Gentrification in a global context: the new urban colonialism

Author(s)	Atkinson, Rowland ; Bridge, Gary
Imprint	London ; New York : Routledge, 2004
Extent	256 p.
Topic	HT
Subject(s)	Gentrification -- Social aspects; Gentrification -- Case studies; Social classes; Sociology, Urban
Language	English
ISBN	9786610168750, 0415329507, 0203392086
Permalink	http://books.scholarsportal.info/viewdoc.html?id=7002
Pages	51 to 68

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Gentrification in Canada's cities
From social mix to 'social tectonics'

Tom Slater

'Canada's coolest neighbourhoods'

Suffering from insomnia on a red-eye flight from Los Angeles to Toronto, I thumbed through Air Canada's monthly magazine, *enRoute,* and happened upon an article entitled 'Canada's Coolest Neighbourhoods'. Criteria for entry in the top ten of coolness, selected by 'a panel of 38 prominent Canadians' (p. 37) were set out as follows:

> When today's archetypal young graphic designer leaves home, he [sic] is looking for something different than what his parents may have sought. Often, he will look for a 'young' place inhabited by his peers. He will seek out a 'fun' place, where he can indulge in his favourite leisure activities. But most of all, he will look for an area that makes him feel distinct and at home at the same time, a neighbourhood that reflects his tastes—a place that is cool (p. 37).

If we dispense with the amusingly arbitrary association of graphic designers with coolness, the striking feature of the list is the fact that every neighbourhood on it has experienced or is experiencing gentrification. In addition, arguably the two most famous gentrified neighbourhoods in Canada occupy the top two slots (see Figure 3.1).

While we should not read too much into the adjudication of an anonymous panel of prominent Canadians in a far from prominent publication, the outcome of Air Canada's survey demonstrates the extent to which gentrification in Canada (and indeed every major advanced capitalist country) has become, in the words of David Ley (2003), 'not a sideshow in the city, but a major component of the urban imaginary' (p. 2527). It is nothing new to see the association of 'gentrification' with 'cool', nor is it new in Canadian contexts to see positive accounts of gentrification like that exhibited in *enRoute*. What is new is the sheer extent to which gentrification is recognised, promoted and celebrated; etched into the public imagination and championed as the process which creates spaces for lavish middle-class consumption and a wider 'liveability' in the city.

1 Queen Street West, Toronto
2 Le Plateau Mont-Royal, Montreal
3 Vieux-Montreal, Montreal
4 West-End, Vancouver
5 Little Italy, Toronto
6 Old Strathcona, Edmonton
7 The Exchange District, Winnipeg
8 Lower Water Street, Halifax
9 Inglewood, Calgary
10 Le Vieux-Québec, Quebec City

3.1 The top ten 'coolest neighbourhoods' in Canada

A number of major theoretical statements on gentrification have emerged from research undertaken in Canadian cities (e.g. Ley 1981, 1986, 1996; Bourne 1993a, 1993b; Caulfield 1989, 1994; Rose 1984, 1996), so the time seems right to offer a review of earlier work and present the findings of recent research to show the 'changing state of gentrification' (see Hackworth and Smith 2001) in Canadian cities, and open up avenues for further inquiry. This chapter adopts a wide-angle lens to document the changing nature of gentrification in Canadian cities, and attempts to demonstrate how the 'emancipatory' potential for 'social mixing' through gentrification, identified in journalistic, political and academic circles, is showing signs of eroding and becoming the potential for something very different, a process of 'social tectonics' (Robson and Butler 2001). The meanings of 'social mix' and 'social tectonics' will be clarified in due course, but the changes in the context of Canada's cities are here attributed to the recent union of neo-liberal urban policy and gentrification.

The first part of this chapter is an abbreviated treatment of a literature that is significant in its size and geographical scope, the second part draws on an empirical investigation conducted in gentrifying South Parkdale, Toronto, to provide an illustration of the neighbourhood effects of what I have elsewhere called 'municipally-managed gentrification' (see Slater 2004a, 2004b). However, it is important to recognise that the role of policy in facilitating gentrification in Canadian cities is not new. As Ley (1996) argued, 'policy initiatives in Canadian cities after 1968 or so have proven propitious for gentrification, even though in most cases this has been an unintended consequence' (p. 52). But in the twentyfirst century, hand-in-hand with the global diffusion of neo-liberalism, the emerging situation is that gentrification is now the *intended* consequence of numerous policy initiatives (as other chapters in this volume point out). Increasing municipal involvement in the process of

gentrification is something that has been noted recently in major Canadian cities (De Sousa 2002; Sommers and Blomley 2002; Smith and Derksen 2002; H.Smith 2003; Ley 2003; Rose 2003), and my purpose is to use the case-study of South Parkdale alongside other recent research to make some tentative general points about the implications of policy-led gentrification.

