



# Moving beyond Marcuse: Gentrification, displacement and the violence of un-homing

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## Abstract

Displacement has become one of the most prominent themes in contemporary geographical debates, used to describe processes of dispossession and forced eviction at a diverse range of scales. Given its frequent deployment in studies describing the consequences of gentrification, this paper seeks to better define and conceptualise displacement as a process of un-homing, noting that while gentrification can prompt processes of eviction, expulsion and exclusion operating at different scales and speeds, it always ruptures the connection between people and place. On this basis – and recognising displacement as a form of violence – this paper concludes that the diverse scales and temporalities of displacement need to be better elucidated so that their negative emotional, psychosocial and material impacts can be more fully documented, and resisted.

## Keywords

displacement, gentrification, housing, social exclusion, urban geography

## 1 Introduction

Displacement is now one of the most frequently-invoked concepts in human geography, used to describe forms of enforced mobility in a variety of contexts and at different spatial scales (Brickell et al., 2017). The term displays a degree of elasticity: frequently deployed when charting the consequences of natural disaster, wars or state terrorism (e.g. Graif, 2016; Lunstrum, 2016; Oslender, 2016), displacement is also seen as integral to the processes of 'land grab', expropriation and violent

eviction characteristic of (settler) colonialism (Bonds and Inwood, 2016). But it is in the context of the 'new urban enclosure' and the forms of accumulation by dispossession associated with urban neoliberalism that the term is most frequently used (Hodkinson, 2012), with some drawing important parallels between urban

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displacement under racialised capitalism and the seizure of land by settlers who ‘seek to replace an entire system of ownership with another’ (Wolfe, 2016: 34; see also Smith, 2002; Fullilove, 2004; Jackson, 2017).

Such possible connections are deeply-suggestive of the value of displacement as a motif in contemporary urban geography, one that links to important notions of social and spatial justice. As Delaney (2004: 848) writes:

Displacement is a useful concept. It gathers together and generalizes across a range of what may otherwise be dissimilar events and experiences, highlighting shared elements. In an age that commonly celebrates hypermobility as the embodied emblem of freedom, displacement focuses on mobility as coerced, as against the will or wishes of subjects. Displacement can be seen as a mode of de-subjectification insofar as the bodies of the displaced are seen as objects operated on by outside hostile forces.

Yet at the same time, the pliability of the term and its deployment in a wide variety of contexts means it is in danger of becoming a classic ‘chaotic’ concept: a notion that actually obscures as much as it reveals.

This is readily-apparent in the literature on urban gentrification. Here, gentrification scholars regularly refer to displacement, but equally apply a variety of overlapping and related concepts that they sometimes appear to regard as synonymous. For example, ‘domicide’ (Porteous and Smith, 2001) refers to the planned, intentional destruction of someone’s home, but it is a term that does not appear applicable to all gentrification-induced displacement given the latter is not always planned or wilful. In related work, Porteous (1988) talked of the ‘topocide’ occurring when the *memory* of a place is obliterated, reminding us of the phenomenological dimensions of displacement, but through a concept that does not necessarily speak to the displacement of individual households. ‘Root-shock’ (Fullilove, 2004) likewise refers to the destruction of a

neighbourhood (by urban renewal) and the traumatic stress reaction experienced by those affected – something akin to the ‘slow violence’ of housing dispossession described by Pain (2019) when detailing the urban trauma that can become ‘hard-wired’ in place.

While all these terms connote forms of dispossession and carry with them significantly negative overtones, in this paper we suggest that they are neither precise enough, not sufficiently encompassing, to capture the range of displacements that occur in the context of urban gentrification. While we recognise that not all urban displacements are associated with processes of gentrification (Smart and Smart, 2017), and that some argue that gentrification does not cause displacement in each and every case (Freeman, 2005), the concept of displacement is now invoked with such regularity in studies of urban gentrification that there can be no doubt that gentrification and displacement are linked. However, the specification of this relationship remains a major priority: too often displacement remains under-theorised and poorly specified in gentrification studies (Baeten et al., 2017).

In this paper we argue that we need to work with a more rigorous conceptualisation of displacement that is, at the same time, inclusive enough to consider the variety of forms it takes in the context of contemporary urban gentrifications. In doing so we argue that gentrification studies needs to move beyond Marcuse’s (1986) now-classic conceptualisation of displacement as something that happens when a neighbourhood gets too expensive for the poor. While Marcuse’s conceptualisation of the relations between abandonment, displacement and gentrification has been a beacon guiding research on gentrification-induced displacement, we argue that it does not always speak to the displacements being experienced in the 21st century, especially those state-led gentrifications occurring outside the Global North. Nor, we argue, does his emphasis on land value help us understand the phenomenological or affective

dimensions of displacement, and the anger and despair that is inherent to its experience. Marcuse's conceptualisation – a view from 1980s New York – was very much a product of its time (see Slater, 2009).

