.com/boston/real\\_estate/2015/04/is-this-the-start-of-the-brooklynization-of.html](http://www.bizjournals.com/boston/real_estate/2015/04/is-this-the-start-of-the-brooklynization-of.html).

impending gentrification<sup>6</sup>, marked by commercial revitalization and residential investment, yet also emphasize the precarious and unsafe living conditions in many Allston apartment buildings and houses<sup>7</sup>.

Two distinct time periods in Allston, 1980s/1990s and 2000-now, have been marked by influxes of ‘risk oblivious’ (Clay 1983) residents, primarily students and creative types who have facilitated residential and commercial changes. Both cohorts embrace an ‘Allston as young’ narrative, with an evolving orientation to this narrative from Allston as a student neighbourhood to Allston as a neighbourhood for young professionals. While both cohorts acknowledge Allston’s student presence, they also note their own investment in the neighbourhood and its potential for upscaling. Both cohorts moved to Allston during their college years, but have remained a presence in the neighbourhood as business owners, residents and/or community activists, shifting their role from student to young professional in the neighbourhood.

Members of the 1980s/1990s cohort expressed motivations for moving to and opening business in Allston that reflect their role as early gentrifiers, including Allston’s central location, its vibrancy and amenities and the relatively low cost. Like pioneer gentrifiers (Kerstein, 1990), this group of neighbourhood business owners and residents saw opportunities to open their own businesses and invest in residential properties. Respondents specifically described Allston in the 1980s and 1990s as neglected, declining and sketchy and relayed stories of rampant heroin use and overdoses throughout the area. Following a pioneer narrative (Kerstein 1990), they explained how disinvested Allston was at the time, but also how they sought to gentrify it:

When I came to Allston, it was a very different landscape. It was rough. We had to clean the blood off the sidewalk every night from the brawls and the puke. It was horrible...I started doing Sunday brunch. No one else was doing Sunday brunch. Sunday Brunch in Allston? People were like ‘Are you kidding me?’ I think, not that I’m crediting myself, but I turned it around. I did the landscaping. I cleaned up messes. I got rid of some of the homeless people. You know what I mean? I cleaned it up so it got more respectable. (John, business and residential owner in his 50s)

Allston experienced commercial gentrification in the 1980s and 1990s, as dive bars were replaced with craft beer bars, yet did not experience residential gentrification and the in-movement of middle class residents. Rather, Allston was able to maintain its student-oriented real estate market, and, due to students’ relative transience, did not experience residential gentrification, characterized by increases in owner occupancy by middle-class people.

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<sup>6</sup> Harris, D. (April 26, 2015) *The Brooklynization of Allston Begins*. Retrieved February 8, 2016 from [http://www.bizjournals.com/boston/real\\_estate/2015/04/is-this-the-start-of-the-brooklynization-of.html](http://www.bizjournals.com/boston/real_estate/2015/04/is-this-the-start-of-the-brooklynization-of.html)

<sup>7</sup> *Shadow Campus: A Globe Spotlight Team Investigation* (n.d.) retrieved March 2015 from <http://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/specials/shadow-campus>

Currently there is group of residents who are referred to as ‘bike people’ by lifelong residents due to their emphasis on improving bike and pedestrian access and transit-oriented development in Allston. Bike People are a cohort of relatively young, white civically engaged residents in Allston who overwhelmingly rent and most moved to Allston for college in the early 2000s and have stayed in the neighbourhood. This group of relatively longtime residents in Allston understand themselves to be ‘pioneers’ in Allston in that they advocate for specific forms of development to ‘improve’ Allston, yet are also ‘social preservationists’ (Brown-Saracino 2004), aware of potential impacts such developments can have on longtime residents.



Figure 1. Remnants of a Triple-Decker that Suffered a Fire in June 2016, Linden Street

While bike people advocate for developments that urban scholars would predict might usher in gentrification, locals point to the consistent neighbourhood disarray, in the form of house parties, underground music performances, public intoxication, drug use and the neighbourhood’s transience. For example, The Boston Globe recently published an in-depth series on Allston, entitled, ‘Shadow Campus,’ in which they attempted to quantify the deleterious housing conditions in Allston that many students attempt to navigate. The Globe, and other accounts, point to fires that break out in large, old, Victorian homes that have been carved up into illegal apartments as evidence not only of Allston’s decaying housing stock and landlord neglect, but also point to the danger for residents in this neglect, including the resulting student deaths from these fires, and the rapes of two local university students due to a broken lock on a door. Figure 1 presents a triple decker that experienced a fire and remained boarded up months later. As explicated below, Allston’s ritual movement, highlighting its transience and instability, compounded by the high renter occupancy and housing conditions, have deterred residential gentrification, despite two distinct cohorts who see themselves as early pioneer gentrifiers.



**Allston Christmas: Ritual Movement**

Dubbed ‘Allston Christmas,’ September 1<sup>st</sup> of each year is the biggest moving day in Boston as renters enter into new leases. The concentration and visibility of moves is particularly evident in Allston due to its even greater renter occupancy and notoriety as Boston’s student neighbourhood. Allston Christmas describes, specifically, the phenomena of local residents moving out of their units and discarding used mattresses, couches, shelving, lamps, and other goods on street sidewalks. Many of these items have only been used for a short period of time due to the high turnover and movement of residents, and so, other residents take these free furnishings—like gifts on Christmas morning. The presence of such items blocks sidewalks and is considered a nuisance by local residents and housing organizations, as illustrated in Figures 2-3. The presence of trash and discarded items strewn on the sidewalks is coupled with images of a declining housing stock, often referencing houses that have experienced fires and have not been repaired.



Figure 2. Linden Street, Allston Christmas, 2016



Figure 3. Kelton Street, Allston Christmas, 2017

While local residents express annoyance at Allston Christmas, various local businesses, residents, media and even police officers embrace the tradition and ritual. On September 1, 2016, I volunteered with a local housing organization to pass out information to movers and warn of potential bed bugs. From my field notes:

After people talk for a while, Dave says we should all head back towards the offices because there is going to be a press conference. Slowly we all walk back towards the housing organization offices where there are several news media outlets set up with cameras and a few reporters. The head(s) of ISD [Inspectional Services Department] and other organizations speak to the media. Dave informs me that at some point they'll do a walk through of the neighbourhood and talk to people while cameras are watching, but that the ISD and neighbourhood services won't be back in the neighbourhood until this time next year. Dave seems irritated by this fact, but also a bit resigned to this situation as matter-of-fact.

As Dave predicts, members of neighbourhood services and ISD walk down Pratt St., putting bedbug stickers on mattresses and couches that just an hour ago Dave had put stickers on when we first passed down the street. Dave points this out to me, indicating, again, that they are merely doing this for the cameras. Dave specifically points to one ISD worker who places a bedbug sticker on a wooden dresser, halfway laughing, halfway frustrated/irritated.

The group of inspectors, now joined by the police officers, slowly walk down Pratt St., talking to whomever they come across. We get to a curve in the road and suddenly there is a bunch of commotion and I overhear people saying something about someone riding a mattress ('he's being pulled on a mattress...'). I try to see what is happening, but my view is blocked by trucks and cars. The group moves quickly toward this commotion, where I notice a small group of young people on the left side of the street (approximately 46 Pratt St.). There is a young (20ish) white man dressed as Santa Claus and the Allston district police sergeant moves very quickly toward the young man. I sense that the officer is not happy and that the young man will be scolded, especially as the cameras and media are around. I watch as the sergeant approaches the young man, but I cannot hear what they are saying. They speak briefly and then the sergeant turns, puts an arm around the young man, and the two pose for a picture for the media. I later find out (through Twitter and other social media) that the guy dressed as Santa had been pulled by a moving truck while sitting on a mattress—an Allston Christmas sleigh ride of sorts.

I notice a reporter and photographer stop and speak with a woman whose son is moving into a house on Pratt St....the woman is not happy with the conditions of the house her son is moving into.

Additionally, as illustrated in Figure 4, a local grocery store had workers dress in Christmas costumes and sing carols on a prominent corner in Allston, promoting their store. While local residents bring humour to Allston Christmas, and city and neighbourhood organizations help ameliorate the clutter and confusion of the day, Allston Christmas not only serves as a physical movement throughout the neighbourhood that marks the beginning of the school year, but also has symbolic and cultural meanings that perpetuate the local neighbourhood narrative frame that Allston is a young, specifically student, neighbourhood, and not amenable to traditional middle class gentrification.



Figure 4. Employees at a local grocery store dress as 'Allston Christmas Carolers' during Allston Christmas, August 2016

### **'At least with gentrification our property values would increase!'**

#### **Allston Christmas as Gentrification Deterrent**

At a local civic meeting, residential developments and the future of Allston are discussed, debated, and argued over. In one particularly contentious discussion about Allston's future, Sasha, an immigrant in her 50s, exclaimed, loudly, 'At least with gentrification, our property values would increase!' demonstrating both her perception that gentrification in Allston has not occurred, but also that neighbourhood upscaling is not completely unwelcome. Indeed, Sasha (and others) would go on to specifically insist on development plans to intentionally deter students, such as deed restrictions limiting residency to owner occupants (e.g., families) and control of parking on local streets. Residents in attendance at local meetings often criticize the developments that do gain approval for being rental properties, near bars and without adequate parking (based on their insistence that most residents drive cars, especially families, who they aim to attract).

Allston Christmas is considered a rite of passage and is even approached with a playful attitude, while local civic organizations and the city frame Allston Christmas as hazardous due to the presence of bed bugs and general chaos. However, it also functions to deter further upscaling. The visibility of trash and discarded furniture, coupled with the declining housing stock, have deterred the gentrification of Allston by presenting an image of Allston as not amenable to middle and/or upper class tastes. Specifically, Allston Christmas makes visible to those within and outside the neighbourhood the presence of trash and students, neighbourhood instability and transience. This further engrains Allston's identity as Boston's student neighbourhood, despite Fenway-Kenmore housing a larger proportion of Boston's student population<sup>8</sup>. While several major U.S. cities have rental occupancy rates similar to that of Boston, Allston's renter occupancy is greater than Boston, but also the movement in and out of rental units is concentrated on one day. Additionally, the constant ebb and flow of residents is a deterrent to gentrification because gentrification requires relative stability of residents to do things like create new organizations that advocate for the neighbourhood, engage in residential investment, invest in relatively long-term upscaling, and often to buy, rather than rent, property (Clay 1983; Kerstein 1990).

## Conclusion

Cameron and Robert, 35 years apart in age, both described daily routines of striking similarity and understand Allston to be a young, and therefore, student neighbourhood. Both also represent cohorts who understand Allston as not having gentrified, yet. The temporal sameness and expectation of gentrification that distinct cohorts of residents have experienced is shaped not only by residential housing markets and commercial districts, but by the cultural narratives of place that are deployed in Allston. Specifically, Allston Christmas is one mechanism that perpetuates the cultural narrative that Allston is young, represents Allston's transience and residential instability, has worked to deter gentrification and reifies Allston's hybridity.

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## ***Perceptions of Residential Displacement and Grassroots Resistance to Anchor Driven Encroachment in Buffalo, NY.<sup>1</sup>***

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This article examines perceptions of institutional encroachment and community responses to it in Buffalo, NY. Specifically, we focus on residents' perceived effects of anchor institution (e.g. hospital and university) expansion on core city neighbourhoods. Through this analysis we offer insights into the processes driving neighbourhood displacement in the contemporary period. Data were collected through a series of focus groups with residents and other stakeholders in working class, minority neighbourhoods which were identified as being in the early stages of neighbourhood revitalization. A total of nine focus groups were held across three neighbourhoods experiencing encroachment due to institutional investments. The focus groups were held during the fall of 2017. The data were coded and analysed using ATLAS.ti software. The analysis was guided by standpoint theory, which focuses on amplifying the voices of groups traditionally disenfranchised from urban planning and policy processes. The findings from the analysis highlight how the expansion of anchor institutions transforms the built environment, neighbourhood identity, and everyday life in urban communities. Residents perceived change brought on by institutional encroachment as relatively unabated and unresponsive to grassroots concerns. On balance, residents perceived the benefit of neighbourhood revitalization accruing to anchor institutions while low-income, minority residents cope with negative externalities in a disproportionate manner. This led to heightened concerns about residential displacement and concomitant changes in their neighbourhoods' built and social environments.

**Keywords:** Anchor institutions, displacement, gentrification, institutional encroachment, neighbourhood revitalization.

