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Gentrification: prospects for urban South African society?

The objective of this paper is to highlight some of the current international trends in the study of gentrification and assess its potential as the research site in a post-apartheid urban context. In the light of international experience and the changing spatialities of post-apartheid cities, it is argued that recent developments in South Africa's city-centres present classic opportunities for gentrification processes to emerge as part of urban regeneration. This exploration assesses this claim in four sections. The first deals with issues of definition, while the second reviews the main theoretical approaches currently employed in understanding gentrification processes. The third section relates this to gentrification research undertaken in South African cities, with the concluding section considering the types of gentrification research issues we might address in the post-apartheid context.

Gentrifikasie: toepassingsmoontlikhede op die Suid-Afrikaanse stedelike samelewing?

Die doel van hierdie artikel is om sommige van die huidige internasionale neigings in die bestudering van gentrifikasie uit te lig en die potensiaal daarvan as navorsingsterrein in 'n post-apartheid stedelike konteks te beoordeel. In die lig van internasionale ervaring en die veranderende ruimtelike benuttingspatrone van post-apartheidstede, word daar geargumenteer dat onlangse ontwikkelings in Suid-Afrika se sentrale stedelike areas klassieke geleenthede bied vir gentrifikasieprosesse om pos te vat as deel van stedelike herontwikkeling. Hierdie siening word in vier interafhanklike afdelings ondersoek. In die eerste word aspekte van definisie oorweeg; die tweede bevat 'n oorsig oor die belangrikste teoretiese benaderings wat tans in die bestudering van die gentrifikasieprosesse gevolg word; die derde oorweeg die relevansie hiervan met gentrifikasienavorsing wat aangaande Suid-Afrikaanse stede gedoen word; en in die laaste afdeling word die tipes van gentrifikasienavorsing oorweeg wat in die post-apartheidskonteks aangepak kan word.

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Since the 1970s, and more persistently over the past decade, urban planners, private developers and government bodies have been seriously engaged in a range of urban renewal programmes (Harvey 2000). This international drive for urban regeneration has been echoed locally, with countless initiatives proposed since the beginning of the 1990s (Dirsuweit 1999). The need for such calls to action was underpinned by a range of decentralisation processes taking place since the mid 1970s, "white flight" from the inner-city areas since the late 1980s, institutional capital disinvestment and the suburbanisation of high-order service functions, all of which have contributed towards the physical decay that has come to define South Africa's central business districts (CBDs) and surrounding inner-city areas (cf Beavon 2000a, 2000b, 1998; Morris 1997; Parnell & Beavon 1996; Rogerson 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 2000, 2001, Rogerson & Rogerson 1995; Steenberg *et al* 1992).

These processes of decline are not unique to the South African urban context but have been witnessed globally in many formerly industrial cities (Harvey 2000; Lees 1994; Soja 1989). In response, these cities introduced numerous urban renewal programmes, many of them central to the reversal of the processes of deterioration (Harvey 1989, 2000). Perhaps the most controversial form of urban renewal to emerge, in what many have labelled the "urban renaissance" of American cities, has been processes of gentrification, a complex and varied form of urban regeneration. Gentrification is a powerful and often rapid process which plays an important role in refashioning the physical, economic and social characteristics of inner-city areas. Like the almost universal process of suburbanisation, gentrification has had a profound impact on the lives of urban residents in hundreds of cities (Slater 2002). In the South African context, however, gentrification processes have been largely absent and this explains the extremely limited body of literature considering its relevance to the local urban context (cf as exceptions Garside 1993; Kotze 1998; Kotze & Van der Merwe 2000; Steinberg *et al* 1992).

Recent developments in the management of South African city-centres, in particular the introduction of central city improvement districts (CIDs), along with a number of inner-city redevelopment initiatives most forcefully seen in Cape Town and Johannesburg (cf

Cape Business News 2002), in addition to a significant rent-gap between CBDs and decentralised nodes have, however, presented classic opportunities for gentrification processes to emerge as a part of urban regeneration. In fact, recent media reports suggest that this process is starting to occur in a number of Cape Town's inner-city areas, provoking intense criticism, while few local policy-makers, planners, urban managers or developers seem able to respond in an informed manner (cf for example *Cape Times* 2001; Yutar 2001).

Against this backdrop, the objective of this paper is twofold. First, it aims to highlight some of the current trends in the global study of gentrification and, secondly, it seeks to assess its potential as a site for research within the South African urban system. Drawing on the work of key commentators, among others Chris Hamnett (1991, 1999) and Loretta Lees (1994, 1996, 2000), this exploration is developed in four sections. The first considers issues of definition around the question of what gentrification has come to mean. The focus then moves to the two main theoretical approaches to understanding gentrification: theories designed around arguments relating to either production or consumption. The third section relates this discussion to gentrification research undertaken in South African cities, with the concluding section considering the types of gentrification research issues we might address in the post-apartheid urban context.