In this review, we hence develop Atkinson's (2015: 376) conceptualisation of displacement as a process of *un-homing* that severs the links between residents and the communities to which they belong, something registered through a range of modalities, including experiential, financial, social, familial and ecological. In so doing we also extend Brickell et al.'s (2017) work, which argues that displacement needs to be considered as an affective, emotional and material *rupture*. The structure of our paper proceeds as follows. In the first section, the paper explores the relationship between gentrification and displacement, establishing displacement as a *defining feature* of gentrification. Secondly, we consider why displacement matters by addressing the harms associated with displacement, identifying it as a form of un-homing that violently severs the connection between people and place, undermining the *right to dwell*. In the final section, we move to consider how such questions intersect with questions of speed and slowness, noting that measuring displacement – and diagnosing its impacts – can differ depending on the temporal as well as spatial horizons invoked.

## II Displacement in the context of gentrification

Displacement has arguably been a defining feature of gentrification since Glass (1964) first coined the term. As she stated: 'Altogether there has been a great deal of displacement... All those who cannot hold their own – the small enterprises, the lower ranks of people, the odd men out – are being pushed away' (Glass, 1964: xxv–xxvi). Of course, consideration of displacement at the neighbourhood scale has a longer provenance: almost a century before Glass's

work, Friedrich Engels' *The Housing Question* noted that housing speculation had particularly negative consequences for working-class residents:

The result is that the workers are *forced out* of the centre of the towns towards the outskirts; that workers' dwellings, and small dwellings in general, become rare and expensive and often altogether unobtainable, for under these circumstances the building industry, which is offered a much better field for speculation by more expensive dwelling houses, builds workers' dwellings only by way of exception. (Engels, 1975 [1872]: 18)

This positions displacement as an inevitable consequence of uneven development, with the displacement of poorer populations by richer ones tied in to the rhythms of capital investment. These investments ebb and flow in periods of economic boom and slump, with accumulation by dispossession accelerating these processes, scaling up both displacement and investment (Harvey, 2004; Glassman, 2006; Zhang and He, 2018). In the last decade in particular, the extent and scale of gentrification-induced displacement has become increasingly apparent with the suburbanisation of poverty noted in many cities thought to be driven by low-income residents moving out from central cities that are no longer affordable to them (Hochstenbach and Musterd, 2018). Indeed it is due to this displacement that gentrification has come to be seen as a socially unjust, and essentially negative, process. In the contemporary remaking of cities, elites conscious of the negative connotations of the term 'gentrification' never use it, instead obfuscating it with more positively-loaded terms like urban regeneration, renaissance, renewal, or redevelopment.

This noted, work in gentrification studies has historically tended to focus on middle-class gentrifiers and the production of gentrified living spaces (Slater et al., 2004; Paton, 2014; Huse, 2014), rather than the consequences of

this for low-income groups. Helbrecht (2017: 2) hence describes the gentrification literature as ‘a one-eyed cyclops that operates with an enormous intellectual bias because it observes only the upgrading aspect of the gentrification process while ignoring displacement’. Displacement has then been described as the ‘dark side’ of gentrification (Baeten et al., 2017: 645), an observation that begs a more detailed investigation of the different forms and modalities of gentrification-induced displacement.

But displacement appears much harder to detect than gentrification, with Bernt and Holm (2009) suggesting that whether or not displacement is diagnosed in a particular context is largely dependent on how it is being looked for. Zuk et al. (2018: 35) concur, arguing that we desperately need ‘advanced tools to define and measure these analytically distinct phenomena’. In part this is because it is difficult to distinguish between forced and voluntary mobility at an intra-urban scale. Even in long-established and settled communities, population churn is a normal fact of life. Properties are routinely sold – usually to those of similar socio-economic status – or rented to new occupiers at similar rent when others leave. Some of this churn might be enforced – such as when a house is repossessed through failure to keep up mortgage payments or a tenant is evicted from a rental property for rent arrears – but this is replacement rather than displacement per se. However, individual evictions can cumulatively pave the way for gentrification if they provide the opportunity for those with different social and cultural dispositions to move into a given neighbourhood (Chum, 2015). Indeed, the displacement of a resident who is unable to pay their rent and their replacement with a resident who can indicates a degree of economic differentiation between them. This situation can be contrasted with instances where multiple landlords or institutions expropriate housing en masse with the intention of increasing rental values, something that constitutes an obvious form of *enforced* displacement.