Emancipatory social mixing: reform-era gentrification in Canadian cities

Gentrification is a process now so firmly established in Canadian cities that it is hard to find neighbourhoods in central city areas from Vancouver to Halifax that have not experienced either wholesale or sporadic gentrification of some form. The rapid pace of urban restructuring since the 1970s makes it all the more remarkable, in retrospect, that it took some time for 'gentrification', a British term, to enter the lexicon of Canadian urban discourse, both public and academic —not until the 1980s did it become the generic label for class transformation in Canadian neighbourhoods. The term 'whitepainting' was used when the process first emerged in Toronto in the mid-1960s, and was a reference to the gentrifiers' penchant for painting the exterior of their house white (Dynes, 1974; Aitkenhead *et al*. 1975; Rebizant *et al*. 1976). At the same time, the process was frequently labelled in other cities with socially innocent terms such as 'rehabilitation', 'townhousing' and 'sandblasting', and gentrification was restricted to a select few neighbourhoods in the largest cities

The process accelerated across Canada in the 1970s during what has become known as the 'reform era' of Canadian urban politics (see Harris 1987). Three scholars in particular, Jon Caulfield, David Ley and Damaris Rose, have provided detailed accounts of gentrification in this era; Ley's covering the six largest Canadian cities, Caulfield's focusing on what happened in Toronto, Rose's on the changing face of Montreal. A summary of their work is necessary in order to gain a historical perspective on gentrification in urban Canada.

For Caulfield (1994), 1970s and 1980s gentrification in Toronto was a very deliberate middle-class rejection of the oppressive conformity of suburbia, modernist planning, and mass market principles. In his words, it was

> a rupture in dominant canons of urban meaning and a cluster of social practices, carried out in the context of everyday life, oriented toward reconstituting the meanings of old city neighbourhoods towards an alternative urban future (p. 109).

Gentrification was portrayed as a highly critical middle-class reaction (what he termed a 'critical social practice') to the city's postwar modernist development— a concerted effort to create this 'alternative urban future'. Toronto's expanding middle-class intelligentsia was instrumental in the reorientation of Toronto's identity away from suburbia and the Fordist ethos back towards the central city

and the emerging post-Fordist society. For the best part of two decades, Toronto's gentrification was in every sense a deliberate operation of resistance to everything that characterised urban development in the 1960s, and thus a practice 'eluding the domination of social and cultural structures and constituting new conditions for experience' (Caulfield 1989:624). In his interviews with the gentrifiers of Toronto, Caulfield observed that their affection for Toronto's old city neighbourhoods was rooted in their desire to escape the mundane, banal routines that characterised suburbia. Heavily influenced by Walter Benjamin, Roland Barthes, Jonathan Raban and Marcel Rioux, he argued the following:

> Old city places offer difference and freedom, privacy and fantasy, possibilities for carnival… These are not just matters of philosophical abstraction but, in a carnival sense,…the city is the place of our meeting with the other (ibid.: 625).

This issue of 'the place of our meeting with the other' will be taken up later on; here it is necessary to register that Caulfield's point was that gentrification could not be separated from reform-era middle-class resistance to political and structural domination.

A similar argument emerges from the work of David Ley in his long-running investigations into gentrification in Canadian cities. It would be foolhardy to attempt to summarise all his work in the space available, so my focus here is on Ley's coverage of the intertwining of gentrification and reform-era urban politics.[1] Post-1968, many centrally-located neighbourhoods in urban Canada saw their social and economic status elevated as the central city became the perceived and lived arena for counter-cultural awareness, tolerance, diversity and liberation. This occurred in the context of a laissez-faire state, a rapidly changing industrial and occupational structure (where 'hippies became yuppies', as Ley so tellingly put it, in the shift towards a post-industrial society), welfare retrenchment, a real estate and new construction boom, the advent of postmodern niche-marketing and conspicuous consumption (Ley and Mills 1993), and the aestheticisation and commodification of art and artistic lifestyles (Ley 2003). In the 1970s, neighbourhoods such as Yorkville and The Annex in Toronto, Kitsilano and Fairview Slopes in Vancouver, Le Plateau Mont-Royal in Montreal, and indeed a number of entries on the list in Figure 3.1, became hotbeds of 'hippie' reaction against political conservatism, modernist planning and suburban ideologies (Ley 1996).

Suspicious of the empirical applicability of arguments from the United States which alluded to a conservative 'adversarial politics' among middle-class gentrifiers, Ley (1994) provided evidence from electoral returns in the three largest Canadian cities (Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver) to demonstrate that the principal gentrifying districts in each city in fact contained an electorate which predominantly sided with more liberal 'reform politics'. Reform politics exhibited

closer management of growth and development, improved public services, notably housing and transportation, more open government with various degrees of neighbourhood empowerment, and greater attention to such amenity issues as heritage, public open space, and cultural and leisure facilities (pp. 59– 60).

