

# Discourses and Practices in Regeneration Policies and Anti-Gentrification Efforts In London and New York



Berlin, Center for Metropolitan Studies, July 6<sup>th</sup> 2010, Ernst-Reuter-Platz 7, TEL 3-0 (3<sup>rd</sup> floor)



## Invited guests

**Loretta Lees**, Professor of Human Geography at King's College London

**Tom Angotti**, Professor at Hunter College Department of Urban Affairs & Planning, New York City

Workshop organized by **Alessandro Busà**, Doctoral Fellow at Center for Metropolitan Studies, Berlin.

\* The idea for this workshop was born out of a conversation with Robert Beauregard  
(Professor of Urban Planning at GSAPP Columbia University, New York)

City governments often see citizen activism against gentrification as focusing on “thin” ideals rather than “thick” pragmatism. While community proposals are generally labeled as nostalgic and unpractical, it is generally the very urban planning discourses and the routinized regeneration policies they support that are made of “thin” slogans (“vibrant street life,” “diverse neighborhoods”, “affordable housing”) that conceal the interwoven interests of city officials, developers and corporate employers for intense real estate development at the expenses of socially sustainable planning. Citizen groups often propose reasonable and practical devices as a way to sustain and protect the socioeconomic fabric of their communities, yet their contributions remain mostly neglected or unheard. This workshop will examine cases of regeneration policies and community planning in the US and Europe in an attempt to discuss the path to strategically incorporate these proposals into government policy.

Since the 1970s, gentrification has shifted from being a marginal, fragmented process in the housing market to a comprehensive and systematic urban development strategy which has been incorporated into planning manifestos, urban renaissance policies, zoning codes and private development initiatives (Smith, 2002). Regeneration policies in advanced capitalist cities routinely promise "diverse neighborhoods," "vibrant street life," "affordable housing," "mixed-income communities" – seemingly universal principles, that nonetheless are imbued with a strong middle class bias. Meanwhile, community-based organizations generally stand alone in their struggles against the customary outcomes of city-led regeneration policies in moderate- and low-income neighborhoods: gentrification and displacement.

Critics in city governments usually see citizen activism against gentrification as acting in the realm of idealism, i.e. as focusing on "thin" ideals rather than "thick" practicalities. While their proposals are often labeled as nostalgic, chimerical and unpractical, it is often the very urban planning discourses and the routinized regeneration policies they support that are made of "thin" captivating slogans - camouflaging the interwoven interests of city officials, developers, landlords and corporate actors for intense real estate development that ultimately undermines all the noble-sounding goals. But, contrarily to such criticism, citizen groups very often propose reasonable and practical devices - such as mandatory inclusionary zoning for affordable housing, enforceable community plans as opposed to developer-driven zoning, regulations such as "formula retail zoning" to avoid the closing of small business and the proliferation of low-wage paying chain retail outlets, and policies targeting homeless and low-income needs - as a way to maintain a socioeconomic mix and to protect the socioeconomic fabric of their communities.

The debate on gentrification has occupied academic scholarship for decades. However, Tom Slater, Winifred Curran and Loretta Lees (2004) remind us that "concerns with low income communities which are at best severely disrupted and at worst eliminated by gentrification have been neglected". Their call is for thorough investigations of "how and at what spatial scales people fight for their right to place, or their right to be re-placed".

This workshop aims to contribute to this gap in academic research by focusing on effective strategic proposals formulated by citizen groups as a response to the social threats posed by regeneration policies in US and European cities. As the title of the workshop suggest, a thorough discussion of contextual case studies may reveal the "thick" pragmatism of these devices aimed at delivering what vague urban planning discourses only promise. Community activists are, after all, urban planners and practitioners as well; nevertheless, their contributions remain at best neglected or unheard. In the rare instances in which community proposals are selectively incorporated into the planning process, this mostly leads to disappointing results and few gains for the community, while ultimately serving the purpose of legitimizing the process itself and selling it as "participatory".