The latter form of ‘gentrification by mass eviction’ has been identified as one of the most significant processes affecting the lives of the urban poor in the Global South (Desmond, 2012: 90), especially in favelas and slums where the state or NGOs have made infrastructure investments (Cummings, 2015). What has been termed ‘mega displacement’ is manifest in many emerging economies – including India, Indonesia and Malaysia – on a scale which is yet to be witnessed in the Global North (see Lees et al., 2016). Given resettlement rights are often insecure in such contexts, transport infrastructure unreliable, and vital services less accessible outside the city, eviction can often be highly disruptive for those affected. Some have questioned whether such displacements should be referred to as gentrification per se (Ghertner, 2014), but emergent comparative work suggests that there are important commonalities between such ‘clearances’ in the Global South and programmes of ‘urban renewal’ in the Global North (Ascensão, 2015; Lees et al., 2016; Shin and Lopez-Morales, 2018).

But given that gentrification can also involve more subtle processes of cultural appropriation and symbolic violence, processes of displacement are not always as obvious as these mass evictions imply (Hern, 2016; Janoschka and Sequera, 2016). This was emphasised by Marcuse (1986), who fleshed out the relations of gentrification and displacement by suggesting that gentrification is responsible not only for the direct removal of low-income households via eviction, but also for forms of *indirect displacement* where existing residents might not feel at home anymore in a changing neighbourhood because of the general decline of working-class culture and identity. As he argued:

[W]hen a family sees the neighbourhood around it changing dramatically, when their friends are leaving the neighbourhood, when the stores they patronise are liquidating and new stores for other clientele are taking their places, and when

changes in public facilities, in transportation patterns, and in support services all clearly are making the area less and less livable, then the pressure of displacement is severe. (Marcuse, 1986: 207)

Marcuse (1986) famously identified five related processes of displacement, combining economic, social and cultural processes, but also noting the distinction between *last resident* and *chain displacement*, the former suggesting that displacement needs to be thought about in relation to the last occupier of a property whereas the latter is more open to the idea that displacement of populations happens gradually and in the context of longer-term shifts. This observation is important inasmuch as community expropriation and un-homing can occur at different speeds (see Section III).

Nonetheless it remains unclear at what point acts of individual un-homing can be described as having given way to a more encompassing form of displacement that involves the erasure of an entire community (Nowicki, 2014). This is related to the question of when the social-economic character of an area has changed to the extent that we can speak of gentrification having occurred. This has been endlessly debated, not least because it is hypothesised that significant socio-economic change in an area can occur without significant displacement occurring. For example, there is a substantial body of research arguing that incumbent upgrading – via moderate-income households improving their own housing conditions – does not create significant displacement (see Johnson, 1983; Van Criekingen and Decroly, 2003). For example, in Owens' (2012) study of US metropolitan change from 1970 to 2009, measures of household income, educational attainment, occupation type, rent, and house values were used to map neighbourhood ascent, with uplift appearing to occur without significant population change in many neighbourhoods, suggesting improvement without displacement. Likewise, Hamnett (2003: 2406) refuted the evidence of

gentrification in inner city London presented by Lyons (1996) and Atkinson (2000), arguing that what was being seen was a 'significant and consistent growth in the proportion of professional and managerial groups and a significant and consistent decline in the size and proportion of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers'. As a result, Hamnett argued against displacement in London, suggesting that 'the transformation which has taken place in the occupational class structure of London has been associated with the gradual replacement of one class by another, rather than large-scale direct displacement' (Hamnett, 2003: 2424).

However, this 'replacement' argument was criticised by Slater (2006: 748), who argued that, 'in the absence of any numbers on displacement it appears that [Hamnett] is blanking out the working class' (see also Davidson and Wyly, 2012). Likewise, Freeman's (2005) oft-cited assertion that poorer (black) residents remain in situ in improving areas, and benefit from the activities of wealthier residents, has been dismissed as based on anecdotal evidence (see Curran, 2007; Sullivan, 2007; McKinnish et al., 2009). Slater (2006: 749) has also contested Freeman's idea that people remain in place because they perceive that they will benefit from the gentrification occurring around them, suggesting that if they stay this is 'because there are no feasible alternatives available to them in a tight/tightening housing market'. Here Slater argues that even if some working class residents remain in situ, this does not mean they are not experiencing 'displacement pressure' (Marcuse, 1986). Summarising such debates, Shaw (2008: 1702) concludes that 'there are no serious studies demonstrating that displacement does not occur at all'.