In all three cities under scrutiny there was 'no significant tendency overall for social upgrading in the city centre to be associated with [adversarial] conservative politics' (p. 70). In *The New Middle Class and the Remaking of the Central City* (1996), Ley exposed the power of the legacy of the counter-cultural youth movements of the late 1960s, arguing that their 'values diffused and evolved among receptive and much larger segments of the professional middle class' (p. 210). The professional middle class were a group which saw unprecedented expansion in the 1970s and 1980s (see also Hamnett 1991; Rose 1996), and for Ley, their collective disdain for the monotony of suburbia, for the mass organisation and repetition of postwar Fordism and its crushing of individualism and difference (and entire neighbourhoods, through freeway construction) could not be divorced from the explanation of gentrification. 'Consecutive waves of the new middle class' viewed the central city as 'a credential, a mark of distinction in the constitution of an identity separate from the constellation of place and identity shaped by the suburbs' (p. 211), and using both quantitative measures and qualitative accounts, Ley demonstrated that gentrification was the outcome in city after city across Canada (see also Ley and Mills 1986; Cybriwsky, Ley and Western 1986).

In Caulfield's work, and to a lesser extent Ley's, we find an endorsement of Damaris Rose's concept of the 'marginal gentrifier', first outlined in a paper published in 1984. This concept emerged from—and was later bolstered by (e.g. Rose and Le Bourdais 1986; Rose 1989)—research in Montreal, and refers to the fact that marginally-employed professionals, prominent among whom were women, single parents and receiving moderate incomes, were attracted to central city neighbourhoods due to the range of support services they offered—which were unavailable in the suburbs. For example, the worry of precarious employment could be eased by networking and holding more than one job; and by minimising space-time constraints, lone female parents could combine paid and unpaid (domestic) labour with greater ease than in suburban locations. Most relevant to this discussion, the concept of the marginal gentrifier was very much influenced by the major societal changes that took place in the reform era:

> [S]ome of the changes which are usually subsumed within the concept 'gentrification' can bring into existing neighbourhoods intrusions of alternative ways of living, which would never be tolerated if they were not being introduced by 'middle-class' and 'professional' people in the first instance (p. 68).

Rose concluded her article by calling for an approach to gentrification which explored 'the actual processes through which those groups we now subsume under the category "gentrifiers" are produced and reproduced' (p. 69). Crucially, she argued that such an approach 'may help us clarify what constitute progressive types of intervention and to identify "oppositional spaces" within the non-commodified sphere of daily life, where such interventions may be tried out' (p. 69). While the political undercurrent of this approach was subject to some trenchant criticism from Marxist scholars (see Smith 1987), Rose's work, like Ley's and Caulfield's, is a very clear lens through which we can see the causes of earlier rounds of gentrification in Canadian cities. Their work should not be interpreted as narrowly cultural, theorising the production of gentrifiers at the expense of other concerns, but rather as a collective of penetrating scholarship which captured the major social, economic and cultural shifts taking place in urban Canada following the major political upheavals of 1968 and the birth of reactionary, countercultural middle-class sensibilities.

The emancipatory discourse on gentrification is not something that can or should be easily disentangled from the issues of social mixing and social diversity in gentrifying neighbourhoods. It is Rose who has engaged with these issues in most depth as part of her continued interest in the gentrification of Montreal, particularly where that city stands *vis-à-vis* broad theoretical statements in the study of gentrification. In a critique of 'stage models' of the process, she argued that:

> it is not inevitable, even in advanced tertiary cities, that all neighbourhoods where a 'beachhead' of 'first wave gentrifiers' is established will ultimately be caught up in an irreversible dynamic largely driven by major real estate interests and leading to their transformation into homogenous yuppie preserves…(1996:153).

Rose points to the fact that many gentrified and gentrifying districts in Montreal in fact exhibit social diversity: '[e]ven at the scale of a city block, rare are the instances where a new social homogeneity has taken hold' (p. 157). This is because, first, the legacy of the city-building process created a very diverse residential morphology at a micro-scale, second, because small pockets of social housing were dotted throughout gentrifying neighbourhoods, and third, 'there were not enough wealthy potential gentrifiers and the city's [1980s] economy was too weak…to unleash a dynamic of wholesale transformation of the most "professionalized" neighbourhoods' (p. 161). In this context, Rose concluded that different social groups are brought together by gentrification, and seem to be staying together, making social diversity 'an issue to be reckoned with rather than dismissed in gentrification theory' (p. 161).

I will discuss Rose's most recent work in the conclusion to this chapter, but at this stage it is worth pointing out that 'social mix' has a long history in Canadian urban planning (one which pre-dates gentrification) and underpinned by

nineteenth-century utopiansim and normative principles on neighbourhood 'health', often drawn up in contrast to ghettoisation in the United States (Harris 1993; Dansereau *et al*. 1997). Any discussion of the emancipatory discourse on gentrification in Canada must take into account the oppositional discourse from which it draws most power. Canadian city images of liveability, freedom, tolerance, cross-class interaction, diversity, mixing and conviviality are almost always articulated and legitimised in contrast to gentrification in the United States, which, as portrayed in an even larger literature, has been associated with controversy, resistance, unease, 'dirtiness' and 'revanchism' (Smith 1996). A discourse is rarely constructed without reference to its 'other',[2] as Lees and Demeritt (1998) have pointed out comparing American and Canadian city discourses:

> images of decay…and images of civility are not simply contrasting; they are mutually constitutive. As a binary opposition, the meaning of one depends on the other (p. 335).