With the idea of a "geography of gentrification", Loretta Lees (2000) called for a research based on international, intra-national and citywide comparisons of contextual cases of gentrification. In this workshop, case studies from New York City, London and other cities in Europe and in the US will be discussed and compared in an effort to examine the local specificities of gentrification phenomena whilst also unveiling the interest groups endorsing the process and the ones resisting against it, their discourses and practices.

### The workshop will revolve around:

- The discourses and practices of interest groups promoting urban regeneration policies;
- The discourses and practices of interest groups resisting gentrification and displacement caused by regeneration policies;
- “Pragmatism” vs. “idealism” in both regeneration policies and anti-gentrification efforts;
- A comparative assessment of contextual regeneration policies and anti-gentrification efforts in different local contexts;
- Political strategies to incorporate community-based proposals into government policy.

### Program of the Workshop

The workshop will take place on Tuesday, July 6<sup>th</sup> 2010, at the Center for Metropolitan Studies, Tel 3-0, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor

<b>11.00 – 11.30: Alessandro Busà, introductory notes: "Discourses and Practices in Regeneration policies and Anti-Gentrification Efforts"</b>
<b>11.30 – 12.15: Loretta Lees: <i>Revisiting the Geography of Gentrification: thinking through comparative urbanism</i></b>
<b>12.30 – 13.15: <u>Tom Angotti</u>: <i>The Complexities of Gentrification, Community-based Strategy and Social Justice</i></b>
<b>13.30 – 14.30: Lunch break at Skylounge, Tel 3-0, 20th floor</b>
<b>14.30 – 16.00 Group Discussion</b>
<b>16.00 – 16.20: Maja Grabkowska: <i>Gentrification in the Post socialist City of Gdansk, in Poland</i></b>
<b>16.30 – 16.50: Oddrun Sæter and Tone Huse: <i>Film and Paper on Gentrification in East Oslo.</i></b>
<b>17.00 – 19:00: Final group discussion</b>

Participation is free. The workshop will be held in English. Most resources recommended in the literature listing are downloadable for free. Participation is open to everyone –however, participants are kindly recommended to send an email of confirmation by July 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Contributions from scholars, activists, and interested participants from Berlin and other US and European cities are strongly encouraged. Each contribution should be kept to a maximum of 15 minutes. Please review the free downloadable literature listing before the workshop.

If you wish to contribute with a talk or presentation, please send an email with a 15-line abstract (in English) by July 2<sup>nd</sup> at the latest to:

[alessandro.busa@metropolitanstudies.de](mailto:alessandro.busa@metropolitanstudies.de)

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Berlin, Center for Metropolitan Studies, July 6<sup>th</sup> 2010, TEL 3-0



## Invited Guests

**Loretta Lees** is currently Professor of Human Geography at King's College London. She has a PhD in Geography from the University of Edinburgh (1994). Her previous posts have been Reader in Geography, KCL (2005-2008), Senior Lecturer in Geography, KCL (2004-2005), Lecturer in Geography, King's College (1997-2004), Post-doctoral Fellow, Department of Geography, University of British Columbia, Canada (1995-1997) and Visiting Lecturer, Department of Geography, University of Waikato, New Zealand (1994). She has served/is serving on the following editorial boards - *Environment and Planning A* (2002-present), *ACME: an international e-journal for critical geographies* (2003-2006), *The Canadian Geographer* (2004-2006), *Geography Compass* (2006-present), *Dialogues in Human Geography* (2009-present). Loretta is currently on the ESRC postdoctoral fellowship panel. Loretta co-organises (with Jenny Robinson, Matthew Gandy and Monica Degen) the *Urban Salon: a London forum for architecture, cities and international urbanism* ([www.theurbansalon.org](http://www.theurbansalon.org))