Such observations also appear relevant in the context of 'marginal gentrification' (Rose, 1996; Van Criekingen and Decroly, 2003; Shaw, 2008), a process said to involve the arrival of a 'well-educated but economically struggling avant-garde of artists, graduate students

and assorted bohemian and counter-cultural types' (Rose, 1996: 132) who renovate their homes and the wider neighbourhood. In their study of Brussels, for example, Van Crielingen and Decroly (2003) note that this involves a change in the cultural status and reputation of an area, improvements to the housing stock and some social change, but not the emergence of a particularly wealthy neighbourhood. For most commentators, such marginal gentrification is typically not associated with displacement (Van Weesep, 1994; Billingham, 2017). However, if the area is 'discovered' by wealthier populations, developers and investors, it appears that considerable displacement pressures can emerge in time (Marcuse, 1986b). In other words, this classical 'first wave' of gentrification must be understood as being a potential trigger for later waves of gentrification. Numerous examples of this process have been identified, most notably in the context of artist-led gentrification, with artists and creative workers locating in 'gritty' inner-city areas because of cheap rents and affordable working spaces, lending a desirable cachet to the area which, in time, they themselves are 'priced out' of (Ley, 2003; Pratt, 2009a). In many cases this process appears related to retail gentrification (Zukin et al, 2009; Hubbard, 2017).

Evidentially, debates on the relationship between displacement and marginal gentrification involve some labyrinthine discussions of whether those low in economic capital, but high in social capital, should be described as marginal or apprentice gentrifiers – or even spoken of as gentrifiers at all (Smith, 2004; Watt, 2005). Examples include so-called 'social preservationists' – highly educated, residentially mobile city-dwellers – who seek to preserve what they consider to be 'authentic' social spaces (Brown-Saracino, 2004). Yet such spaces can be identified by established communities – defined by class, ethnicity, age and culture – in a manner that can be culturally essentialising, and hence actually provoke forms of exclusionary

displacement. This tendency is also apparent in the context of studentification, which involves the conversion of 'family' homes into houses designed to accommodate groups of students during term-time, usually through buy-to-rent schemes (Smith, 2004). Whilst in relative terms the neighbourhood does not become more wealthy – as students tend to be rich in educational and cultural capital, but not affluent – the exclusionary displacement that results in such situations is often palpable, with services such as schools, shops and pubs which had catered for long-term residents often disappearing (Allinson, 2006).

The lack of agreement among researchers as to the relationship between gentrification and displacement is particularly pronounced in the context of new-build gentrification (see Smith, 2002; Davidson and Lees, 2005, 2010; Boddy, 2007; Davidson, 2009). This is a form of gentrification that, in theory, does not entail displacement, a conclusion drawn by Henig (1980: 648), whose US studies led him to conclude that gentrification does not necessarily lead to displacement if 'the inwardly moving professionals are moving into newly-built or previously vacant units'. However, Davidson and Lees (2005: 1170) argue that new-build gentrification, even on ex-industrial, brownfield sites, undoubtedly causes displacement, but that this displacement is likely to be 'indirect'. Instead it is a form of 'exclusionary displacement' where lower-income groups are unable to access property in those neighbouring areas falling under the shadow of gentrification. In this sense, new-build gentrification makes working-class residence in 'improving' neighbourhoods increasingly untenable (Visser and Kotze, 2008; Kern, 2009; Rerat et al., 2010; He, 2010; Rose, 2010; Doucet et al., 2011; Shaw and Hagemans, 2015). This posits gentrification-induced displacement not simply as a form of out-migration that corresponds to a concomitant in-migration: rather it suggests it involves about multiple processes of un-homing which

raise important questions about socio-spatial justice.

### III Un-homing and the violence of displacement

The above observations imply that it is displacement, rather than the revaluation of land per se, that lies at the heart of definitions of gentrification. Indeed, we would argue that some degree of displacement is inevitable given that gentrification *severs* links between people and the communities that they regard as their own (see also Atkinson, 2015). While this can be resisted, with some groups exhibiting ‘survivability’ in the face of gentrification (Lees et al., 2018), this posits displacement as an intensely-felt and experiential process of *un-homing*. This more expansive and inclusive conceptualisation of displacement has, we argue, real purchase for gentrification studies as it combines both physical and psychological displacement, and allows us to more fully recognise the destruction of phenomenological attachments to place and home (Davidson, 2009). Here, the notion of un-homing is multi-scalar and stretches out from the household to the street, neighbourhood and the city beyond (Massey, 1992: 14; cf. Baxter and Brickell, 2014, on home unmaking).

The diagnosis and conceptualisation of gentrification-induced displacement as a form of severance allows us to look for different signs of displacement, with affected neighbourhoods and populations displaying the marks of wounding or trauma (Graham, 2008; Till, 2012; Pain, 2019). Zhang (2018), for example, explicitly elucidates the violence of gentrification-induced displacement in the context of urban redevelopment in China, with older residents comparing the processes of un-homing to their experience of war, describing it as ‘fast, stressful and chaotic’ (Zhang, 2018: 201). This explicit link with the violence of war was also reproduced in less obvious ways, with the local state engaged in tactics that included

‘oppressing collective resistance, long meetings to solicit agreement as well as intrusive visits to displacees’ homes, even their workplaces and schools’ (2018: 201), mirroring the state violence more usually associated with geopolitical conflict.