### **Introduction**

This article builds on prior research examining processes of gentrification and institutional encroachment. In particular, it focuses on the role of anchor institutions in the urban revitalization process. Prior research has argued that anchor institutions, like large non-profit hospitals and universities, play a growing role in the revitalization and gentrification of core city neighbourhoods (Adams 2003, Bartik and Erickcek 2008, Sterrett 2009). Although some of the initial discussions of anchor institutions in the urban revitalization process focused on the synergies and benefits of hospital and university expansion in core city neighbourhoods impacted by decades of disinvestment, subsequent scholarship argued that institutional investments in inner-city neighbourhoods could also result in neighbourhood disruption and residential displacement (Silverman et al. 2014, Hyra 2015, Ehlenz 2016). This research offers extensions to this line of inquiry by examining how renters, homeowners and other neighbourhood stakeholders perceive the dynamics of anchor institution expansion in core city neighbourhoods.

### **Methods**

This article is based on data collected through a series of focus groups with renters, homeowners, and other stakeholders in three working class, minority neighbourhoods in

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Buffalo that were identified as being in the early stages of neighbourhood revitalization. The focus groups were part of a larger research project studying gentrification and displacement in Buffalo and other cities across the United States. The three neighbourhoods examined in this analysis were identified in collaboration with city-wide stakeholders from local government, the non-profit development community, and higher education using an adaptation of the methodology developed by Lisa Bates (2013) to identify neighbourhoods at risk of gentrification and displacement.

The three neighbourhoods (Lower West Side, Ellicott, and Fruit Belt) are shown in Figure 1. The neighbourhoods are all located adjacent to downtown Buffalo. Table 1 displays the population and housing characteristics of the study neighbourhoods and the city of Buffalo. Across all measures the study neighbourhoods were distinct from the rest of the city. The study neighbourhoods had: experienced more rapid declines in total population and the number of housing units between 2010 and 2016, larger African American and Hispanic populations, higher rates of housing vacancy, lower rates of homeownership, and higher rates of renter occupied property. After selecting the three-study neighbourhood, the research team worked with a community advisory panel composed of representatives from each of the study neighbourhoods to identify renters, homeowners, and other neighbourhood stakeholders to recruit for focus groups.

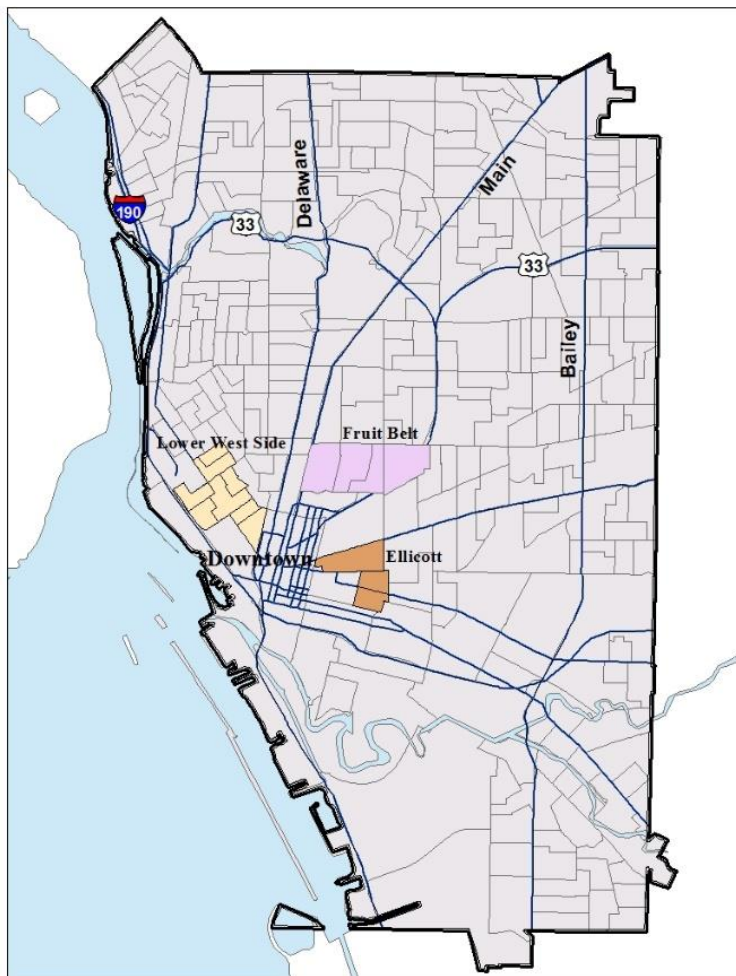


Figure 1: Three Study Neighbourhoods where Focus Groups Were Held.

	Study Neighbourhoods	Buffalo, NY
<b>Population 2016</b>		
Total	10,528	258,989
Percent Change 2010-2016	-15.7	-2.6
<b>Race 2016</b>		
Percent White	34.7	48.1
Percent African American	41.1	37.3
<b>Ethnicity 2016</b>		
Percent Hispanic	33.1	10.9
<b>Housing Units 2016</b>		
Percent Change 2010-2016	-11.1	-5.9
<b>Housing Occupancy 2016</b>		
Percent Vacant	20.6	16.3
Percent Occupied	79.4	83.7
<b>Tenure of Occupied Housing Units 2016</b>		
Percent Owner Occupied	27.3	41.4
Percent Renter Occupied	72.7	58.6

Table 1: 2016 Population and Housing Characteristics of the Study Neighbourhoods and the City of Buffalo, NY. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2010 and 2016 five-year estimates.

A total of nine focus groups were held across the three neighbourhoods experiencing encroachment due to institutional investments. Separate focus group were held in each neighbourhood with renters, homeowners, and other stakeholders. Table 2 displays the characteristics of the focus group participants. The focus groups were held during the fall of 2017, each had an average of 6.4 participants, and each lasted approximately two hours. The data collected from the focus groups were transcribed verbatim and analysed using ATLAS.ti software. The analysis was guided by standpoint theory, which focuses on amplifying the voices of groups traditionally disenfranchised from the planning and policy processes (Adler and Jermier 2005, Anderson 2017).

Variable	Percent
Average focus group size	6.4
Percent homeowners	34.5
Percent renters	29.3
Percent other stakeholders	36.2
Percent male	38
Percent female	62
Percent age 18-35	8
Percent age 36-64	32
Percent age 65 and over	60
Percent white	22.5
Percent black	63.3
Percent Latino	10.2
Percent other	4

Table 2: Characteristics of the Focus Group Participants (N=58).

## Institutional Encroachment

### *Changing Land Uses and Renaming Neighbourhoods*

Buffalo is a shrinking city that has experienced decades of population decline, employment losses, housing abandonment, and property demolition (Silverman et al 2013; Silverman et al 2016; Weaver et al 2017). However, there has been growing boosterism among city officials and local development interests fed by, ‘nascent revitalization in select urban neighbourhoods [that] has prompted a flurry of articles depicting the city as a paradise for young, hip millennials’ (Renn 2015). City boosters point to investments by local hospitals, universities and other anchor institutions as evidence of revitalization in the city. Despite the presence of some new investment in and near downtown Buffalo, the long-term trajectory of the city and the region remains unchanged. Buffalo is projected to continue to lose population and housing stock into the future, raising questions about the spill over effects of anchor institutions’ investments on low-income, minority neighbourhoods that buttress against their campuses and physical plants.

The three neighbourhoods examined in this study have been at the epicentre of anchor driven revitalization efforts in the city. Each has been impacted by the recent expansion of the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus (BNMC), the University at Buffalo (UB), D’Youville College, and other healthcare and higher education institutions in the city. Although these changes affect all of the neighbourhoods, the intensity of institutional factors driving neighbourhood change varies due to the proximity of specific anchor institutions to each of them. For example, the Lower West Side is most effected by institutional pressures from

D'Youville College and other anchor institutions in downtown Buffalo. The Ellicott neighbourhood's is most influenced due to its proximity to downtown Buffalo and endangered by spill overs from residential and commercial development in that area. While the Fruit Belt is confronted by institutional expansion of hospitals, the medical research centre, and UB's medical school. During focus groups residents and other stakeholders discussed the magnitude, scope, and impact of this expansion. One renter from the Fruit Belt neighbourhood made this comment about the BNMC's expansion:

The campus sits on a 120-acre site adjacent to downtown Buffalo and directly in the Fruit Belt neighbourhood. Presently there are estimated 17,000 employees working at the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus with a projected 12,000 more employees and students in the region in 2018. The University at Buffalo is in the process of completing a \$375 million medical school, currently constructed of \$40 million parking ramp on East North. The Conventus Medical Family Center just opened up in 2015. That was another \$100 million. Kalida Health announced the grand opening of the Oishei Children's Hospital. Another \$250 million and \$7 million just got allocated for Allentown [an adjacent neighbourhood] so it can be connected as a hub to the medical campus. Not one dollar has poured this way towards the Fruit Belt neighbourhood and not one dollar of those millions of dollars has been allocated for any minority businesses. So the effect that they have on us here is? You can answer that. No progress with them or a relationship with them. We need to be included in what's going on as they sort of gentrify and push the residents here in the Fruit Belt out without a word.

Like this resident, other stakeholders verbalized concerns about the 'encroachment' of the medical campus and the neighbourhood displacement they perceived it produced. The general sentiment was that anchor institutions did not serve the interests of residents living in surrounding neighbourhoods. As one renter from the Ellicott neighbourhood put it, 'It's sad that over there in the Fruit Belt, not only UB, but also the cancer centre takes so much out of the Fruit Belt and then they want to build things just for the cancer centre or UB.'

Residents and other stakeholders concerns about institutional encroachment were most pronounced when they discussed the issue of neighbourhood identity. In a number of instances residents and other stakeholders discussed how encroachment transformed the identity of their neighbourhoods. One way this occurred was with the renaming of neighbourhoods by institutional actors. One stakeholder described his experience in a planning meeting hosted by the City when he realized that the name of his neighbourhood had been surreptitiously changed:

People in the meeting, residents, they were saying, 'we're concerned with the Fruit Belt being taken over by the medical campus. Speculation, and things like that'. They were told, 'Oh no, no, no that's not going to happen'. Then on the map it shows, rather than saying 'Fruit Belt' it says 'Medical Park'.

Other residents raised similar concerns about seeing their neighbourhood's name changed in plans when they attended public meetings hosted by the City and developers. One



homeowner commented that, ‘when you look on maps you don't see it anymore, it's considered the Medical Park, or whatever, they have erased us with a big eraser off of the city map’. Another homeowner pointed out that the change of the neighbourhood's name had also been adopted by commercial websites and on social media, commenting that, ‘it's up on Snapchat, if you know what that is, it will say “Medical Park”, and I'm like, “no I don't live in the Medical Park!”’

The renaming of neighbourhoods by institutional actors was one way that the identity of communities was transformed. Another way this occurred was when boundaries of neighbourhoods were redrawn. A homeowner in the Ellicott neighbourhood made this comment about how redrawing boundaries impacted neighbourhood identity:

We could have lived anywhere in the city. And we chose to live down in this neighbourhood because they were part of downtown. It's been interesting because I feel we were sold on being part of downtown and then they tried to disenfranchise us from downtown. So little things like the zip code. Zip codes are really important because zip codes tell banks about the people, everything. So if you look at us, we're in 14204. But guess what, you go one block up there in 14203. Guess what, 14203 is downtown. 14204 is not. That has a huge impact on our home values, on the bank. I'm still pissed about that. So you want to talk about a change, one of the changes is we were told we were downtown and then they changed the zip code. Not only did they change the zip code, but then they changed where we get our mail. Again, we used to get our mail right there on Washington. So we were downtown. Then all of a sudden I get something in the mail and now our mail is on William Street, past Fillmore. I'm going 20 blocks in the other direction when I used to go two blocks to get my mail. So I think that there's been a smoke and mirrors trying to disenfranchise us.

On one level, changing the name or boundaries of a neighbourhood has symbolic effects on its identity. On a more substantive level it has implications for everyday experiences and residents' quality of life.