**Tom Angotti** is Director of the Hunter College Center for Community Planning and Development and Professor of Urban Affairs and Planning at Hunter College, City University of New York. From 1995 to 2001 he was Professor and Chair of the Graduate Center for Planning and the Environment at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York. He is the author of *New York for Sale: Community Planning Confronts Global Real Estate* (MIT Press, 2008), *Metropolis 2000: Planning, Poverty and Politics* (Routledge, 1993), *Housing in Italy* (Praeger, 1977), and many articles in professional journals. He has worked and written extensively on urban planning and community development in the United States, Latin America and Europe. He is a Fellow at the American Academy in Rome, co-editor of *Progressive Planning Magazine*, and participating editor for *Latin American Perspectives* and *Local Environment*. He was previously a city planner with the NYC Department of City Planning, and worked for state government in New Jersey and Massachusetts. He taught at the graduate level at SUNY, Columbia University, Harvard, and University of California at Berkeley. He holds a Ph.D. in Urban Planning and Policy Development from Rutgers University.

## Suggested primary literature

(most resources are downloadable for free)

Angotti, Tom (2008) *The Past and the Future of Sustainability*, The Gotham Gazette, June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2008  
Available online at: <http://www.gothamgazette.com/article/measuringup/20080609/209/2552>

Angotti, Tom, Marcuse, Peter (2008) *New York for Sale: Community Planning Confronts Global Real Estate* (Urban and Industrial Environments), MIT Press. Preface and first chapter available online at:  
<http://mitpress.mit.edu/catalog/item/default.asp?ttype=2&tid=11559&mode=toc>

Angotti, Tom (2010) *Charting a Better Way for Planning and Community Boards*, July 2010  
Available online at: <http://www.gothamgazette.com/article/Land%20Use/20100706/12/3306>

Angotti, Tom (2009) *Zoning without Planning*, The Gotham Gazette, May 26<sup>th</sup> 2009  
Available online at: <http://www.gothamgazette.com/article/fea/20090526/202/2928>

Busà, Alessandro (2010) *Rezoning Coney Island – The Crisis of Routine-Development and the Struggles over “The People’s Playground”*, working paper, Center for Community Planning and Development, Hunter College, CUNY, New York. Available online at:  
<http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/ccpd/repository/files/Busa%20-%20Rezoning%20Coney%20Island%20-%20November%201st%202009.pdf>

Colomb, Claire (2007) *Unpacking New Labour’s ‘Urban Renaissance’ Agenda: Towards a Socially Sustainable Reurbanization of British Cities?*, Planning, Practice & Research, Vol. 22, No. 1, pp. 1–24,  
Available online at: [http://pdfserve.informaworld.com/128144\\_781484342.pdf](http://pdfserve.informaworld.com/128144_781484342.pdf)

Hartman, Chester (1984) *The Right to Stay Put*, Land Reform, American Style, ed. Charles Geisler and Frank Popper, 302–18.

Lees, Loretta (2008) *A Re-appraisal of Gentrification: towards a ‘geography of gentrification’*, Progress in Human Geography, 24 (3): 389-408.  
Available online at: <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/content/1/c4/98/91/PHGppr2000.pdf>

Lees, Loretta, Slater, Tom and Wyly, Elvin (2008) *Gentrification*, Routledge: New York.

Porter, L. and Shaw, K. (eds) (2009) *Whose Urban Renaissance? An international comparison of urban regeneration policies*, London: Routledge.

Newman, Kathe, K. Wyly, Elvin (2006) *The Right to Stay Put, Revisited: Gentrification and Resistance to Displacement in New York City*, Urban Studies Vol. 43, No 1, 23-57, Routledge.