Putting violence front and central in discussions of displacement may seem extreme when, in some studies, the effects of displacement seem relatively benign. Young and Willmott’s (1957) classic study of kinship in east London, for example, identified many individuals who actually found displacement to have a beneficial impact on their lives, with an enforced move from the inner city to newly-constructed suburbs nonetheless bringing them heating, running water, indoor toilets and multiple bedrooms. Longitudinal research in Glasgow by Kearns and Mason (2013, 2015) likewise suggests that there might be a difference in the ‘psychosocial’ impacts of displacement between those willing to move and those who are reluctant displacees. Reporting deleterious health outcomes for those displaced from central Glasgow housing estates, their conclusion was that ‘most of those who moved considered that they had “bettered” their residential conditions, though again less so in neighbourhood than in dwelling terms’ (Kearns and Mason, 2013: 195).

The latter observation is important given the argument that ‘working-class’ people are said to exhibit a phenomenological understanding of their home and neighbourhood as a ‘comfortable lived space’ rather than a financial investment (Allen and Crookes, 2009; Davidson and Lees, 2010). So even if displaced residents receive the market value for their loss of property, this suggests it is impossible to compensate them for the longing and isolation that are often felt when their home is lost. In some cases, a new place may never feel truly like home, as no matter how many new friends are made or how much better a new house may be, the memories of their original home and neighbourhood will always remind the displaced of their loss (Jones,

2015). The paradox here is then that the ‘objective’ social good which derives from moving to a ‘better’ neighbourhood becomes a form of ‘systemic violence’ – not always a physical violence directly executed by individuals, but one that ‘operates anonymously, systemically and invisibly through the very way society is organised’ (Baeten et al., 2017: 643).

Much here of course depends on where displaced residents relocate to, with Crawford and Sainsbury (2017) arguing that rehousing displaced residents across a range of locations may contribute to a loss of social networks and associated social capital (see also Posthumus et al., 2013). Given the choice, Lyons (1996) reports that lower-status households tend to move more locally than more affluent ones, reflecting both their restricted choices as well as their desire to maintain localised social networks. Atkinson (2003) suggests that this represents a somewhat ‘desperate’ attempt by residents to maintain a foothold near the locations they have come from. But where displacees relocate to ultimately has significant consequences in terms of their ability to construct meaningful social ties, with several US studies concluding that there is little successful integration of displaced households into more distanced communities (Goetz, 2003; Kleit and Manzo, 2006; Newman and Wyly, 2006; Greenbaum et al., 2008). This is of course a generalisation, and it has been noted that younger residents find it easier to adapt than older ones: those who have lived longest in their original community appear to gain fewest benefits from relocation (Van Criegingen, 2008). Indeed, older residents are usually reluctant to engage with medical services in their new neighbourhood, and sometimes travel long distances to engage with the GPs and pharmacists they are familiar with (Crawford and Sainsbury, 2017). Kleinhans (2003) suggests that, in addition to age, ‘personality’ can be important in shaping experiences of displacement, with more resilient individuals able to take a more positive view of the ‘relocation’

process. This study is one of very few that takes a benign view of displacement, suggesting that, on balance, most residents considered the negative aspects of displacement to be outweighed by the benefits of living in a new home. This is typically the line taken in governmental assessments, with Vigdor (2002) citing a report from San Francisco suggesting that displacees had not experienced severe negative changes in housing characteristics. A longitudinal study of disadvantaged groups moved as part of the HOPE VI Program in San Francisco also found that improvements to housing improved residents’ mental health, though many residents felt that their physical health had deteriorated over time, possibly due to their unwillingness to engage with local health services (Seto et al., 2009).

This suggests that the impacts of displacement are unevenly felt, with LeGates and Hartman (1986: 97) concluding that ‘displacement imposes substantial hardships on some classes of displacees, particularly lower-income households and the elderly’. Those with vulnerable bodies are particularly vulnerable to displacement, with Philo (2005) arguing that it is vital that we conceptualise the ‘geographies of wounding’ that result from such structural processes rather than considering them as individual happenstance. Indeed, many commentators suggest that processes of displacement can trigger a range of affective responses which, in some cases, are associated with psychological distress, and even post-traumatic stress (Fried, 1966; Fullilove, 2004; Vandermark, 2007; Manzo et al., 2008; Fussell and Lowe, 2014; Crawford and Sainsbury, 2017; Pain, 2019). Urban renewal programmes in US cities during the 1960s saw displacement affect African-American communities most acutely (Hyrá, 2008, compares this with the ‘new’ urban renewal). The financial costs of displacement could be seen on individual families, whereas the costs incurred by black businesses and socio-political infrastructure in informally



segregated American cities signified more structural effects. Furthermore, the ‘root shock’ – the psychological trauma of the economic, social and emotional coercion of gentrification-led displacement – further stagnated the socio-political power of many African-American neighbourhoods (Fullilove, 2004).