#### *New Faces and the Disruption of Everyday Life*

On a more micro level, institutional encroachment was evidenced by changing residential demographics. One renter in the Fruit Belt described how the BNMC expansion had changed the neighbourhood's residential composition:

What I see is white people not being afraid to come into a black neighbourhood. A lot of things I've heard over time about white people is they don't like to come to the inner-city of Buffalo because they're scared, or they don't like to come to the bars because they think something is going to happen. It's negative. But I see white women, young white women, they'll walk 5 or 6 blocks to their cars they park here in the Fruit Belt. Another thing I've seen is, 3 o'clock in the morning, I see a white woman in spandex pants jogging down Jefferson, down Masten, walking their dogs.

The changing composition of a neighbourhood has implications on who occupies public and private spaces. For instance, a homeowner in the Lower West Side neighbourhood commented on the relationship between increased rents and encroachment due to the expansion of D'Youville College, saying that 'you can end up with like a dorm next door, because they can split up the rent and it becomes reasonable if you've got four people'.

Changes in occupancy patterns inevitably spill over into public spaces and impact social interactions. A renter on the Lower West Side described how the growing number of college students living in the neighbourhood increased nuisances, such as parties on the weekends. She described this encounter with a college student leaving a party next door to her, 'I came from a Halloween party myself, but I'm like, "Oh my God", I pulled in front and he's like "are you my Uber?" I'm like "no, I live here! Have a good night"'. Nuisances caused by institutional encroachment were not limited to late night interactions with college students. A number of concerns identified by residents and stakeholders related to parking congestion on neighbourhood streets. One renter in the Ellicott neighbourhood described how parking congestion was a direct result of anchor institution expansion:

What's happening is the workers don't feel like they should have to pay for parking. They got enough parking lots, but they don't want to pay for parking. I don't agree with them because it's a state job first of all, and I feel like you make enough money to pay for parking.

Increased competition for street parking has direct effect on residents' quality of life. A renter in the Fruit Belt made this point about the ways parking congestion that resulted from institutional encroachment effected residents:

Older people couldn't get rides or couldn't park in their own driveways because people blocked their driveways. They're needing medical care and things like that, and they couldn't get it. Another thing was, when relatives or somebody came over they had to park blocks over to get to the property.

For residents, institutional encroachment resulted in a change in the fabric of neighbourhood life. In some cases, new, unfamiliar people were encountered on the streets. In others, overflow parking and commuter traffic led to disruptions in everyday life.

## Conclusions

This article focuses on how institutional encroachment transforms neighbourhoods' built and social environments. Data from focus groups in Buffalo highlight how the expansion of anchor institutions transforms the built environment, neighbourhood identity, and everyday life in urban communities. Often the benefit of this transformation accrue to anchor institutions while low-income, minority residents cope with negative externalities in a disproportionate manner.

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## ***Commercial Gentrification in a Medium-Sized City: An Ethnographic Look at the Transformation Process of the Historic Centre of A Coruña (Spain).***

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The present article analyses, from ethnographic and visual perspectives, the transformation of the historic neighbourhood of Orzán, in the city of A Coruña (Spain). We propose that this scenario of social, economic and symbolic change, masks its intensive commercial gentrification. Therefore, we suggest that factors such as the substitution of traditional shops for alternative shops, the regeneration of its 'brand image' and the consumption and leisure preferences of the so-called creative classes, as well as the impact of global gentrification help to explain the current stage of reinvestment. We contextualise this commercial restructuring by placing it within the general framework of a macro-project of regeneration of the city's seafront that seeks, among other objectives, to promote tourism in the historic centre for which Orzán plays a key role for nightlife and 'creative' consumption.

**Keywords:** Gentrification, commerce, rent-gap, A Coruña, tourism.

### **Introduction**

This article employs ethnographic and visual perspectives (Krase, 2012) to examine the transformation of the neighbourhood of Orzán (A Coruña - Spain), one of the four that make up the historic centre of the city. A Coruña, with just over 240,000 inhabitants and located in the northwest of the Iberian Peninsula, is a medium-sized city in the Spanish urban system. Therefore, this work should be framed within the set of studies that, gathered under the term 'provincial gentrification' (Lees et al. 2013), focus on the dynamics of gentrification in territories beyond the excessively restricted focus on Anglo-Saxon cities over the last half century.

As a starting point, we look at recent changes in Orzán, which are structured within four interdependent dimensions. The first involves sociological changes in the neighbourhood's composition, with an increase in the number of members of the creative classes (Florida 2010) that led to an alteration of its symbolic image. The second dimension, of an economic nature, is related to the commercial transformation of the area. The third, concerns the physical change of the place itself. The last dimension situates these changes within a broader strategic framework that encompasses the regeneration of the A Coruña seafront that is based on a model of public space management promoting tourism and putting speculative pressures on the historic centre as a whole.

After the main vectors of the model of neighbourhood change are introduced, we take a reflexive look at their socioeconomic evolution. We also discuss how the neighbourhood, in its first phase of devaluation, suffered for years because of the lack of private and public investment, causing its stigmatisation and the proliferation of marginal activities such as prostitution.

Ironically, the current network of alternative and countercultural businesses -which ironically arose thanks to the neighbourhood's negative symbolic capital due to its decadent

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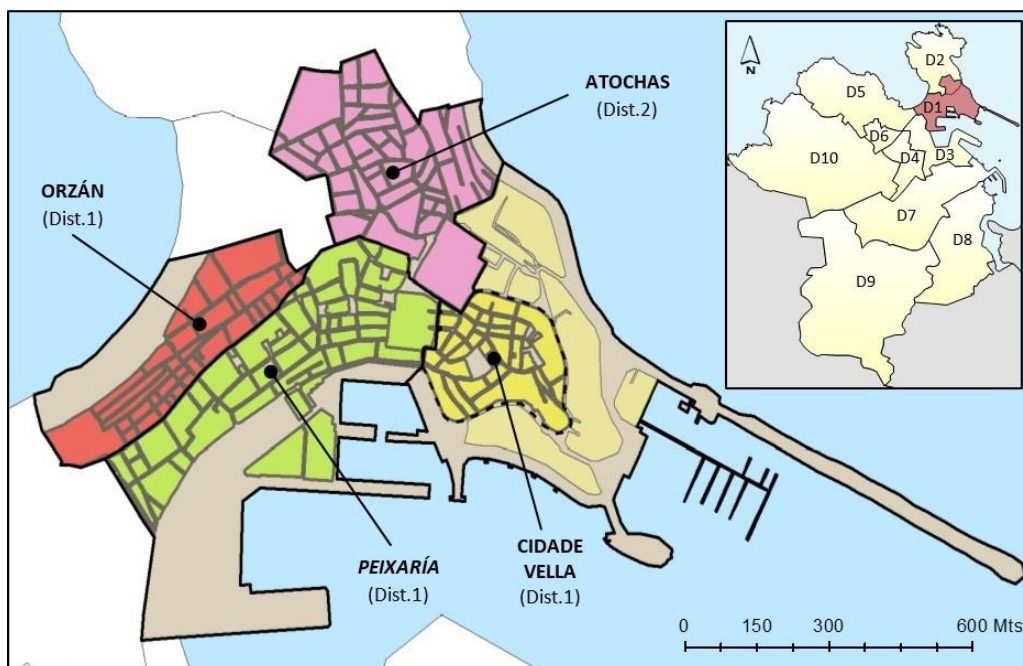
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and bohemian charm- seems to be the key to its recent revitalisation. Presently, the neighbourhood is undergoing a second phase of economic revaluation, which can be seen in the increase in the number of rehabilitated dwellings. Undoubtedly, this situation is linked to the arrival of new social groups in the neighbourhood (creative classes) and the touristic urban regeneration of the historic centre. This article demonstrates how both factors, principally revealed via an exhaustive two-year fieldwork of structured in multiple participant observations, are negatively impacting Orzán's traditional spaces and social networks.

### A Socioeconomic and Ethnographic Approach to Orzán

Orzán is located in the upper part of the isthmus that gives shape to the city of A Coruña. The lower part contains the neighbourhood of Peixarúa, where the Central Business District and all its financial, touristic, institutional and, to a large extent commercial, activities are located (see Map 1). In this sense, since the ninth century, Orzán developed as its counterpoint. Traditionally, it contained many of the less attractive functions of the city, such as port warehouses and the municipal slaughterhouse. However, unlike Peixarúa, Orzán maintained its dynamic network of small local businesses.



Map 1. Location of the neighbourhood of Orzan in the historic centre of A Coruña. Source: Alberto Rodríguez Barcón.

Orzán's architecture, unlike the bourgeois character of Peixarúa, is irregular and reveals poor planning, as well as a lack of city services and facilities. As we ascend perpendicularly on Map 1. from the tourist district of Peixarúa through its interior streets, we can see how the environment is progressively degraded, revealing a lower economic and social profile that merges into a visual landscape full of graffiti, abandoned or dilapidated buildings, damaged roads and many closed traditional shops (see Figure 1).





Figure 1. Visual contrasts between Orzán and Peixarúa (A Coruña).

Caption: Top Row: Degraded buildings on an Orzán street alongside a recently renovated one.

Bottom Row of the most emblematic and tourist areas of the neighbourhood of Peixarúa.

Source: Alberto Rodríguez Barcón.

In Orzán, the few public interventions carried out in recent years have barely promoted the physical and social revitalization of the neighbourhood. On the contrary, there are clear signs of vandalism in the area as well as the proliferation of abandoned buildings that coexist with the rehabilitation of some other buildings (see Figure 1). These are visual representations of the recent social and, most importantly, commercial changes in Orzán.

### Sociodemographic Change

The sociodemographic evolution of the neighbourhood of Orzán shows a series of clearly different dynamics with respect to the general trend of the old town. For instance, Orzán's annual average growth rate of 2.67% during the 2007-2017 interval is much higher than the rest of the areas in the historic centre (0,06%). This indicates the attractiveness of the neighbourhood and the changed image it has developed in recent years. These data also suggest that many who arrived in the last decade are childless. This is consistent with the findings of Ley (1983), Beauregard (1986) and Bondi (1991), who point out that single-parent families, or those without children, are a distinctive feature of the creative classes. This group acts, from our perspective, as an engine of change in Orzán through the importation of related patterns of cultural consumption and leisure. Social change is also evident in the educational levels of new residents. Based on the latest census data, between 2001 and 2011, the number of university

students living in Orzán increased by 7.21%, as opposed to the rest of the historic centre with an increase of this group of only 0.07%.

Intimately related to the rise in their educational level, the socioeconomic status of Orzán residents has also risen. By applying a similar methodology to that used by Navarro and Mateos (2010), Rodríguez (2016) located a remarkable concentration of the creative classes in the historic centre of A Coruña. Rodríguez also has highlighted the proliferation of new global lifestyles that, framed under the logic of cultural consumption, also involve new spatial behaviours. Specifically, this concentration of higher status residents rose to 26.11% of all employed people for District 1, which includes Orzán and three of the four neighbourhoods in the historic centre, compared to only 21.76% of the city of A Coruña as a whole.

### **Commercial Gentrification in Orzán**

The degraded environment of Orzán gives rise to alternative and countercultural commercial activities, interspersed with pockets of poverty and brothels that is oriented to a model of consumption and leisure characterised by Florida (2010) as ‘neo-bohemian’. The strengthening of the symbolic capital of the neighbourhood around the emergence of alternative leisure activities is reflected in its branding as ‘SoHo Orzán’, and in the popular name of ‘Hipsters Square’ given to the main nightlife area (see Figure 2). As a result, new businesses are replacing traditional local businesses.

Along the almost 700-meter length of Orzán Street, the main artery that gave the neighborhood its name, traditional shops have given way to new types of business embedded in a very deteriorated, and once economically devalued, urban vernacular landscape. There are, however, some ordinary food shops, hairdressers and traditional business such as printers, and hardware stores. Abandoned premises, mixed with dilapidated houses, contrast with newer establishments such as fashionable pubs, hipster coffee shops and hairdressers, specialised comic book shops, creative workshops, vintage bicycle shops, organic produce markets, vegetarian restaurants, and co-working spaces, etc. (see Figure 2). While for traditional neighbourhood residents they go quite unnoticed during their own local consumption routines, this new set of establishments, is especially valued by the invading creative classes (Moledo 2018). As noted by Krase (2005), visually, these new shops and businesses are replacing the vernacular landscape based on what Bourdieu (1984) referred to as the ‘Taste of Necessity’ with one dominated by the ‘Taste of Luxury’.



Figure 2. Examples of Local Businesses — ‘Hipsters square’ surrounded by trendy establishments (above left); vintage bicycle repair shop and barbershop/hipster tattoos (above right); Scandinavian design furniture shop (below left); vintage bicycle shop (below right). Source: Alberto Rodríguez Barcón.