Slater, T., Curran, W., and Lees, Loretta (2004) *Gentrification Research: New Directions and Critical Scholarship*, Environment and Planning A, 36(7):1141-1150.  
Available online at: <http://www.envplan.com/epa/editorials/a3718.pdf>

Slater, Tom (2006) *The eviction of critical perspectives from gentrification research*, International Journal of Urban and Regional Research 30(4) p.737-757.  
Available online at: <http://www.geos.ed.ac.uk/homes/tslater/evicton.pdf>

Smith, Neil (2002) *New Globalism, New Urbanism: Gentrification as Global Urban Strategy*, Antipode, Blackwell Publishers. Available online at: <http://neil-smith.net/wp-content/uploads/2009/10/newglobalism-new-urbanism.pdf>

Weber, Rachel (2002) *Extracting Value from the City: Neoliberalism and Urban Development*, Antipode, Blackwell Publishers. Available online at: <http://www.akira.ruc.dk/~akt/TEKSTERNE/09-Weber-Extracting-Value-from-the-City.pdf>

### Further suggestions

Angotti, Tom, Jagu, Cecilia (2006) *Community Land Trusts and Low-Income Multifamily Rental Housing: The Case of Cooper Square, New York City*, prepared for the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 2006.  
Available online at: <http://urban.hunter.cuny.edu/~tangotti/CLT%20FINAL%2007x.htm>

Angotti, Tom (2008) *Is the Long-Term Sustainability Plan Sustainable?*, The Gotham Gazette, April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2008  
Available online at: <http://www.gothamgazette.com/article/sustain/20080421/210/2495>

Beauregard, Robert (1993) *Voices of Decline: The Post-War Fate of U.S. Cities*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Busà, Alessandro (2008) *Celebrations of Urbanity*, editorial, in Alessandro Busà ed., *The Urban Reinventors 2:07*, UR New York.  
Available online at: <http://www.urbanreinventors.net/paper.php?issue=2&author=busa>

Florida, Richard (2008) *Who's Your City?: How the Creative Economy Is Making Where to Live the Most Important Decision of Your Life*, Basic Books Inc.

Harvey, David (2008) *The Right to the City*, New Left Review, September-October 2008  
Available online at: <http://www.newleftreview.org/?view=2740>

Lees, Loretta (2003) *The Ambivalence of Diversity and the Politics of Urban Renaissance: the case of youth in downtown Portland, Maine, USA*, International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 27 (3): 613-634.  
Available online at: <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/content/1/c4/98/91/IJURR.PDF>

Lees, Loretta (2003) *Policy (Re)turns: urban policy and gentrification, gentrification and urban policy*, Environment and Planning A, 35 (4): 571-574.  
Available online at: <http://www.envplan.com/epa/editorials/a3504com.pdf>

Lees, Loretta (2009) *Urban renaissance in an urban recession: the end of gentrification?*, Environment and Planning A.

Lefebvre, Henri (1991) *The Production of Space*, Blackwell Publishing, Malden, MA.

Marcuse, Peter (2010) *On gentrification - A note from Peter Marcuse*, CITY, VOL. 14, NOS. 1-2, February-April 2010.  
Available online at: <http://www.geos.ed.ac.uk/homes/tslater/notefromMarcuse.pdf>

Slater, Tom (2008) *'A literal necessity to be replaced': a rejoinder to the gentrification debate*, International Journal of Urban and Regional Research 32(1) p.212-223.  
Available online at: <http://www.geos.ed.ac.uk/homes/tslater/evictionrejoinder.pdf>

Slater, Tom, (2009) *Missing Marcuse: on gentrification and displacement*, CITY: analysis of urban trends, culture, theory, policy, action 13 (2) p.292-311.  
Available online at: <http://www.geos.ed.ac.uk/homes/tslater/MissingMarcuse.pdf>

Smith, Neil (1996) *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City*. Routledge, New York.

Smith, Neil (2006) *Gentrification Generalized: From Local Anomaly to Urban "Regeneration" as Global Urban Strategy*, in M. Fisher and G. Downey eds, *Frontiers of Capital: Ethnographic Reflections on the New Economy*, Durham, Duke University Press.