Yet the emancipatory discourse is also a product of its time (the reform-era, and the era of rapidly-widening employment horizons, life course and housing choices for middle-class women). Its power could well dwindle as gentrification in Canada changes, and the next section of this chapter provides an illustration of the influence of neo-liberal urban policy in producing a new situation which is far from emancipatory.

Neo-liberal social tectonics: the case of South Parkdale

> The specific impact of gentrification on Toronto tenants is to exacerbate the tightness of the rental market by causing the withdrawal of generally cheap accommodation from this market.
>
> (Filion 1991:563)

In two papers which could now be described as infamous, Larry Bourne (1993a, 1993b) questioned the longevity of gentrification in Canada (and elsewhere). Based on evidence from Canadian cities, he argued that a 'demise' of gentrification would lead to a 'post-gentrification era' because

> the supply of potential young gentrifiers will be significantly smaller, given the passing of the baby-boom into middle-age, the declining rate of new household formation, and the general aging of the population. The expanding cohort of potential young gentrifiers will not be sufficient to compensate for the rapid decline in the younger cohorts. At the same time, given widespread macro-economic restructuring, corporate down-sizing

and a persistent recession, we might also expect slower rates of employment growth in the service sector and associated occupations.

<div align="right">(1993:104–5)</div>

While his work was rightly taken seriously, Bourne's declamatory predictions did not materialise, and his arguments were refuted regularly (Badcock 1993, 1995; Lees and Bondi 1995; Smith 1996; Ley 1996; Wyly and Hammel 1999; Smith and DeFilippis 1999; Hackworth 2001, 2002b). The language that replaced Bourne's post-gentrification thesis was that of a 'post-recession' era (from 1993 onwards) *of accelerated,* 'third wave' gentrification. Hackworth and Smith (2001) argue that this era differs from earlier gentrification in four ways. First, gentrification is expanding within and beyond the neighbourhoods it affected during earlier waves. Second, the real estate industry has restructured under globalisation, providing a platform for the involvement of larger developers in gentrification. Third, resistance to gentrification has declined due to continued working-class displacement from the inner city, and fourth, the state is now more involved in gentrification than in the 1980s 'second wave', which was largely market driven (see Mills 1988, for the case of Fairview Slopes, Vancouver). While it is very likely that there will be historical and geographical variances to these four points (something that Hackworth and Smith perhaps do not emphasise enough), I zoom in on the fourth category; specifically, increasing neo-liberal municipal government involvement in the process of gentrification. The following is a very condensed account of such involvement, drawn from research conducted in the neighbourhood of South Parkdale, Toronto.

South Parkdale is located in Toronto's west end (Figure 3.2), and has a history which is best described as turbulent. It emerged in the late 19th century as one of Toronto's first commuter suburbs, facilitated by the development of the railway and later the streetcar (Laycock and Myrvold 1991). Streets were laid out to facilitate resident access south to Lake Ontario, and north to Queen Street which became the main thoroughfare of commerce and trade, a condition unaltered today. In its early years it was considered 'one of Toronto's most desirable residential locations' (CTPB 1976:7). Known informally as 'The Village by the Lake' (Laycock and Myrvold 1991), with fine Victorian and Edwardian terraces and some substantial mansions housing a largely elite and upper-middle class population, South Parkdale was for many years insulated from an era in Toronto which Hiebert (1995) has described as 'a time of massive immigration, economic change and social ferment' (p. 55).

This insulation was removed when Toronto became a locus of experimental modernist planning in the 1950s (Caulfield 1994; Filion 1999). Expressways leading to suburban expansion were seen as signs of economic progress, legitimised by phraseology such as 'slum clearance' and 'urban renewal' (Kipfer and Keil 2002). While there was disinvestment from the neighbourhood after World War II (Whitzman 2003), South Parkdale's identity was forever changed when it found itself in the path of the construction of the Gardiner Expressway
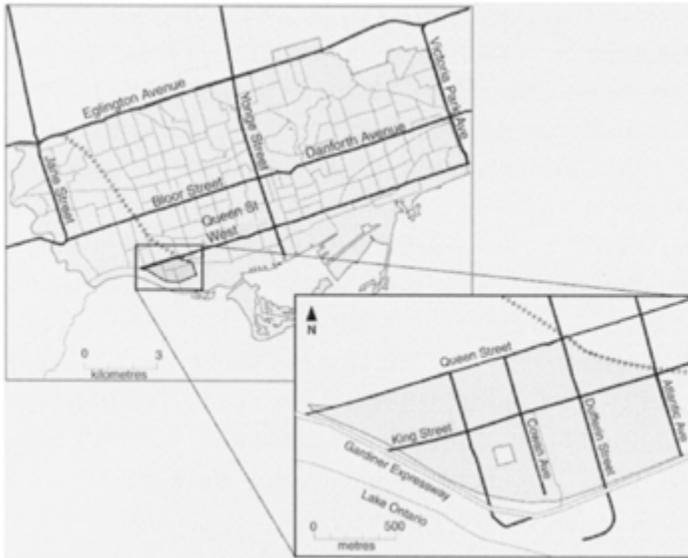
3.2 Queen Street