Modern facilities coexist with brothels in decline (see Figure 3). These survive in some inner alleys between Orzán Street and San Andrés Street. This visual clash between affluence and mixed commercial activity delimits the border between Orzán and Peixarria. Despite being besieged by trendy and ‘creative’ establishments, brothels remain somehow invisible to the pedestrian and vehicular traffic along both streets.



Figure 3. Brothels in Orzán. Source: Alberto Rodríguez Barcón.

To conclude, we will territorially locate and identify the commercial establishments that form Orzán Street, the neighbourhood’s main artery, and its direct area of influence (see Map

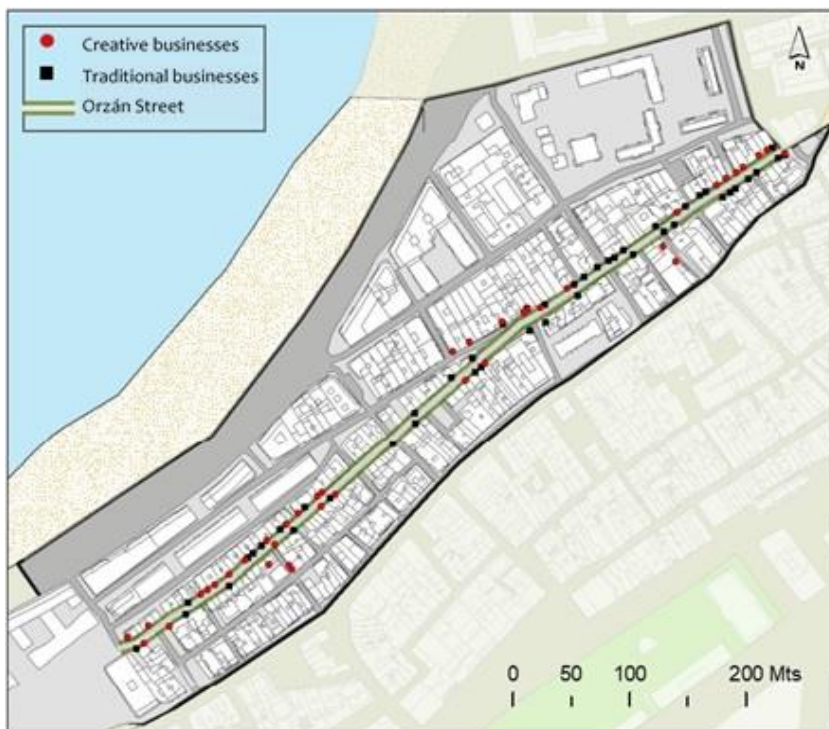


2). The elaboration of this mapping was carried out from the beginning of 2016 until the end of 2017.

There are two major commercial types. The first are ‘traditional’ businesses and the second are establishments that we have classified as ‘creative’. The distinction was made by using subjective criteria based on parameters derived through direct observation or conversations with business owners. They include: year of opening; appearance; commodity or service type; average price of offerings; and explicit and implicit touristic strategies.

Logically, it is not possible to establish a simple delimitation between ‘traditional’ and ‘creative’ businesses based only on their opening date. Some recent establishments serve new functions but sport a ‘neighbourhood shop’ appearance, and are defined in our study as creative, as for instance some hairdressers or bars were so defined by DeSena and Krase in their study of gentrification in Brooklyn (2015). Similarly, some longstanding establishments act as leisure and entertainment venues for ‘creative’ groups and ‘protogentrifiers’, despite being fully integrated into the older commercial neighbourhood, as in the case of vinyl record shops, jazz venues, and pubs.

In addition to suffering pronounced residential deterioration, the neighbourhood has lost many of its old local businesses. The generational segmentation reproduced in both spaces is very clear: ‘opposite the young neighbour, who is a ‘consumer’ of creative business and bars of the ‘active’ area, there is the old neighbour who walks the ‘passive’ area and who does not participate in the gentrifying process’ (Moledo 2018: 36). Locals are less likely to patronise traditional shops because they are disappearing. (see Figure 2).



Map 2. Distribution of ‘creative’ businesses versus ‘traditional’ businesses in Orzán Street. Source: Alberto Rodríguez Barcón.

The preferred commercial alternative for the non-creative classes of Orzán are the many large shopping centres in the city (see Figure 4). These ‘temples of consumption’ encourage globalized standardisation of the shopping habits of the poor-, working-, and middle-classes.

In short, the commercial gentrification of Orzán, as in other large Spanish cities<sup>4</sup>, mimics the neoliberal patterns of the city as an ‘entertainment machine’ (Lloyd and Clark 2001), which thematise the urban centre for two large global audiences: the creative classes and tourists.



Figure 4. News from the Newspaper *El Mundo*. Source: [www.elmundo.es](http://www.elmundo.es) (09/07/2010 and on 04/14/2011). Caption: Left: ‘Shops in San Andrés refuse to disappear’ Right: ‘Opening in A Coruña of ‘Marineda City’, the commercial centre of the record figures’. Since the beginning of the decade, while the traditional shops in Orzán disappeared, on the outskirts of A Coruña and its metropolitan area, important networks of shopping centres were built.

### The Transformation of Orzán as Part of Touristification in the Historical Centre

The transformative dynamics converging on Orzán form a scenario of change at three levels (social, commercial and visual), and must be contextualised within a broader process of intervention in the historic centre of A Coruña. In any case, the four neighbourhoods that make up the historic centre (Orzán, Cidade Vella, Peixaría and Atochas) share a common history and future. The increase in touristic pressure in the historic area is subordinated to the redesign of its seafront (called A Mariña) with one expectation: converting A Coruña into an attractive site for large cruise ship operators (Rodríguez et al. 2018) (see Illustration 5). Selective rehabilitation processes were also activated that focused on the young who had higher purchasing power who wanted to live in urban centre.

<sup>4</sup> See the contributions of Justo (2014) on the gentrification process in the neighbourhood of Malasaña (Madrid), and Hernández (2016) on the commercial gentrification of the Casc Antic in Barcelona.





Figure 5. Coastline and seafront of the historic centre of A Coruña. Source: <http://clusterturismogalicia.com> (left); <https://www.pinterest.es/pin/589479038698228133/> (right). Caption: General view of the city with six anchored cruises (left) and comparison between A Mariña before (upper right) and after (bottom right).

Privatisation of the coastal area has increased touristic pressure on the historic centre and consolidated the current processes of upscale development and gentrification. Although the most direct impact occurred in the neighbourhoods of Peixaría and Cidade Vella, which largely shape the affected coastline of A Coruña, Orzán is also changing due to the real estate speculation generated by the transformation of the entire southern coast of the city.

## Conclusions

Throughout this paper we have attempted to show how commercial gentrification in Orzán is the epicentre around which a series of strongly interrelated phenomena revolve. The commercial revitalisation of the area also acted as a driving force behind its transformation in social, economic, visual and symbolic terms. The new businesses adapted, in terms of offerings and appearance, to the consumption and leisure preferences of the incoming creative classes. These newcomers have found, in the depressed and counter-cultural environment, a welcoming space for their recreational and entertainment preferences. In this last regard, we have tried to show how ‘creative’ establishments that emerged from this dynamic have replaced the traditional network of small neighbourhood businesses.

The processes of economic change in Orzán should be framed within the parameters of Neil Smith’s rent-gap theory by which the ‘disinvestment-reinvestment’ logics of certain economic agents seek to increase the price differential between the devaluation and revaluation of property for economic gains (1987). Thusly, after a phase of disinvestment and abandonment, Orzán gave the first signs of social and economic revitalisation. In this context, the process of commercial gentrification marks the point of inflection and begins the transition from one stage to another. The consolidation of the neighborhood’s ‘neo-bohemia’ brand (Florida 2010), also

helps to explain the progressive housing rehabilitation activities and sociodemographic improvement. It should be noted that Orzán's attraction to the creative classes would not have been possible without changing the public's perception of the historically stigmatised neighbourhood.

We must emphasize the importance of studies such as this one in redirecting research interests to medium-sized cities, because in them, more so than in large cities, the processes of neighborhood decline are more dramatic. We have looked at Orzán by employing ethnographic, especially participant observation, and visual methods. In this sense, our work is critically reflective. We suggest the contemporaneity of the phenomenon, with its multiple edges, requires future researches that contextualise gentrification at the neighbourhood level while also placing them within the context of global strategies for urban transformation and social change.

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**David-William Gibson. 2015. *The Edge Becomes the Center: An Oral History of Gentrification in the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Overlook Press.**

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Both illuminating and frustrating, DW Gibson's *The Edge Becomes the Center: An Oral History of Gentrification* indicates its strengths and limitations in its subtitle: this is ultimately just one subjective account of gentrification, drawn from an increasingly singular setting, contemporary New York city. The book disappoints readers hoping for broader context, conceptual precision, clarifying historiography, or other standards of social science research on this topic. Yet it seems churlish to expect those from a work targeting a popular audience written by a journalist with a different objective. Indeed, the book's value lies in its immersion into the language of gentrification, articulated through the perspectives of those who steer, oppose, benefit from, are displaced by, and accommodate — often simultaneously — this dynamic process for urban inequality.

In a format that recalls Studs Terkel's oral histories, *The Edge Becomes the Center* assigns one or occasionally two informants per chapter and allows them extended, sprawling responses. Gibson interjects sparingly in italicized passages written at a distance from the interview moment, which serves more to tease the reader along (e.g. by failing to disclose informants' roles in gentrification from their first introduction) than to disclose his analytical agenda. Informants run a gamut of participants in and witnesses to gentrification: real estate agents and middlemen, landlords, neighborhood activists and tenant organizers, architects and contractors, street artists, art collectors, institutional investors, elected officials and residents' association leaders, public defenders and legal aid lawyers, squatters, homeless shelter staff, shop owners, weed dealers, even a sociology professor. Each is asked what gentrification means to them, and the multiplicity of meanings they share — if at first infuriating to readers versed in well-trod conceptual and theoretical approaches — sketch out an experiential framework whereby urban bodies navigate flows of capital and attachments of place.

A few scattered references to political economist Neil Smith's work on gentrification suggest the emphasis and extent of Gibson's theoretical program; the author is content to let his informants guide readers through practical debates regarding gentrification as a class vs. race-based process, the future of municipal institutions like public housing, the creation and support of urban amenities like gardens and coffeeshops, urban universities as major landowners and redevelopers, the politics of white-led gentrification resistance, the eclipse of manufacturing by service and creative sectors, and the evolution of art practice when studios become unaffordable. The book helpfully explains in clear, everyday language a spectrum of on-the-ground mechanisms: from street-level processes of landlord disinvestment and harassment, tenant buy-outs, and the acquisition and flipping of foreclosed apartments; to city-level processes that involve scanning public archives, enforcing occupational health and consumer safety regulations, incentivizing green infrastructure, and offering immigration visas to foreign

investors. Persuasive assessments are offered for the historical significance of the Giuliani and Bloomberg mayoral regimes, and of the understandably high expectations placed upon the de Blasio administration (newly elected at the time of the book's publication).

This has to be said: as formal ethnography, *The Edge Becomes the Center* is significantly lacking. Gibson never explains his sampling strategy and methods, leaving readers no means with which to assess the typicality of informants' roles and viewpoints. The analysis here could benefit from an extended place method that identifies informants in gentrification's key sites of abstraction: real estate investment firms, urban policy institutes, the moment of neighborhood choice by footloose migrants, etc. There's also the question of why base this study in 21st-c. New York, a place where gentrification has evolved over three decades into highly advanced dynamics of global city formation may yield limited insights about the generalized diffusion of gentrification elsewhere. No doubt there remains a diehard readership for New York urban studies, but the scholarship on gentrification increasingly pulls in new and global directions, from stagnating second-tier and shrinking industrial cities, to the amenity frontier of rural towns and natural-recreation destinations, to the state-led initiatives of city-region building and primitive accumulation that drive what Loretta Lees calls 'planetary gentrification.' In this context, why return to NYC at such a late date?