Similar research in London has suggested that vulnerable people already living with mental health issues are more likely to be displaced, with isolation from friends, family and local services increasing their risks of more serious depression or psychosis (Atkinson, 2000). While moving house is always a stressful experience, the stress and anxiety of enforced mobility is often exacerbated by the tactics deployed by those seeking to evict residents. For example, Lees (2014a) discusses what she terms ‘state Rachmanism’ in the eviction of the last residents refusing to move from the Heygate Estate in London, with the council turning off their gas and electricity, and mail no longer delivered, before bailiffs literally carried residents out. Arrigoitia (2014) similarly speaks of the fear experienced by tenants threatened with the demolition of a public sector housing block in Puerto Rico. Here, local government used police officers to harass residents, leading many residents, particularly women, to express feelings of depression and anxiety, and to suffer from increased blood pressure. These impacts of enforced displacement are then often gendered in significant ways, with Watt (2018) documenting the impacts of eviction on working-class women living on a housing estate in east London. Talking of *displacement anxiety*, and the pain of moving, Watt (2018) traces the movement of displaced women through temporary accommodation – which was continually broken into – where they were forced to live with housemates with problematic drug use, and put up with sanitary problems including damp and bedbugs. These forms of gendered and social violence led to mental health issues (a

conclusion that resonates strongly with Fussell and Lowe’s 2014 analysis of the impact of housing displacements post-Hurricane Katrina).

However, gentrification studies need to properly include displacees as people with agency and not simply present them as victims (see Paton, 2014). As the term gentrification gained popular currency among academics in North America in the 1960s and 70s, activist-scholars detailed the community campaigns challenging displacement in cities like New York and San Francisco (Jacobs, 1961; Hartman, 1976; Hartman et al., 1982). As these have evolved, resistance to gentrification-led displacement has arguably become more sophisticated, with Maeckelbergh (2012: 670) observing that social movements are attempting to ‘stay put’ by ‘mobilizing the notion of housing in order to transform it from something tenuous and temporary’ to something more permanent. Examples of this can be seen on both sides of the Atlantic, through independent mobilisations, as well as partnerships with private, voluntary sector organisations and public bodies (DeVerteuil, 2012). This right to ‘stay put’ – obviously related to Lefebvre’s right to the city idea – is not simply a cry and demand to remain in an area, but asserts a resident’s agency to move *or* remain (Maeckelbergh, 2012). As Baeten and Listerborn (2015) argue, the ‘right to dwell’ must be understood as a right to inhabit the abstract space of a ‘home’ in a wider sense than simply remaining in one’s own residence. Indeed, Baxter and Brickell (2014: 135) state, ‘unmaking can also work symbiotically with the recovery or remaking of home’, highlighting the way in which a dwelling can be renewed and reproduced over time and across space.

In the face of gentrification, residents hence mobilise a range of tactics to defend their ‘right to dwell’, including public interventions and pooling resources among families (Newman and Wyly, 2006), as well as legal campaigns and popular protest (Lees and Ferreri, 2016;

Watt and Minton, 2016; Hubbard and Lees, 2018). In addition to possible material gains, a sense of pride can also emerge as a result of collective ‘defiance against a common enemy’ (Arrigoitia, 2014: 175), culminating in large public meetings and demonstrations (see Robinson, 1995; Ghaffari et al., 2018; Watt, 2016). Thus the right to dwell extends beyond simply having a home in an area, encompassing the right to continue using commercial, community and public spaces and institutions, as well as the dignity of defending such rights (Davidson, 2009). But resistance is complex and uneven, and necessities such as work, or caring for family members and other dependants, can make protest risky. In Puerto Rico, some residents resisting gentrification-led displacement were concerned that campaigning would make their ability to find alternative housing more difficult, particularly single mothers, for whom the gendered trope of the irresponsible lone parent was projected by the press to legitimise demolitions (Arrigoitia, 2014).

Despite these inequalities, the fact that the struggle to stay put, or ‘right to dwell’, remains the core demand of anti-gentrification campaigns reaffirms displacement’s centrality in the gentrification process. This implies a need to focus on such campaigns as evidence of exclusionary pressure and a concomitant desire to resist un-homing. Given that displacees are often objectified and stigmatised in public discourses around gentrification and ‘urban renewal’, giving these campaigns voice in accounts of displacement is not just an important corrective but essential if we are to investigate how people both survive and resist displacement.