between 1955 and 1964. By 1959, South Parkdale was completely sliced off from Lake Ontario (Figure 3.2), its principal amenity. Over 170 houses were demolished, and entire streets erased from existence (Caulfield 1994:33). A number of high-rise apartment buildings were constructed in the neighbourhood, with the City of Toronto hoping that those displaced by the Expressway construction would move in and remain in South Parkdale (CTPB 1976). This proved optimistic; the middle classes largely abandoned it in favour of other neighbourhoods and the suburbs. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, substantial mansions and handsome terraces were demolished to make way for the high-rises; others were abandoned by owner occupiers and sold to absentee landlords or (dis)investment firms, who divided them into smaller apartments, and some properties remained vacant as the neighbourhood went into serious economic decline (Dunn 1974).

In the 1980s, South Parkdale was further affected by its proximity to the Queen Street Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, the largest psychiatric facility in Canada and 'a consistently vital resource' for Toronto's mentally ill (Court 2000).

In this decade, the Tory provincial government endorsed the deinstitutionalisation of psychiatric patients under the misnomer of 'community-based care' (Dear and Taylor 1982; Marshall 1982; Dear and Wolch 1987; Hall and Joseph 1988; Simmons 1990). Thousands of patients were discharged from the centre into South Parkdale in the early 1980s (Marshall 1982; Simmons 1990). Coupled with a major retraction in the welfare state, a consequence of a

provincial fiscal crisis (Lemon 1993; Hasson and Ley 1994), deinstitutionalisation had profound and lasting effects on a neighbourhood already under stress from metropolitan restructuring and devalorisation.

Housing was neither plentiful nor adequate for the needs of discharged psychiatric patients, and by 1981, it was estimated that up to 1,200 lived in South Parkdale (Simmons 1990:168), in a neighbourhood which by 1985 contained only 39 official 'group homes' for such patients (Joseph and Hall 1985:150). A large majority thus had to find alternative means of accommodation. As the provincial government did not provide housing assistance to those discharged, patients gravitated to unofficial boarding homes, to rooming houses or the even smaller 'bachelorette' apartments in the single-family dwellings of the old South Parkdale. All of these housing types saw prolific (and usually illegal) conversion during the 1970s, resulting in one of the highest concentrations of low-income housing in Toronto. Home to such a large number of mentally unwell residents mostly left to their own devices, South Parkdale became beset by the social problems resulting from poverty, illness and institutional neglect. As Dear and Wolch (1987) put it, deinstitutionalisation in Ontario was 'a policy adopted with great enthusiasm, even though it was never properly articulated, systematically implemented, nor completely thought through' (p. 107).

South Parkdale has for a long time stood in stark contrast to most other neighbourhoods in central Toronto. Its reputation has proved highly resilient; a recent article in *The Globe and Mail* described it as 'a neighbourhood rife with poverty, drugs, and prostitution…no place for a child to grow up' (Philip 2000). However, while it might seem unlikely that gentrification could take place, it has experienced slow yet continuing middle-class resettlement since the mid-1980s, quickening in pace (though not yet rampant) since the mid-1990s. A neighbourhood that was so often an instigator of middle-class derision and fear attracted the middle-classes *precisely because* its insalubrious reputation kept property values down. As house prices rose elsewhere in Toronto in consecutive real estate booms, a growing segment of professional middle classes found a handsome, spacious and affordable Victorian and Edwardian architectural heritage on South Parkdale's broad, tree lined streets, with easy access to employment in downtown Toronto. Their expectations were that property values would eventually rise as the neighbourhood's profile rose, leading to handsome profits in years to come. There can be few better examples than the case of South Parkdale for the continued need for 'complementarity' in the explanation of gentrification (Clark 1992; Lees 1994); a 'rent-gap' existed in tandem with the production of gentrifiers with tastes for a distinctive housing stock.

A major factor behind more recent gentrification has been South Parkdale's growing reputation as a community of artists. Artists have been shown to prime entire neighbourhoods for the real estate industry; the group rich in cultural capital who often pave the way for followers richer in economic capital (Podmore 1998; Bridge 2001b; Ley 2003). The South Parkdale section of Queen Street West represents the final stage of the Street's cultural (and socio-

economic) transformation in a westerly direction from Spadina Avenue in the heart of Toronto. Artists have congregated in South Parkdale because studio and gallery rents are affordable, and because the 'edginess' of the neighbourhood serves to amplify the message of their 'cutting edge' art. Over 600 artists now live in the neighbourhood, and have the complete, uncritical support of the city, as was revealed to me by the City Councillor for the administrative ward which contains South Parkdale:

> Things are improving with the influx of the art galleries. This is the way we need to go, we need to open up the street to that sort of business. I was instrumental in that because I was on the board that helped to legalise live/work spaces for artists who were living in poor conditions. So with Queen Street what is needed are speciality stores that will serve people in the neighbourhood and attract people from beyond it. It's not great at the moment, but it's getting there. We do need more pride from businesses on Queen Street, like cleaning up windows, storefronts, signs, that kind of thing.
>
> (City Councillor, interview, 2 April 2001)

Yet the resettlement of middle-class homeowners and tenants (who have been following the artists) has not been welcomed by the substantial number of low-income tenants in the neighbourhood, who are now threatened by displacement resulting from either the closure or deconversion of rooming houses and bachelorette buildings. These are the cheapest forms of permanent rental accommodation currently available in Toronto, the last step before homelessness for the city's low-income population. Together with gentrification, a lack of profits for landlords, pressure from middle-class residents' associations (Lyons 2000), new zoning restrictions, and closure through illegality and poor safety standards, such dwellings have declined significantly across Toronto since the 1980s. This decline has been linked to the explosive growth of homelessness in the city (Filion 1991; Dear and Wolch 1993; Ley 1996; Layton 2000; Harris 2000; Peressini and McDonald 2000).

   In December 1996, under pressure from middle-class residents concerned about the effects of low-income accommodation on adjacent property values, the City of Toronto passed a by-law that prohibited any rooming house/bachelorette development or conversion in South Parkdale, pending the outcome of an area study. The results were released in July 1997, in the form of proposals entitled 'Ward 2 Neighbourhood Revitalization' (CTUDS 1997). An examination of the document reveals what the City of Toronto viewed as the principal social problem of the area—the presence of single-person dwellings and their low-income occupants. The broad objective of the proposals was spelt out concisely and without disguising the intent:

> To stabilize a neighbourhood under stress and restore a healthy demographic balance, without dehousing of vulnerable populations.
>
> (CTUDS 1997:17, emphasis added)

The document repeatedly reminds its audience of an 'unhealthy' balance:

> [T]he area has gone from a stable neighbourhood, with a healthy mix of incomes and household types, to one with *a disproportionately large number of single occupancy accommodation* [sic].
>
> (ibid: 1, emphasis added)

> At the request of [the City] Councillor…[the] Land Use Committee requested the Commissioner of Planning and Development…to report back on *a strategy to encourage families to return to Ward 2*.
>
> (ibid.: 3, emphasis added)

> Limiting the number of units in future conversions to two will automatically ensure that at least one, and probably both the *units will be large enough for family occupancy.* The second rental unit, if provided as a rental unit, could *assist a young family in carrying a mortgage on their house*.
>
> (ibid.: 26–7, emphasis added)

It does not take a sophisticated decoding of this document to realise that an influx of families is seen as a way to unlock South Parkdale's 'revitalisation'. While the objective states that 'dehousing' of vulnerable populations would be avoided, it is not easy to see how this can be achieved because South Parkdale's most vulnerable are singles—the welfare-dependent, mentally ill and socially isolated. A defensible argument can be put forward that these proposals were not drawn up to improve the conditions for singles already in South Parkdale, but drawn up to reduce the percentage of singles in the neighbourhood, with middle-class families from other areas taking their place.

Following a boisterous anti-gentrification campaign by the Parkdale Common Front, a coalition of anti-poverty activist groups who united against new zoning and argued that the city's proposals were tantamount to 'social cleansing' (Lyons 1998; Kipfer and Keil 2002), the city went back to the drawing board. Responding to criticism that they had been exclusive of low-income interests in the neighbourhood, they invited members of all stakeholders to a series of meetings, in what became known as the 'Parkdale Conflict Resolution'. In October 1999, the outcome was published (CTUDS 1999a), and while quieter on the issue of attracting families, the 1996 by-law remained in place, and a team of planners and building inspectors, called the Parkdale Pilot Project (PPP), was formed to deal with the overcrowding, illegality and poor safety of many of the existing multi-unit dwellings; its manifesto is presented in Figure 3.3. The

requirement for licensing eligibility most relevant to this discussion is that all units in a building must comply with the minimum unit size of 200 square feet (CTUDS 1999b:14). A study undertaken in 1976 by the City of Toronto (CTPB 1976) revealed that many units are smaller than 200 square feet—since many remain unchanged since this study was undertaken, bringing buildings up to standard would almost certainly lead to the loss of smaller units, and to the displacement of tenants.