Answers are found in the responses that Gibson collects and assembles from his informants. Particularly because gentrification at this stage has become so single-mindedly pecuniary in motives and mechanisms in contemporary New York, *The Edge Becomes the Center* offers a deep dive into the language of money at all levels of urban livelihood. There are almost no homilies about neighborhood 'authenticity' or civic participation in this book, in contrast to the reports of gentrifiers that Japonica Brown-Saracino and other scholars have produced. Everyone in this city has their price, informants repeatedly attest; as Georg Simmel would recognize, within this reductive quantification lies a prism to observe the totality of urban life. Race and ethnicity are revealingly implicated in this language of money, when, for instance, a Hasidic landlord describes how he understands the varied neighborhood obstacles and conflicts he encounters: 'I can't explain it to you without sounding like a racist' (p. 172). Crucially, New York remains a key testing ground for the execution of neoliberal ideas about poverty relief and public investment. Especially jaw-dropping is one banker's breathless transition from praising the Bloomberg administration's embrace of high-end development ('Bloomberg raised so much money... Among the unsung heroes in the city, I think, are the capital budget people' [pp. 116-7]) to a near flawless recital of HOPE VI-style strategies for deconcentrating poverty in public housing:

to build out the fringes of these entities into a more open, retail-oriented, low-rise, mixed-use, mixed-income environment so you're dealing with this in a different way. To have lower-middle-income and lower-income people in their own world is just horrible. (pg. 122)

*The Edge Becomes the Center* includes its share of old-timers' recollection of gentrification's first wave in 1980s East Village and Lower East Side — stories well documented in urban research, articulated now with an occasional even-handedness that the



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passage of time affords. Even more recurrent are the deeply felt remembrances of New York's legacy of civil liberties and tolerance. 'We flee to New York because we know it's the place where there's freedom,' a downtown shop-owner says. 'But it's not going to be free for too much longer.' (p. 209) Gibson and his informants reframe this local expression of a critical junction in NYC life into a broader contradiction in urban governance and planning between democracy and capitalism. Therein lies perhaps the most profound lesson of this New York story.

## **REVIEW ARTICLE**

### **Intellectual Fashion and Sustainable Urban Policies**

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Duncan McLaren and Julian Agyeman. 2015. *Sharing Cities. A Case for Truly Smart and Sustainable Cities*. Cambridge Massachusetts: MIT Press.

Emanuela Guano. 2017. *Creative Urbanity. An Italian Middle Class in the Shade of Revitalization*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Social research and academic publications are not immune to fashion. In the social sciences, while researchers aim to understand social phenomena and social changes, it is not unusual that the academic establishment either fails to recognise the relevance of new phenomena or, for the sake of securing funding, encourages politically-fashionable projects with the aim of developing and, of course, selling forecasting analyses and grand universal models which are often detached from the empirical reality. When in the 1980s the emerging environmental movements began to voice their concern about our planet's future, the political and the academic establishments were all too eager to dismiss their protests as a fleeting, mainly youth, movement. In spite of timid interest among a few scholars, still in the 1990s even disciplines like anthropology — notoriously concerned with the human-nature relationship — only lukewarmly welcomed environmental research and tolerated the attendant publications.<sup>1</sup> Nor, at the time, were politicians and the academic establishment ready to acknowledge the relevance of studying issues of legitimacy that were affecting various sectors of society across the world, including an increasingly bureaucratized governance, which only a handful of scholars were courageous enough to tackle.<sup>2</sup> Today, both environment and legitimacy have become hot topics alongside climate change and world sustainability, in which cities play a major role. Concomitant with this awakening, new fashionable research has flourished, producing such buzz words like, smart city, creative industry, creative class, sharing economy, green economy, resilient city, global city, just city, inclusive city, urban revitalization, gentrification, and so on. In some cases, embracing fashionable research trends in order to secure funding has stimulated innovative analysis. In other cases, however, the pursuit of intellectual fashion has gone hand in hand with scholarly laziness. The book by Emanuela Guano on *Creative Urbanity* seems to fall in this latter category.

Broadly drawing on Richard Florida's sixteen-year old concept of 'creative class' (2002), Guano claims originality for her work when she states that the social groups described in her book 'have often been neglected by anthropological inquiry' (p.6). The social groups in questions are the Genoa's university-educated middle class who have been left out of the

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<sup>1</sup> A key example was Kay Milton's edited volume (1993).

<sup>2</sup> A case in point is Italo Pardo's edited volume (2000).

professional job market. Apart from being obviously unaware of the vast array of mainstream anthropological studies on urban elites that have been carried out since the 1980s, Guano also ignores recent anthropological works on the ways in which urban professionals cope with the economic crisis and job insecurity of neo-liberal policies (among the many, Spyridakis 2013). Guano's book is above all a personal journey whose principal aim is to expose the Italian practices of nepotism and corruption in the allocation of professional jobs, particularly in academia, that forced many of her unemployed intellectual informants to explore opportunities in the 'creative industry' which, as in many other North American and European cities, had become fashionable in Genoa's policy of urban regeneration. In the Genoa case discussed by Guano, the educated middle class have reinvented themselves as street antique dealers, festival organizers, walking tour guides or small business owners. Many of her informants are old friends and, as she says, some new informants have become friends during the research. The description of the Genoese trendy bohemianism is preceded by an overview of the city's industrial decline and the revitalization attempts of the 1990s. Frustratingly, however, the book does not engage with the real contribution that these new bohemians may have made to the city's economic development. She also fails to address the socio-economic inequalities brought about by the creative industry and the revitalization projects and ignores the critical debate that followed Florida's theorization on creative class and economic development.

*Sharing Cities* by McLaren and Agyeman also deals with fashionable ideas that have entered the political arena. However, while driven by a messianic call to save the planet, the authors attempt to move away from the standard, and in their view limited, approach of the sharing economy. The book's main argument is that the 'sharing paradigm' that the authors propose ought to be a central aspect of city governance. This paradigm, they argue, runs counter the social fragmentation and commercialization of the public sphere and offers cities the opportunity to become truly smart, just, inclusive and sustainable. *Sharing cities* analyses six of the 'C40 Cities';<sup>3</sup> they are: Amsterdam, Bengaluru (formerly Bangalore), Copenhagen, Medellín, San Francisco and Seoul. The authors want to show the successful potential of 'sharing the whole city', in the sense of sharing the public realm, both physical and virtual, encouraging collaboration and trust, civic engagement and political activism. Through these case-studies, McLaren and Agyeman seek to demonstrate 'how, with modern technologies, the intersection of urban space and cyberspace provides an unrivalled platform for more just, inclusive and environmentally efficient economies and societies rooted in a sharing culture' (p.1). New digital and smart technology are regarded as vital to this 'sharing paradigm', which should include sharing consumption and production as opposed to the models of urban development that have deepened the divide in the economic prospects of different urban dwellers, like for instance the creative class model.

The template of the sharing, and shared, cities proposed by McLaren and Agyeman seems to oppose the creative class approach, according to which a city's success is determined by becoming an attractive 'consumer city' of skilled people. As many critics have pointed out, linking the 'creative class' to urban economic development, not just in theory but also in policy-

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<sup>3</sup> On the C40 Cities Network see <https://www.c40.org/>

making, has produced new inequalities between a higher-skilled, and usually well paid, creative job market and lower-skilled and lower-paid 'service class' jobs; especially, to name a few, in sectors like food preparation and home health care.

Having argued that the future of humanity is urban, McLaren and Agyeman set out to show that cities are drivers of a 'shared revolution' that would provide solutions to world challenges. The sharing paradigm that they propose is not limited to 'sharing the city'; it also implies a 'global' sharing culture. Through sharing, they claim, cities across the world can learn from each other how to 'fix themselves' and, in so doing, 'fix' the planet. Key dimensions of this sharing paradigm are: 'intrinsically motivated communal sharing' and 'extrinsically motivated commercial sharing'. Both kinds of sharing can be mediated through learning and evolve into common sociocultural values. In their model, examples of communal sharing include peer-to-peer sharing, service co-production, not-for profits, the gift economy, which would hopefully evolve into the 'collective commons' approach and a collaborative lifestyle. Examples of commercial sharing include the sharing economy of ventures like Airbnb and Zipcar, which implies 'dis-ownership' and an 'access economy' and would hopefully evolve into the 'collective economy' of open-sourcing and peer production. The six selected urban case studies are examined in six separate chapters to address different aspects of sharing. San Francisco provides an example of 'sharing as a collaborative consumption'; Seoul is used to illustrate shared domains of production and exchange; the chapter on Copenhagen focuses on political and cultural dimensions of sharing; the Medellín case is used to discuss issues of equity and social justice; the chapter on Amsterdam explores how different dimensions of the 'sharing paradigm' could reinforce one another, also highlighting some obstacles and challenges; Bengaluru is taken as an example of the prospects of sharing in cities of the 'developing world', pointing out how the pursuit of 'smart' policies may indeed run counter sharing and justice.

In different ways, these two books should alert social scientists of the fallacy of relying on abstract models or of the attempt to enforce universal templates. *Sharing Cities* does offer interesting urban case studies but would have benefitted from addressing the cultural, social, political and economic differences and similarities of these urban realities and their practical significance in attempting to implement a specific urban template. Less jargon would also been welcome. *Creative Urbanity* makes equally frustrating reading. While Guano addresses nepotism in the intellectual job market and makes a passing reference to the critically important *tangentopoli* (bribesville) political scandal of the early 1990s, she fails to engage with its contemporary ramifications; particularly, the corruption underlying the private-public deals that rather than creating a true revitalized and inclusive city has produced crumbling infrastructures and the attendant games of back-passing responsibility. This is the kind of corruption that lies at the root of structural and human disasters like the collapse of the Genoa's Morandi Bridge in August 2018.

Most significantly for the responsibility of intellectual production and for the future of society, these two books invite reflection on the danger of attempting to translate fashionable intellectual ideas into policy. They alert the reader to the absolute need for empirically-grounded analysis. From different disciplinary fronts, today scholars are doggedly attempting

to make the social sciences matter.<sup>4</sup> For it to matter, however, social analysis needs to be based on solid ethnographic research; it needs to address the specificity of each sociological setting and bring out its comparative significance and theoretical value.

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<sup>4</sup> See, for example, the Palgrave initiative 'Social Sciences Matter' and recent debates on why ethnography matters (<https://www.palgrave.com/us/social-science-matters/pardo-and-prato-on-why-ethnography-matters>).



## **BOOK REVIEWS**

**Kayhan Delibaş.** 2015. *Risk Toplumu: Belirsizlikler ve Söylentiler Sosyolojisi* (*Risk Society: The Sociology of Uncertainties and Rumors*). Ayrıntı Yayınları.

Rumours are an inseparable part of everyday life, yet the existing scholarship on them is rather limited. *The Risk Society*, sharing the same title with Beck's influential book, aims to address this limitation. It provides answers to the questions of why rumours emerge and how they spread by focusing on their structure and characteristics. In his book, Delibaş particularly concentrates on the rumours on earthquakes. Turkey is a land of earthquakes and experiences earthquakes at various scales each year. The language of the book is clear and easy to grasp for readers with different academic interests and various backgrounds. It also offers quite comprehensive literature, which is not totally translated into Turkish, but accessible for English readers. It is an important book that must be read by anyone who is interested in risk, uncertainties and rumours.

The book consists of nine chapters. Delibaş starts with an extensive analysis of the theoretical discussions on the risk society and the sociology of uncertainties in the first chapter. The coverage of these discussions is not only limited with the main theoretical references especially on risk and its consequences in the modern society including Beck (1992), Furedi (1997), Giddens (1990), Lupton (1999) and others, but also refers to various examples of rumours, conceptions of risk from different countries, different time frames

and various contexts. These examples highlight the impact of rumours on everyday life of ordinary citizens.

The author discusses the methodology of the research in the second chapter. It is comprehensive in terms of geographical coverage and the methods used. The author and his research team conducted field research in five different cities in Turkey, which are Isparta, İzmir, Niksar, Erzurum, and Diyarbakır. These cities have different features as far as their size, geographical position and socio-economic characteristics are concerned, and they represent a sample for understanding the rumours. The researchers also used a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods with a survey and in-depth interviews. In addition to these methods, various media resources including newspapers, videos and Internet resources were analysed during the research. The methodology section of the book is highly detailed; thus, it would be helpful for those who want to conduct this kind of research.

Delibaş gives readers detailed information about his quantitative research findings in Chapter three. A total of 1802 participants (1003 men and 799 women) took part in the research. Socio-demographic characteristics of the selected sample are given in various tables and charts. Moreover, information on housing patterns of the participants were also added as houses play a significant role at the time of earthquakes.