#### **IV The temporalities of displacement**

If we accept the premise that displacement can be a form of violence, the implication is that we need to be watchful for both direct, short-term

displacements and longer-term, indirect ones, and not leap to conclusions about whether displacement is causing harm on the basis of one-time snapshots of change. Take for example the violent displacements associated with forms of state-led gentrification, such as the removal and relocation of incumbent populations to make way for flagship urban developments (Chan, 1986; Crump, 2002; Short, 2008; Melih Cin and Egercioglu, 2015; Zhang, 2018). Displacement due to infrastructure projects such as the redevelopment of land for the 2012 London Olympics is a case in point (Davis and Thornley, 2010), as was the case for Vancouver’s Winter Olympic Games 2010 (Vanwynsberghe et al., 2013), Glasgow’s Commonwealth Games 2014 (see Paton et al., 2012; Gray and Porter, 2015), and Rio’s FIFA World Cup 2014 and Olympic Games 2016 (Perelan, 2012; Zirin, 2014). In each case, the enforced displacement of working-class or precarious populations before the Games was justified with reference to both the national interest and the civilising impact of the sports events themselves, which were assumed to be beneficial for the health and economic well-being of those living in the neighbouring areas. But the irony is, of course, that the very population said to benefit from such sports mega-events was ultimately displaced. In the case of London, the Olympic boroughs have become increasingly unaffordable for local populations, with the legacy of the Games being rapidly rising land prices, and a glut of speculative commercial and housing developments, many on ex-council estates whose social housing has been replaced with housing sold at ‘market rate’ (Watt, 2013; Frediani et al., 2013).

While displacement can be a singular act, enacted and enforced by authorities, it can also occur through a series of smaller aggressions which displace industries and businesses, as well as residents, over a longer time-span. Curran (2007), for example, notes that industrial displacement involves a piecemeal targeting of

industrial premises by real-estate developers, planners and landlords that typically unfolds relatively slowly. Campkin and Marshall (2017) also note this trend of incremental change in their study of LGBT nightlife in London, suggesting ‘grassroots’ club numbers in London decreased by 44 per cent between 2007 and 2016, with developers taking advantage of high London rents by gradually converting clubs into residential accommodation (see also Doan and Higgins, 2011, on gentrification’s impact on LGBT populations).

Here, Kern’s (2016) description of the ‘slow violence’ of gentrification and neighbourhood transition appears particularly relevant. Drawing on Nixon’s (2011) *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, Kern uses this term to describe the gradual emergence of cool or ‘crunchy’ consumer spaces (e.g. organic cafes, microbreweries, coffee shops) which transform inner-city districts into hipster havens. As she notes, the transition from ‘authentic inner city liminality’ to gentrified spectacle can occur slowly:

As eventfulness and a particular notion of authenticity begin to redefine everydayness, disruptions to everyday life build up into significant displacement pressure for marginalized groups. For the most part, these displacements comprise a variety of very ordinary, non-catastrophic non-events. The removal of a bench from outside a café eliminates a place to sit and smoke near the shelter. Coffee prices go up at all the local shops. Sex workers move north of the train tracks. Retired men sit alone on their porches. ‘No loitering’ signs appear. These non-events . . . ask us to bear witness not just to the structural and catastrophic transformations wrought by gentrification but also to the everyday slow violence of cruddy, chronic urban inequality. (Kern, 2016: 453)

The idea that the identities of ‘immigrant’ neighbourhoods can only be rewritten slowly, and that it takes time for them to be integrated into circuits of ‘global gentrification’, is also

noted in Benson and Jackson’s (2013) account of the transformation of Peckham and Dulwich in south London. In contrast to the ‘fast’ gentrification and violence associated with major sporting events and large-scale development which often leads to protest, legal action and high-profile media coverage, here slow gentrification appears to be associated with piecemeal retail change, greening of the local economy and a gradual increase in property prices; this type of gentrification has been less obviously contested (see Hånkansson, 2017). In part this is because the pace of change allows new middle-class incomers to become community representatives, and sometimes position themselves as opposed to a gentrification process they are actually implicated in. Similar processes can be seen to be happening elsewhere: for example, Bernt and Holm (2009) investigated Prenzlauer Berg in Berlin, where some middle-class residents complained about the influx of ‘yuppie bars’ and rent rises in traditionally working-class housing blocks, despite having previously displaced the working-class populations who dwelt in the area in the pre-unification era.