A representative of the PPP provided a revealing glimpse into the continued wish of the city to reduce the percentage of single-person housing:

> Generally accepted planning principles suggest that healthy neighbourhoods support a diversity of housing opportunities for families, couples and singles. There is a planning concern that by tipping the balance too much in favour of small, essentially single-person housing, that healthy diversity will be lost and the area will become ghettoised as more and more of the housing stock is abandoned by families and converted into bachelorettes and rooming houses. … So what we are doing now is bringing current conversions into the light, and banning all new ones.
>
> (Interview, 20 June 2001)

It is interesting how the very strong emphasis on family housing in earlier reports is now disguised with neo-liberal discourse such as 'a diversity of housing opportunities'. The City of Toronto is clearly using the laws on building safety and licensing to fulfil a broader objective, which is to re-balance the population of South Parkdale. The comments of the director of a drop-in centre for the homeless and mentally ill in the heart of South Parkdale lend credence to this:

> [T]he problem with the zoning legislation is that it was proposed in a neighbourhood with one of the largest, if not the largest, populations of psychiatric survivors in Canada, and the people living in rooming houses… have nowhere else to go. Admittedly there's also an obvious drive to encourage more families to live in Parkdale, as singles are seen as less sensitive to community issues, so the legislation was perhaps intended to make space for a family value ethic which Parkdale has not had since the before the Gardiner [Expressway].
>
> (Interview, 11 April 2001)

In recent years, responsibility for this drive to encourage the middle-class resettlement of South Parkdale has not only been in the hands of the municipal government, but indirectly with the provincial government.[3] The threats to South Parkdale's poor posed by gentrification were compounded by the more aggressively neo-liberal (1995–2003) Conservative provincial government (Keil 2000, 2002). In June 1998, their oddly named 'Tenant Protection Act' came into effect, the hallmark of which was the introduction of vacancy decontrol—the

Parkdale Pilot Project

What are we doing?
* Retain housing
* Improve building and housing safety and standards
* Community improvement

How are we doing it?
* Regularize existing bachelorettes and illegal rooming houses
* License regularized bachelorettes and rooming houses
* Ensure ongoing compliance with standards

When will we do it?

NOW!!!

Toronto

3.3 Parkdale Pilot Project

elimination of rent control on vacant units. When an apartment becomes vacant through 'natural turnover', the landlord may charge whatever they think they can make on the unit to a new tenant. Landlords are now less likely to negotiate if a low-income tenant falls into rent arrears, because the Act paves the way for them

to attract middle-class tenants paying higher rents. This has 'reaked absolute havoc' on low-income tenants in South Parkdale, according to a legal worker working in housing issues at a non-profit legal aid clinic in the neighbourhood:

> In the past you could get your landlord to negotiate with you. Now the impetus is to get rid of you, totally, as they will pay off the arrears they lose when they get a richer tenant paying way more rent… The landlord has no reason, if they think they can get more for that unit, to forgive the people who are in arrears of rent.
>
> (Legal worker in South Parkdale, interview, 12 February 2001)

Layton's (2000) assessment of the Tenant Protection Act captures the problem:

> The ironically named Tenant Protection Act accomplished precisely the opposite result for tenants—exposing them to increased pressure by making evictions more profitable and easier to accomplish (p. 81).

Not only are there stories of threatened and actual displacement to be heard in South Parkdale (see Slater 2004b), there is also a contradiction between the two levels of government concerning the PPP. Following any mandatory maintenance/ safety improvements ordered by the PPP inspectors, the landlord can still apply to the province for an 'above-guideline rent increase' allowed under the Tenant 'Protection' Act—so the costs of regularisation can be downloaded to the tenant. If the municipal government really is attempting to improve the existing housing stock 'without dehousing of vulnerable populations', their work may be undone by this loophole in the provincial government's tenancy legislation—achieving the desired rebalance of the 'unhealthy' demographics of South Parkdale.

To explain the social impacts of gentrification on South Parkdale, it is instructive to turn to the work of Robson and Butler (2001). Undertaking qualitative gentrification research in Brixton, London, they found that social relations

> might be characterized as 'tectonic'. That is to say, broadly, that relations between different social and ethnic groups in the area are of a parallel rather than integrative nature; people keep, by and large, to themselves…. Social groups or 'plates' overlap or run parallel to one another without much in the way of integrated experience in the area's social and cultural institutions. This does not make way for an especially cosy settlement, and many residents, middle class or otherwise, speak of palpable tensions (pp. 77–8).

The 'tectonic' social structure is reinforced by minimal class interaction and conflict. It is somewhat ironic that this structure of class isolation and absence of

social capital exists in Brixton, a place which attracts gentrifiers because of its social heterogeneity and multiculturalism. As these authors explained in a companion essay, a tectonic social structure 'celebrates diversity in principle but leads to separate lives in practice' (Butler and Robson 2001a:2157). This is precisely what is happening in South Parkdale, but it is policy-led. Social diversity is encouraged by neo-liberal urban policy which shows an alarming lack of attention to South Parkdale's complex historical geography. 'Social balance' under the guise of gentrification is being deliberately mapped onto one of the last outposts of low-income housing in central Toronto, and socially tectonic relationships are the outcome. Interviews conducted with incoming gentrifiers and extant non-gentrifiers in South Parkdale provided a sense of the *lack* of social mix between different social classes (see Slater 2004b). Lives are lived in parallel, under the auspices of what Peck and Tickell (2002) have called 'roll-out' neo-liberalism: the 1990s onwards fit of policy into the grooves laid down by market forces, in contrast to the 'rolling-back' of the state during earlier 1980s neo-liberalism. As Smith and Derksen (2002) have argued, 'where there is the residual welfare state, as in Canada, policies cosmetically ameliorate housing conditions without essentially altering the market or the trajectory of gentrification' (p. 68).