In Chapter four, the author discusses the research findings to situate rumours into a historical, socio-cultural and political background. While investigating through which channels rumours become widespread, Delibaş points to two main

sources of rumours, media and new social media. Risks like earthquakes are particularly difficult to estimate and they affect the whole population. These features increase the impact of rumours. The network of family, close friends and face-to-face relations is more influential in the distribution of rumours compared to other communication channels.

In the following chapter, Delibaş analyses people's response to these rumours. He also puts these responses within the context of lack of trust towards public authorities under the neoliberal government practices. People's responses to rumours vary from not doing anything to extreme precautions. Most people talk about the possible dangers posed by expected earthquakes to their family members and friends.

In Chapter six, the relationship between rumours and culture of fear is analysed as the features of socio-economic and cultural context where these rumours become widespread. Referring to the relationship among risk society, uncertainties and trust, rumours are interpreted as a signal of increasing search for trust in modern societies. The author discusses the negative relationship between rumour and trust. The possibility of both emergence and distribution of rumours is high in countries like Turkey, where the level of interpersonal trust is low. Furthermore, trust towards institutions is also low in Turkey. The uncertainties, low level of trust and rumours have decreased individuals' feeling of security and increased fear. Both quantitative and qualitative methods support these arguments in Chapter 7. It should be highlighted that presenting various

examples of rumours from different countries, the author asserts that these arguments are not only limited to the Turkish context, rather they have world-wide effects. People are pessimistic about not only the future of Turkey, but the future of the world as well.

In Chapter 8, the author discusses his findings in a comprehensive manner. These can be summarized as follows: Rumours are social construction and they are a medium of communication. They have a historical background. They are widespread social phenomenon. In this chapter, the author also summarizes his discussions made in each chapter.

In the last chapter of the book, Delibaş highlights that the reasons for both the emergence and spread of rumours are related to the decrease in both cultural and institutional authorities and the erosion of trust at both inter-personal and institutional levels. At this point, the author argues that there is an increasing need for cooperation among universities and public institutions for conducting research to better understand rumours and to better respond to them when necessary. At the end of the book, Turkey is conceptualized as a model of 'risk society', and increasing uncertainties and perception of risk could refer to Zeitgeist (Delibaş 2015: 306).

Why is this research crucial? Few sociological studies are conducted in this field. Field research presented in this book covers the geographical context of Turkey and also offers a valuable combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods. Also, the detailed coverage of theoretical and conceptual themes combined with research findings gives

inspiration for new research studies on rumours.

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**Ilay Romain Örs.** 2018. *Diaspora of the City, Stories of Cosmopolitanism from Istanbul and Athens*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Ilay Romain Örs' s work, *Diaspora of the City, Stories of Cosmopolitanism from Istanbul and Athens*, is about the cultural identity and life stories of the Rum Polites, that is people whose place of origin is Constantinople, residing primarily in Athens in specific geographical locations. Aspects of the research include the way they define their identity in terms of their daily life, their daily social relations, their perceptions about history, their traumatic memories about the violent ways their displacement took place as well as their cultural connection with the urban cosmopolitanism of Istanbul. Based on ethnographic data collected from systematic fieldwork in the urban location of Rum Polites residences, mainly in Paleo Falıro area, Örs traces the interconnection between political history, memory and their

experience through the narratives of the involuntary protagonists of diasporic communities. Hence, following a chronological Prologue about the major events signifying important moments in the memory of diasporic actors, Chapter 2 introduces the notion of cosmopolitanism as an extension of metropolitan knowledge. It is this relation that marks the dividing line between Greeks living in the Istanbul in the past and Greeks living in Greece. In Chapter 3 Örs goes on to present the perceptions of others about Rum Polites identity. These people embody a certain level of differentiation form other Greeks in general, called exclusive diversity. In this context, their relations with the Turks become very ambiguous. Using Michael Herzfeld's concept of *disemia*, Örs tests conventional labels and categories against the ethnographic evidence collected problematizing widely used social categories. Hence the ground is set for criticizing the notion of methodological nationalism against the Kantian concept of methodological cosmopolitanism by showing in what ways informants consider themselves as 'diaspora in the city'. Chapter 4 explores the traumatic recent past with the Turks, observing how informants build their narrative about the past and addresses the way in which the involvement of the ethnographer affects their diagnostic events of commemorations. Chapter 5 analyses acts and events of nostalgia related with cosmopolitan Istanbul. Focusing on different aspects of cosmopolitanism, Örs discusses the different ways Rum Polites conceive Istanbul, as well as how other Istanbul communities relate to the city as a source of identity. In the final chapter there is an attempt to comment and update the

social, political, cultural, historical and urban setting. It is concluded that a more comprehensive understanding of concepts like diaspora and cosmopolitanism can be achieved by taking into account the current manifestations of the historical aspects of the city as well as the ways in which alternative identities are formulated. Örs's study embodies an interesting ethnographic approach, as it involves the recourse to anthropology, history and political science as well as a daring methodological attempt aimed at unveiling hidden injuries, past memories and actual lives — elements that constitute the identity of contemporary Rum Polites living in Athens. What I found very attractive was the great effort these people make both to manage their traumatic past and refrain from concealing their identity in their new settlement areas. In this light, to look at their effort for survival through their narratives means to explore the ways in which they define their sense of belonging to a cosmopolitan past and present.

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**James Rosbrook-Thompson and Gary Armstrong.** 2018. *Mixed-Occupancy Housing in London: A Living Tapestry*. Palgrave Macmillan.

As the editors of the Palgrave Studies in Urban Anthropology note in a comment to this text, the percentage of humans living in cities and towns has increased dramatically in the past 100 years. The means of evaluating the effects of this transition from mobile human groups like hunter gatherers, the regularities of movement of

transhumant pastoralists, less mobile shifting horticulturalists or sedentary villagers has been limited by the lack of comprehensive comparative studies of the traditional ethnographies. Most of these, like that by Melville Herskovits and C. Daryl Forde, have been focused on economic aspects, while a few (for example, Francis L.K. Hsu) have been more psychologically oriented and focused on one ethnic group or overseas ghettos of specific ethnic groups as in Bernard Wong's work. Yet, a vast amount of ethnographic work was done in the 20th century on urban life, both by sociologists inspired or trained by Robert E. Park or social anthropologists (the authors recognize the work of W.E.B. Du Bois in this area and one should add Allison Davis [1939], whose work in the South and among urban African American communities informed a generation of students of boundaries to educational success).

The modern city of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, has seen a fundamental transformation of living space in the reorganization of residential neighbourhoods with commercial zones within them into service centres for information and financial industries (Sassen 2011). Rosbrook-Thompson and Armstrong have produced a document that provides a view of the life of people in a 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century urban residence. The antecedents of events often make history surprising. As Francis Hsu (1967) said, the world's historians and political scientists were shocked when 'tradition bound' China, a nation and people often used as a prime example of the 'unchanging East' became communist. We are in like measure

surprised at some reversals in expectation regarding optimal housing conditions.

Rosbrook-Thompson and Armstrong begin their ethnography with the post WWII attempt to establish ideal communities and quote Lewis Mumford on the importance of the social constitution of such endeavours. Since the time of Pythagoras (Zhud 2012), efforts to produce stable and enduring communities where the inhabitants live in relative harmony has been a dream. Rosbrook-Thompson and Armstrong effectively summarize the dismal housing situation for working people in England and the failure of political will to produce an affordable housing stock. The effect of the privatization of council housing under Thatcher and its continuation to the present is shown to be a major factor. The subject of their study, Lashall Green, is an example of social housing typical of the post war effort. Unlike Watling estate (Durant 1939), which was isolated at its beginning from the urban core or American examples of new towns like Levittown (Gans 1967) whose intrusive nature produced racist charges and cultural conflict in addition to theories of isolation and psychological crises in fairly homogenous populations, Lashall Green departs significantly in its diversity. From its beginning in the 1960s it was a haven for immigrants, from Irish, West Africans and people of the Indian subcontinent to Cypriots.

The study of such a development as Lashall Green, with 148 housing units, compares in complexity to a small village, yet the special nature of its uniformity of design belie such comparison. The elements of governmental desire for multiculturalism and affordability provide us with an

experimental roadmap for good intentions, while the context is obviously self-defeating, where the government is also promoting gentrification. So, the authors chart the intercept of how the community of residents unfolds and responds to these factors. They note the 'Malinowskian contradiction' between what people do and what they say they do, and while the visiting scholar can get some hint of this on several visits to a community, it is necessary in my view for one to live within a set neighbourhood and see and experience these divisions, which gives more weight to the authors' findings.

Perhaps of most interest today is the opportunity the authors had to record the consequences of the 'Right to Buy' programme and the credit crisis within the diverse community of Lashall Green. But the authors address the ideologies and the intentions of planners and policy as in Ebenezer Howard's efforts regarding overcrowding. It is ironic that today we are recognizing the 'metropolitan knowledge' people develop to negotiate the various physical and social landscapes and boundaries of urban spaces in different cultural meanings (Pellow 1996, Sennett 1994) which has made 19th century ideas of overcrowding seem quaint (Low 1996). The authors provide a detailed introduction to the history of urban theory and planning as well as urban ethnography, importantly in the context of recent developments in the United Kingdom, especially regarding diversity and affordability and the politics of safety in housing made dramatically clear in the horrific fire at Grenfell Tower. In other interpretations of migration and housing pressure on preexisting ethnic groups, the authors point out that new terms



like ‘supercomplexity’ can hide or confuse racism and xenophobia as gentrification can dilute the ethnic character of communities and cause fear of forced economic internal migration, as San Francisco has experienced with the loss of established African American communities (Fuller 2016). At the same time, the idea of the global city suggests a future urban scene of integration based on merit; in some cities conflict has destroyed traditional neighbourhoods and created greater isolation and discrimination as in Northern Ireland, Aleppo and Sarajevo. In another form, across the globe ‘densification’ is putting unrelenting pressure on older suburbs (Skovbro 2002). But while much of the liquidity produced by central banks in the USA and the UK found its way to produce luxury homes and a glut of speculation, little affordable housing has resulted (Cox 2018). Rosbrook-Thompson and Armstrong (2018) show how this has been a repeated situation for over 150 years, even quoting Nye Bevan Minister for Health speaking before Commons in 1946 to the same point regarding the behaviour of speculators.

What is creative and of great benefit in this ethnography of LG is not only the intimate knowledge of the occupants and surrounding areas and their relationships as venues for human activities, but the detailed approach to the economic interrelationships of the residents of LG with each other and those outside. The networks of occupations from drug dealing to teaching show the actual means of exchange and interdependence that exists. This continues in a fuller sense by their engagement of the police and other ‘custodians of order’ to give an analysis of what people consider to

be acceptable disorder and how the ‘custodians’ negotiate their role. The authors are correct to question the nature of how positive values have been placed on diversity and what this presages, as in the former ideas of artist enclaves (SOMAs and SOHOs) and opportunities for development. Bernard Wong (for example, 1982; also, Wong and Chee-Beng 2013) and Antonello Mangano (2016) have investigated such areas in the past where the routine creation of ghettos for foreign residents becomes associated with illegal commerce, labour exploitation and zones of moral neutrality (Burrows and Wallace 1999). The idea of ghetto as internal colony has also been applied to zones of interaction and diversity (Harris 1972).

The authors pursue the means of access to knowledge and action within LG regarding gender. How individuals from different socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds interact to produce outcomes beneficial to the creation of safe places for children to play, for parents to exchange goods (especially ‘hand-me-downs’) are essential to understand gender asymmetry and its effects generationally. But the transition in labour from stable unionized jobs after the 1990s led to temporary, service jobs that were seen as increasingly female. This was seen in the USA as well and is described by Bourgois (2003) with devastating effect.

The authors’ focus on the privatization of council housing is most important. The process of changing new standardized housing for working class families into slum housing waiting to be demolished or sold reflects the failure of politicians and the electorate to recognize how key reinvestment in upgrades and

amenities is to continued attractive aspects of stable communities. Once maintenance becomes such a problem that significant units are boarded up the community suffers related problems. It is obvious that LG, like many similar projects, experienced the uncertainties of private landlords. While reinvestment can be a character of well managed non-profit housing in the USA, funds are seldom adequate as seen in the UK, and the arrival of private landlords, either by leasing multiple units or single units can be deadly as new class divisions can arise between renters and owners vs renters and non-profit management.