Such observations on the temporalities of displacement are important in terms of framing displacement as a question of social and spatial justice, especially if we are to chart its impacts on those affected. What appears particularly important is that displacement is never a one-off event but a series of attritional micro-events that unfold over time, generating different emotions and mental states for those affected: anxiety, hope, confusion, fear, dislocation, loss, anticipation, dread and so on (see Lombard, 2013). In some cases of enforced displacement, such as the demolition of the ‘million estates’ around Stockholm, it can be years from the point of the announcement of the redevelopment before tenants and leaseholders know what will happen to them (Baeten et al., 2017). In the meantime, freeholders may leave, the neighbourhood begin to desertify and

services begin to fail. In such cases, the life of residents is effectively suspended: there is no longer any incentive to improve the neighbourhood, nor is it clear how they should plan for the future. They are effectively trapped in the present, and displaced before the event. The potential psychological and physical consequences of living in this state of abeyance are multiple, with the tortuous and exhausting processes of establishing how displacement will impact on one's home-space leading to feelings of shame, stress and anxiety (Wallace, 2015). This can ultimately wear down individuals, leading to an inertia that makes effective resistance to displacement impossible (Lacione, 2017). In this sense, there are important parallels to be drawn between the experiences of those being displaced within cities and those of international refugees and migrants who make homes while in a state of 'limbo' (see Brun and Fábos, 2017). Diagnosing gentrification-led displacement thus requires an attentiveness to its temporal, social and spatial unevenness, and its pernicious impacts on health, quality of life, and well-being.

## V Conclusion

Though many theories of gentrification revolve around questions of land value and rent, here we have put displacement front and central as its defining feature. The implication here is that we need a clearer understanding of what urban displacement is, and how it can be best conceptualised. In this regard, Marcuse's (1986) now-classic conceptualisation of gentrification-induced displacement remains useful, but it is also a product of its context and time: New York City's housing market in the 1980s. It is surprising that there have been so few attempts to provide an updated conceptualisation that attends to the variegated nature of contemporary gentrification-induced displacements globally. Indeed, conceptualisations and typologies of urban gentrification massively outnumber conceptualisations of displacement.

Yet, as Marcuse (2010: 87) stated, 'If the pain of displacement is not a central component of what we are dealing with in studying gentrification... we are not just missing one factor in a multi-factorial equation; we are missing the central point that needs to be addressed'.

In this paper we have hence considered gentrification-induced displacement as a form of un-homing distinct from – but also related to – other instances of involuntary mobility, suggesting that it is a form of violence that removes the sense of belonging to a particular community or home-space. While it is wrong to suggest that the enforced movement of a household from one neighbourhood to another is the same as the dispossession experienced by indigenous populations under settler colonialism, or the plight of stateless refugees stripped of national identity, we have stressed that all are forms of violence which need to be scrutinised as such because of their capacity to inflict mental and physical harms. The fact that these harms are distributed unevenly, with displacement having particularly pronounced impacts for vulnerable working-class groups, women, minority ethnic groups, and those with complex needs, reminds us that displacement is an invidious form of socio-spatial injustice. Hence, while 'the "right to displace" is an overwhelming fact of life' (Hartman, 1984: 533), we suggest that the 'right to stay put' should be fundamental to any imagining (or operationalisation) of the right to the city (Hubbard and Lees, 2018). Such notions are inevitably problematic given the imagining of a homed community can be sometimes appear exclusive rather than radically inclusive (Imbroscio, 2004), but given the pervasive influence of gentrification in contemporary cities, it appears an important basis for securing other rights to the city (e.g. rights to access and secure urban resources and services).

Of course, our conclusion that displacement is an inevitable consequence of neighbourhood gentrification, whether on a shorter- or longer-term basis, could be questioned given

the lack of conclusive evidence that displacement occurs at all in some situations where gentrification or social uplift is identified. For this purpose – and to end once and for all the ideological schisms between those who subscribe to ‘displacement’ or ‘replacement’ models – it seems that more robust data are needed to confirm that displacement is occurring. In this paper we have argued that any investigation of gentrification-induced urban displacement must consider the type of gentrification (including different types and tenures of property), but also the *scale* and *speed* of the process. As we have insisted, displacement is not just about direct replacement of poorer by wealthy groups; it also involves forms of social, economic and cultural transition which alienate established populations. This can entail forms of slow violence, which render particular neighbourhoods less hospitable and accommodating to established residents, as well as direct and forceful acts of expropriation which the vulnerable and precarious seem least able to cope with. This means that there cannot be a singular measure of gentrification-induced displacement for cities, and that simple measurements of displacement (e.g. census indicators suggesting a change in the social-economic or tenure mix in a neighbourhood) are no longer sufficient. Instead we need data that can help establish the lived experiences of urban displacement from the perspective of established, lower-income groups, revealing the processes of un-homing that impact violently on some of our most vulnerable populations.

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