Conclusion

It is important to exercise caution when making general arguments about gentrification in Canada from particular cases, like that of South Parkdale in this chapter. However, there are wider signs that the shift toward relationships in gentrified neighbourhoods characterised by socially tectonic processes is by no means restricted to this neighbourhood or indeed this city. It would also seem that the nature of these social relationships is linked to an increased role played by public policy in the process itself. Recently published research from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, a neighbourhood with a history even more turbulent than South Parkdale's, documents a municipally-managed 'Community Revitalisation Program' in conjunction with a 'Housing Plan'. The purpose here was to 'introduce into the neighbourhood a wider mix of housing types, tenures, households and socio-economic classes' (H.Smith 2003:504). While the alleged intention of these policies is 'to ameliorate growing tensions between the area's newer and more established residents', there is every indication that socially tectonic relationships, rather then social mix, is the outcome as neo-liberal urban policy accentuates 'the clashing of upgrading and downgrading in the neighbourhood' (p. 505; see also Sommers and Blomley 2002). This 'clashing' could also serve as a powerful descriptive indicator of social polarisation under neo-liberal urban policy in South Parkdale.

In a recent study, Damaris Rose (2003) acknowledges that gentrification is 'a particularly "slippery" area of social mix discourse' (p. 1) and demonstrates the impact of recent municipal policies to encourage the movement of middle-

income residents into Montréal's inner-city neighbourhoods.[4] Much of this is facilitated by new housing construction, 'instant gentrification', as Rose calls it, yet there has also been a municipal drive to provide social housing in the vicinity of middle-income developments, and vice versa. At the same time, reflecting the Canadian desire for social mix, there are policies designed to encourage the deconcentration of the poor into middle-income neighbourhoods. As Rose points out, 'it would be quite inappropriate to interpret the Montreal policies and programs as being part of a neo-liberal agenda' (p. 14); there are geographical variances in policy-led gentrification in Canada (Ley 1996). By interviewing professionals who moved into small-scale 'infill' condominiums (constructed by private developers on land often purchased from the City) in Montreal between 1995 and 1998, Rose gathered the views of gentrifiers on municipally-encouraged 'social mix'. Interestingly, a quarter of the forty-nine interviewees expressed some degree of 'NIMBY' sentiments with respect to the prospect of adjacent social housing; as one interviewee remarked:

> I don't want to find myself in a neighbourhood where you'll have confrontation and then there'll be big problems…social problems in the community.
>
> (Interviewee 645 quoted in Rose 2003:22)

The apparent lack of a neo-liberal policy agenda at the municipal scale of government 'says nothing about the existence of a broader social climate influenced by neo-liberalism and individualism' (Rose, personal communication, 16 January 2004). There has, quite simply, been a neo-liberal revolution across Canada with a concerted attack on the much admired Canadian welfare state, massive cuts in federal funding of social services in the provinces (due to globalisation priorities and structural adjustment demands), provincial cutbacks and privatisation of social services, and the downloading of social responsibility to municipalities and the voluntary sector. The impacts are of course geographically uneven, with some regions/provinces/cities affected more than others but at the urban scale:

> [G]entrification, fuelled by a concerted and systematic partnership of public planning with public and private capital, has moved into the vacuum left by the end of liberal urban policy.
>
> (Smith and Derksen 2002:67)

Social mix in urban settings remains the goal of urban planners, policy-makers, and middle-class residents. These goals need to understood in light of a continuing influence of reform-era emancipation and is, at first glance, an admirable intention. However, such 'social mix' increasingly appears to be a shield under which gentrification is being actively promoted as a means of achieving a social mix which improves local tax bases rather than civic pride and

disparate social interaction. It is this which appears to create additional problems. Gentrification as an emancipatory experience has only ever been portrayed as a middle-class experience that generally excludes the voices and experiences of other residents. The final outcome of these changes can only be anticipated. Nevertheless, these moves push towards an urban future in which the image of neighbourhood 'coolness' and social mix, projected by boosters of Canadian cities, sits uneasily with the apparent entrenchment of gentrification which has brought few benefits to low-income residents of many of these neighbourhoods.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1 This is something of a neglected aspect of Ley's work, as many commentators have chosen to situate him as the cultural opposite to Neil Smith's economic explanations of the process, with the unfortunate effect of misrepresenting both scholars, overdrawing their perspectives, and sidelining issues of vital epistemological importance. If this irritating tendency ends, gentrification research will advance even further.

2 As an example, take Ley's (1996) telling caveat in his round-up of Canadian city gentrification: 'the geographical specificity of gentrification should caution us from making arguments that are too binding from evidence that is limited to the United States' (p. 352).

3 While provincial policies are not geared towards particular neighbourhoods, they have a significant influence on the ways in which Canadian urban spaces are lived and contested (Stoecker and Vakil 2000).

4 At the same time, reflecting the Canadian desire for social mix, there are policies designed to encourage the deconcentration of the poor into middle-income neighbourhoods.