Also timely is the authors' investigation of the nature of employment and the effect entrenched groups have had on new arrivals and globalization, especially in building and the substantial incomes available and then the collapse of the council labour force in the 1980s and early 1990s. It is important that the authors traced the effects of legislation on LG, as in the anti-discrimination housing legislation in the 1970s. The choice by the authors to include numerous quotations from residents of LG is helpful in gaining an understanding of how attitudes developed, especially from generation to generation. This lends considerable context to the process of outsourcing and restructuring and the change in opportunities on marginal professionals which is termed, 'proletarianisation'. At the same time, the different opportunities and experiences of immigrants and their interaction in their differently shaped economically 'different worlds' was quite parallel to other major cities where one class of immigrants services another. The fluid ladder here between entry as a squatter and

underemployment to 'gig economy' temporary and illegal jobs to contract and public employment is quite well defined. Though cash employment and temporary work more affected women as shown in Chapter 7. This fluidity, did not seem to be sufficient to break down 'ethno-racial' lines, though economic ties were formed in weak and temporary junctures, both in the legal and illegal branches of the economy.

The authors also describe one of the main problems of managed housing where authorized renters, due to disability or benefits, can subvert the system for personal gain (sometimes even with the connivance of resident supervisors) and sublet their units to others. Reference to the 'broken windows' theory of policing in the context of illegal economic behaviour is made but appropriately questioned as increasing non-resident ownership, speculation and decreased services lead to neglect and a lack of authority. While the theory requires a no-tolerance attitude in policing, the initial signs and signals of neglect that it argued concentrated on illegal behaviour, ignoring landlord or absentee neglect in maintenance. Controversy surrounds the theory in general (Braga, Welsh and Schnell 2015). The study by Braga et al. (2015) found a variety of interpretations and implementations of the theory. It seems obvious from the review that few police departments linked code violations, 'cosmetic' physical disorder like broken windows with crime rates and policing targets. Therefore, evaluating the theory is quite difficult. Policing physical disorder requires landlords to spend money as does treating social disorder (drug problems, education, public health), all of which requires investments in the

community. One might argue that a factor in this was the 'Buy to Let' process and its popularity discussed in Chapter 6, though the authors argue that an integrative role is played by a 'settler sensibility' of original presence and investment in community that appears similar to that quality of the first residents in Levittown described by Gans (1967).

The role of community 'institutions', like the pub, are an example of how these function and their manifestations change with time. The pub owner and the community of men who used it created an ethos around violence that limited its extent, but the spread of drugs (for example, cocaine) changed that and reduced the ability of the pub owner and the community to monitor and enforce limits. Changing demographics and cultural inclusion/exclusion affect such institutions. The extensive quotes from Fran are an example of local knowledge and custom, giving an insight on how families, especially with children, negotiated problems. However, it is interesting how often university students show up in the resident quotations, usually as disruptive agents and as a separate class, like Gans' 'mobiles'. Yet the desire to find acceptance among immigrants was as significant as the students' positive attitudes toward diversity and difference, while crime and conflict are centrifugal, the former are centripetal and integrative as was Allport's idea of knowledge of others derived from contact.

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**Manos Spyridakis** (ed). 2018. *Market Versus Society: Anthropological Insights*. Palgrave Macmillan

Given the perplexing, and dangerous, state of the global economy today and going forward, *Market Versus Society* edited by Manos Spyridakis is a very welcome

addition to the Palgrave Studies in Urban Anthropology. Although many books and articles have been written in recent years in which the word 'neoliberalism' prominently appears, few have succinctly defined the complex phenomenon and, most importantly, connected it directly to individual cases in unique global contexts. A diverse collection of expert contributors provides the reader with detailed, in depth analyses and expositions of a wide variety of economic and social situations. As the world economy seems to be hopping from one political crisis to another, they are especially timely. The volume fills in some important gaps, if not gulfs, in available scholarship on a problem that, if not attended to, could cast the global economy into at least a global recession, if not a global depression. Most of the work that I have read on neoliberalism seems to avoid its most difficult and complicated aspects as opposed to this one which meets them head on.

In his expansive Introduction, the editor, Manos Spyridakis, places the current crisis as a contemporary Enclosures Act, making the economically weak weaker and even more vulnerable to predation. This was demonstrated by the massive subprime mortgage fraud in the USA that, because of the financialization of the American economy, became an epidemic resulting in a tsunami that caused shipwrecks across the world. As noted, the alleged end of the crisis required the expropriation by global capitalists of public as well as private funds to right the ship that was floundered by their own greed.

Plainly stated by the volume's editor (see also Spyridakis 2013 and 2017), after

discussing Keynes (1930), Bauman (2017), and of course Marx and Engels (1967):

... within a neoliberally oriented context favouring adverse social incorporation, deregulated labour relations and massive layoffs, contemporary people experience the gradual disappearance of standard aspects of life and the advent of its insecure forms as well as the emergence of vulnerable social relationships (Castel 2000), threatening both their material survival and life trajectories. Caught in this situation defined by distant economic power structures and in pedagogic political technologies that advocate less social protection for the market's invisible hand, vulnerable people, being de-unionised and unable to forge a class become powerless to defend themselves and are unwittingly led to a grey area regarding their work identity and life trajectory (3-4).

Neoliberalism has become the dominant policy paradigm. Its purveyors argue that the most efficient distributors of 'goods, services and happiness' are 'unfettered markets'. In their wake, the vulnerable suffer from its 'devastating effects' such as structural adjustment and austerity programs that increase poverty rates and reduce governmental social. In tandem with globalization, neoliberal policies have also led to an extreme concentration of wealth. The volume convincingly argues that Anthropology is in a unique position to combine interpretive models and methodological tools to describe and analyse its causes and effects.

For example, in reference to the banking crises in Greece and Italy, ordinary people seem to be unaware of what is happening and therefore unlikely to effectively respond. Several chapters deal with more and less successful organized responses to both national and local problems. By carefully combining empirical data and a wide range of theoretical devices, the volume demonstrates how ordinary people learn about and respond to the growing unequal distributions of wealth in the global neoliberal economy.

Theoretically and methodologically focused contributions include: James G. Carrier's 'Economy and Society, Neoliberal Reform and Economic Deviance'; Alf Hornborg's 'The Root of All Evil: Money, Markets, and the Prospects of Rewriting the Rules of the Game'; Iain Lindsay's 'Sport, the Market and Society: Contrasting the Rhetoric and Reality of Sport as a Growth Catalyst' and Paul Durrenberger's 'Anthropology in a Neoliberal World'. Other contributions that discuss theory and methods but also have a distinct geographical focus are as follows: Italo Pardo, 'Managing Against the Odds: Economic Crisis, Bad Governance and Grassroots Entrepreneurialism in Naples'; Giuliana B. Prato, 'From Nationalization to Neoliberalism: Territorial Development and City Marketing in Brindisi'; Andreas Streinzer, 'Relations with the Market: On Cosmologies of Capitalism in Greece'; Manos Spyridakis, '"We Are All Socialists": Greek Crisis and Precarization'; Julia Soul, '"De proletarios a propietarios... Neoliberal Hegemony, Labour Commodification, and Family Relationships in a "Petty" Steel Workers' Firm'; Fulvia D'Aloisio, 'At the Periphery



of Development: Scenarios and Actors of an Industrial Settlement Experiment and Its Crisis in the Case of FIAT-SATA in Melfi'; Gadi Nissim, 'Workers' Committees in Israel in the Heyday of Neoliberalism: From Consent to Professionalisation to Alternative Solutions'; Martin Buedel, 'Autonomy and Adaptivity: Farmer's Work in France'; Alicia Regada, 'Economic Rationality and Human Experience: Global Agrifood Chains from the Perspective of Social Anthropology'; Christian Zolniski, 'Neoliberal Agrarian Policies and Its Effects: Labour Flexibility and Regimentation in Mexico's Export Agricultural Industry'; Corine Vedrine, 'The Renegotiation of Identity and Alterity in an Economically and Spatially Changing Context: The Case of a Former Industrial and Mining District of Saint-Etienne'; and Michel Rautenberg, "'Weak Heritage" and Neighbourhood in Contemporary Cities: Capitalism and Memories of Urban Utopias'.

Although all the chapters were rich in detail and insight, a few were especially valuable for this reader. In James G. Carrier's chapter on economic deviance, was an unusually clear definition of '... neoliberalism as ideas and policies these vary, but common ideas are that government should have a minimal role in the country's economy and that people should be independent and satisfy their needs and desires through market transactions. Common policies include a reduction in public services and government oversight and regulation of economic activities' (23-24). Another exceptional assertion was made by Giuliana B. Prato who looked critically at the

relationship between economic and political policies agendas as follows:

Although it has become *the* paradigm for global policies, neoliberalism is more than just an economic mechanism. It would appear to be a *total* governing system that seeks to adapt society to its needs. Politics – national or global – has not disappeared; mostly, it just tends to follow suit. Neoliberalism and market deregulation do need a supporting political apparatus. At the same time, at the local level attempts are increasingly made to adapt trendy neoliberal templates to this situation on the ground, encouraging a neo-Smithean approach to 'individual' entrepreneurial competition that would benefit society as a whole. Ethnographic analysis has the power to bring out these dynamics. (98)

The final chapter, Paul Durrenberger's overview of the volume, was especially valuable, as that which proceeded it, and was much too much to digest in one sitting. As a scholar-activist who studies local urban neighbourhoods and uses auto-ethnography as a tool for change he asserts that:

While some observers may see anger and failure, ethnography suggests a different process that incorporates place in history in a distinctive set of class-specific, local values. Doukas, working in an area of high residential stability, found that people remember ancestors and events have been obscured or obliterated by official histories. In this light, the present-day sense of "apathy" is constructed on

the repeated failure of numerous attempts to remedy injustices – zoning battles lost in city councils dominated by real estate interests, failed resistance to urban renewal projects promoted by the same interests, failed attempts to block highway routing decisions promoted by developers and non-local traffic and highway experts– the residuals of repeated political actions, including unions, that ended in repeated defeat. (311)

I am sure the insights provided by all the authors, both abstract and concrete, provided in the volume, were derived from their ethnographic or otherwise close-up descriptions and analyses. Therefore, they further establish the value of anthropology for the study of economics from the local to the global. Finally, I must note that in this review, I refrained from using the term ‘Economic Anthropology,’ because I think such terms tend to compartmentalize and limit the value of the ethnographic discipline which I also practice.

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## **FILM AND VIDEO REVIEWS**

*A Memory in Three Acts.* Director, **Inadelso Cossa.** 2016. 64 minutes. Colour. Produced by 16mmfilms.

With this film director Inadelso Cossa delivers a significant work on history and memory related to Mozambique's anticolonial struggle in the 1960s and 70s. The film is compiled by interviews with militant clandestine participants in that struggle, juxtaposed to archival material from that era, and it is framed by two reflective and poetic sections, a prelude and an afterword, in which the director discusses his own position towards the political significance of memory. This is a film that is not only about Mozambique's struggle for independence from Portugal, but also about the diachronic political significance of memory in anti-colonial struggles, past and present. Thus, memories of struggle, oppression, torture and liberation are the source material for this work. The film opens with a criticism of how little mention is made in current official histories about the role of clandestine resistance in Mozambique's struggle against colonial rule. And the director, in a very sensible manner, starts the film by giving a face and a voice to a few of these anonymous people, who share their stories and confront their ghosts and traumas in the course of the film.

The personal stories and memories narrated by the interviewees provide a very comprehensive glance through first hand experiences of how colonial rule functioned, and how resistance was organized against it, significantly in, and in interaction with, the capital, Maputo city (then Lourenço Marques). For some of the

people interviewed, who were natives of rural Mozambique and arrived in Maputo at a young age, their urban encounters were life-changing comings of age, awakening them and engaging them in the anti-colonial movement. For instance, as one interviewee narrates, it was there that he first encountered the gloss and inequality that city life entailed. Working as a domestic servant and later in a hotel placed him in contact with colonial rulers, their collaborators and wealthy tourists who roamed the city in the 1960s. Significantly, marginal jobs in the city and unseen networks within the urban structure were the points through which some of them came in contact with the resistance movement. Through such networks they became involved in this movement, and used them to hide and find strength in their encounters with colonial violence, torture and terror.

The rich use of visual documents from Mozambique of that period, such as archival television footage, photographs from magazines of the time as well as propaganda material, framed by the interviews, establishes a politically significant collage of life in Maputo and in Mozambique of that era. Some scholars of urban studies may thus find the film useful, as well as scholars of memory studies and historians of colonialism who may be the primary scholarly audience for this film. Yet, by discussing details of how marginalized urban lives and underground networks played a role in establishing and maintaining the clandestine resistance movement against colonial rule, the film may be particularly useful to scholars and researchers studying urban social

movements - and in particular to urban studies scholars interested in the particular historical and geographical contexts or in the wider anti-colonial struggle in Africa.

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*Delta Park.* Directors/Screenwriters, **Karine de Villers** and **Mario Brenta**. 2016. 68 minutes.  
Colour. Production: Polygone Etoilé, Film Flamme, Blue Film.

*Delta Park* is the fourth collaboration between Italian film director Mario Brenta and Belgian anthropologist turned cineaste, Karine de Villers. They partnered on this documentary to describe the experience of a group of African migrants stranded at the Hotel Delta Park that has been transformed into a government-funded migrant shelter. It is located somewhere in a nondescript Italian town at the delta of the Po. Depicting the Beckettian wait of African young men, the film juxtaposes their experience as migrants stuck in limbo with the decaying urban structures that embody the town's industrial past. The central theme is that of their wait. While this film may appeal to anthropologists interested in migration and more generally in migrants' experience of time and transience, it also provides insight into the ways in which they inhabit this architectural and post-industrial landscape.

The directors masterfully show how time comes to a stubborn standstill inside the walls of the Delta Park, which is shared by the owner's family and the hotel residents. The men's languishment, idleness, and feeling of social exclusion are

shown through a series of close-ups of their resigned faces interwoven with long shots of the abandoned ruins around the town. As one of the protagonists says: 'it's really not easy to stay in one place for a year and four months without doing anything'. Comically echoing the man's concern, the hotel's owner elderly mother relentlessly checks the unreliable longcase clock standing in the lounge. By making this visual parallel, the directors point the viewer's attention towards the protagonists' pervasive sense of boredom and doom. Both of these feelings permeate the inexorable passage of time at the Delta Park while beautifully contextualizing the exacting nature of the migrant's wait

The film's greatest strength is its use of visual language rather than words. It lets the images do the storytelling of the drama unfolding. The protagonists are barely introduced, which could leave the viewer wanting to know more about these men and their personal stories, and yet these stories manage to shadow the portrait of an Italian region impoverished by processes of de-industrialization. The nearby playground where the men kill time, the nearly deserted train station, the empty fields and the surrounding ruins all become an urban metaphor of their overbearing wait and sketch an endless vanishing line toward an absent horizon.

Distant from visions of spectacular exoduses at sea, a sea that is almost non-existent in the film, we are shown what becomes of the people who risk their lives for better prospects, only to find themselves trapped in the bureaucratic and geographical meanders of the European 'El Dorado'. We see the suffering of these

people helplessly looking for new horizons that are always imagined to be better yet seem forever out of reach. The hotel, and indeed the town, both become ‘non-places’ in the sense of ‘transit point’ proposed by Marc Augé (1992), except that, in the case of the hotel’s residents, transience has become an abiding circumstance.

As one of the protagonists says, ‘Suffer [sic] for long is different from long-suffering... long-suffering has to do with affliction.’ The affliction here is orchestrated by Karine de Villers and Mario Brenta to offer a seldom seen picture of the reality of migration, one that shows how this exodus can also defy movement, bringing so many lives to an enforced halt. Throughout this well-crafted film, we cannot help but share in the lassitude of these men, their seclusion, and contemplation of an uncertain future.

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*Worlds on Edge*. Directors, **Thiago B. Mendonça** and **Renata Jardim**. 2015. 25 minutes.

Colour. Produced by Memória Viva.

*Worlds on Edge* (*Entremundos*) documents a day in São Paulo’s most unequal neighbourhood. Built around shots that juxtapose the neighbourhood’s rich and poor quarters, the documentary records the extreme social differences that compose Brazilian reality. A simple and straightforward film structure portrays the social reality of one of the world’s largest and richest cities.

From wide-angle shots of residential buildings and luxury houses to ground level

shots of the litter that occupies the narrow streets of the slums, the viewer’s gaze is intercalated in the material universe of daily life in São Paulo. In that sense, the film renders an accurate portrait of the city. By contrasting the gated residencies and the slums, paved roads and narrow alleys, cars and skateboards, a personal trainer and a gym, the ballet class and the communal ball, the viewer is offered rich details of the material and symbolic elements found in the city, nearly creating in this way a typology of the megalopolis. A strong feature of the film is the sound editing, which allows the differences of the city to become clear not only through images, but through a clear editing of the many layers of noise of the poor periphery and the almost complete silence of the bourgeois residences.

In the most compelling sequence, the political component of the film becomes explicit. Residents from the rich quarters of the neighbourhood gather around a police station to discuss public security issues. In racist rants against the slum residents, these bourgeois residents demand harsh security measures, including the deployment of army troops, in a cacophony of nonsense and prejudice. Juxtaposed with this sequence, the camera presents a samba party in the slums, whose residents joyfully sing and dance. It is the sole moment in which the oppositional structure of the film falls short, however. Lacking mediation, the directors unwarily reproduce the same biased rhetoric that they denounce in the racist bourgeois residents. The overlapping of the soundscape and the appearance of joy with the upper-class resentment shows the film to have less of a dialog with the slums, which it sees with an air of naïveté, than



with the middle class itself. The core of inequality thus remains untouched, and although the denouncement of racist rhetoric is evident, in the end we are left with no account of the cause of the social inequality that the films denounces.

Overall, nonetheless, the film is a fair depiction of São Paulo's everyday reality. It may certainly provide insights for students of Urban Anthropology and Visual Culture, allowing them to reflect on ways to portray and work with images of the urban environment. It may also be of interest to Urban Studies and Architecture students in general, since it captures significant differences in material culture found in a global megalopolis, highlighting the topology of the city and the creative housing solutions developed with local ingenuity. Furthermore, it contributes to the portrayal of São Paulo (and Brazilian) reality, since it does not repeat the cliché of 'poverty as disgrace', common in many representations of Brazil, and provides a fair portrayal of the everyday life of marginalized communities.

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*Portrait of China.* Director, **Mathias Nordby**. 2018. 30 minutes.  
Colour.

The opening shot of Mathias Nordby's 'Portrait of China' depicts a meandering ribbon of smoke trailing up from a lit cigarette perched on an ashtray. A chair pulled up to the small round table where the ashtray sits is conspicuously empty, and the

room is silent save for the muffled sounds that emanate from the grey, nondescript Chinese city outside the window. The image sets the scene for what can be read as a brisk thirty-minute reflection on presence and absence in China's rapidly shifting urban scapes. Self-described as an 'ethnographic film', Nordby presents a visual collage of nine different regions, juxtaposing moments of consumption, leisure, and everyday practices that are often mediated through technologies of communication, transportation, and recreation. As such, the short film invites a deeper consideration of how social relationships and relations to particular places, times, and lifestyles are being critically transformed in contemporary China. As new technologies thread together seemingly disparate episodes — a toy drone drawing a crowd at a cherry blossom festival, a group of friends discussing their post-graduation futures over a game of cards aboard a train, a barge drifting across the skyline at dusk, ubiquitous smart phones and selfie sticks — they point to new and enduring modes of connection even as they highlight proliferating forms of disconnection and disengagement.

In his analysis of the modern city, Georg Simmel distinguishes the density, diversity, and endless possibilities of the metropolis from the more rigid restrictions of rural life (1964). Simmel's urban dweller is a mobile subject, forging connections across social circles and using these new associations to construct an individualized identity and social world (1955). In the modern Maoist city, however, the enclosed form of the work unit frequently resulted in less freedom, heterogeneity and interaction at the urban level. As Lu Duanfang describes, in this context, the work unit was

often physically and socially separated from the rest of the city, restricting urban residents' access to resources outside of its confines (2006).

Nordby's film presents glimpses of a radically transformed Chinese urbanite, with cosmopolitan tastes, desires, and an identity derived from the expanding cityscapes once derided as parasitical under Mao (Visser 2010). While residents still congregate in public parks (see Farquhar 2009), stop to read the daily newspaper displayed on public walls, and gather to sing traditional patriotic songs, a 24-7, always-on media environment (Crary 2013) simultaneously allows them to reimagine themselves as part of a distributed national and transnational public (Anderson 2006). Nordby's almost surreptitious shots capturing the aesthetic parameters of Chinese tourists posing for, staging, and circulating selfies are especially provocative, illuminating the ways in which Chinese citizens are today repositioning themselves as protagonists in their own autobiographical stories (Shipley 2015). As we already know, mobile phone images can offer a counter perspective to mainstream media coverage and help reimagine a citizenry outside of official state channels (Bonilla and Rosa 2015). In this particular context, they offer insight into new modes of self-representation in a rapidly urbanizing China, questioning the boundaries of the urban and its communities, as well as the lines between public and private in the city. Although a sense of immense change is impressed upon the viewer, Nordby does not provide any narrative commentary or footage to contextualize this change. As such, Nordby's film would be most useful for scholars and wider audiences looking to

visually supplement more nuanced examinations of the monumental changes currently underway in China.

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*Bricks*. Director, **Quentin Ravelli**. 2017.  
83 minutes.  
Colour. Produced by Survivance.

The documentary *Bricks* explores the social and political consequences of the 2008 financial crisis in Spain. The collapse of the construction industry is used by the director to transform bricks into the main actors of the film. The production, use and destruction of bricks is intertwined with the dialogues and everyday life of people who responded to the crisis in different ways. The materiality of bricks is transgressed to stimulate a multiple audio-visual narrative in which viewers can relate the building blocks with evictions, processes of resistance, political agendas or business plans. 'We have pushed this wall, we've made cracks in it, and with everybody's help, we have to demolish it'.

The use of observational and participatory film techniques is taken to a high level in this audio-visual narrative. This creates a sense of intimacy with the actors and their environment. The camera seems not to interfere with the natural flow of the action, blurring the boundaries between scripted and spontaneous recording or between fiction and reality. Additionally, the adept treatment of lighting, photography and sound creates a cinematic aesthetic uncommon in most documentaries on social issues. The care for technical aspects, however, does not diminish the immersion of the film into the everyday life, emotions and thoughts of its protagonists. They are portrayed as part of a society shaken by the failure of its economic system and the film reveals how this affects people and their ways of life.

The housing crisis is a central point of discussion and involves voices from different economic and social backgrounds. The scenery of the film moves between landscapes shaped by abandoned construction sites and semi ghost towns such as Valdeluz. These places are metaphorically embedded in the process of social and urban transformation through images of the constant production of bricks at a factory. In between these takes we are presented people who introduce us to their life and activities. Dialogic methods are used to foster interactions between the participants in the documentary who address issues such as urban speculation, political corruption and the so-called burst of the construction bubble. This eruption produced high levels of unemployment in Spain, the bankruptcy of many real estate companies, and more than 400,000 evictions. The juxtaposition of some of these dramatic stories with other, less serious ones, offers a perspective for critically reflecting on people's basic rights within the capitalist system.

The frustration of people marginalized by the system and cast into vulnerable circumstances leads to the formation of the 'Mortgage Victims' Platform' collective, a common space for sharing and mutual help. The focus on this collective and its social and political activism is one of the main narratives of the film. We follow the eviction of Blanca's, who is a member of the platform. The different stages of her eviction show how the social and political strength of the platform is generated across generations and people with different social and national backgrounds. The heterogeneous

group, organized in self-defence around a common cause in the face of a reality in which issues of inequality and injustice are at play. The actions of the group members involve not only public demonstrations and interventions but also new forms of democratic expressions and ways of conducting politics. The film ends with the celebration of the local elections in Spain and how these new forms of politics begin to find political representation at the institutional level. The financial crisis evolved into a crisis of political representation, which forced people to find new forms of empowerment and ways to construct future possibilities.

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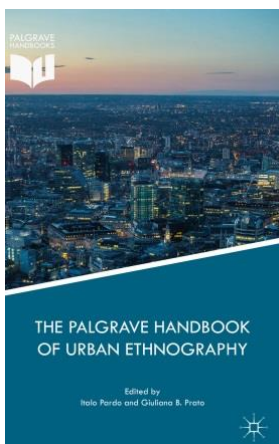
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