1. Gentrification as an urban process

Gentrification is a complex urban process that has proved difficult to explain. Ruth Glass (1964: 19) coined the concept with reference to London in the early 1960s, writing that

> one by one, many of the working-class quarters of London have been invaded by the middle-classes — upper and lower. Shabby, modest mews and cottages — two rooms up and two down — have been taken over, when their leases have expired, and have become elegant, expensive residences. Once the process of gentrification starts in a district it goes on rapidly until all or most of the original working-class occupiers are displaced and the whole social character of the district is changed.

In more measured terms, gentrification has come to mean a unit-by-unit acquisition of housing which replaces low-income residents with

high-income residents, and which occurs independent of the structural condition, architecture, tenure or original cost level of the housing (although it is usually renovated for or by the new occupiers).

In the classic gentrification pattern, upper-middle-class buyers purchase individual units from working-class owner-occupiers or small-scale landlords. In the course of a decade or two, the original population is replaced by a population of a different social class, culture, income level and lifestyle. Whereas the process of gentrification typically occurs within the context of older urban residential areas, there is a growing literature focused on "rural gentrification", generally found around large cities or in the hinterlands of metropolitan complexes (cf Phillips 1998a, 1998b; Smith 2002). There are different understandings of how, why and where gentrification occurs, but the one aspect that unites all definitions of the process is that "class" succession forms the core defining theme (Hamnett 1991, 1999; Lees 2000; Slater 2002; Smith 1996).

It is arguably easiest to understand gentrification as a process that brings about change in a neighbourhood based on the influx of people different (socially, economically, culturally, etc) from those already there — generally the new class comprises highly educated, skilled and generously remunerated residents. As is the case with class, the term "different" should be employed with care and certainly not simplified. In fact, as Slater suggests (2002), class is often experienced as "difference". Gentrification has come to display typical phases, although there has not been a systematic categorisation of this process. Nevertheless it does seem that art and culture workers are prominent in the first phase. Indeed, as Treanor (2002) observes, the first art gallery in a working-class neighbourhood is a classic sign of imminent gentrification. Later these activities and the associated population may themselves be displaced by an older, higher-income population and by office uses. Whereas the "physical" and social "signifiers" of gentrification are relatively simple to observe, our interpretation of its desirability is far more varied.

The explanation of gentrification is complex, in the main because it is affected by the different theoretical and political underpinnings of those conducting research into its workings. The analysis of gentrification has exposed a considerable tension between those focusing

on the economics of the process — the relationship between the flow of capital and the production of urban space — on the one hand (Smith 1979), and those interested in the characteristics of the gentrifiers and their patterns of consumption within the broader sphere of urban culture in post-industrial society, on the other (Ley 1995, 1996). While something of a simplification of the discourse on gentrification, these two positions are generally viewed as "production-side" and "consumption-side" arguments, respectively, and their key features form the focus of the following section.

2. "Production" and "consumption" as causal factors in gentrification

The early work on gentrification was largely descriptive, illustrating processes of neighbourhood change which contradicted the traditional conceptualisations of urban residential patterns, such as the Alonso and Zonal models (for example, Alonso 1964; Burgess 1924, 1927). This work also demonstrated, in some cases, the ousting of lower-income residents from an area and their replacement by young, upwardly mobile professionals; questionable tactics used by landlords, or estate agents wishing to generate larger profits from property sales and rentals. Moreover, these studies illustrated how in some places government intervention intended to assist in the improvement of low-quality inner-city residential areas was inadvertently used to subsidise the costs of improvement, bringing about large financial gains on the part of the more affluent classes (cf also Hamnett & Williams 1980; Johnston 1994).

As gentrification became more common, the work of Ley (1977, 1986) drew attention to the general conditioning factors that stimulated its development in a variety of places. In addition, the process was increasingly analysed in the context of theoretical developments in the understanding of the making and remaking of urban residential differentiation as part of the operation of the circuits of capital (cf Harvey 1973, 1982) invested in the built environment and creating uneven development (Smith 1984; Smith & Williams 1986). It is in this context that the work of Neil Smith in the late 1970s came to dominate much of our understanding of this process and underpin-

ned volumes of theoretical work for and against explanations of the process in terms of economic factors (Slater 2002). In fact, significant numbers of researchers were convinced by Smith's explanation of gentrification, as many used his ideas in empirical investigations of gentrification in other cities. Their admiration was largely based on the elegance of Smith's "rent-gap" thesis in the context of a general Marxist turn in the academic debates concerning geography, urban planning and sociology at the time (Cloke *et al* 1991).

2.1 Production-side explanations of gentrification

Smith presents gentrification as a key element of the larger process of uneven development in urban space within a capitalist mode of production. Slater (2002) suggests that this approach had its foundations in the geography of capital's simultaneous disinvestment in the inner city and investment in decentralised suburban infrastructure. It was argued that low ground rents on the urban periphery during the 1950s and 1960s triggered a continuous movement of capital to finance the development of decentralised or suburban industrial, residential, commercial and recreational activity (Smith 1987). This caused a "devalorisation" of capital in the inner city, where a downward spiral of neglect and decay led to substantial abandonment of inner-city properties and a fall in the price of inner-city land relative to rising land prices in the suburbs. This, the argument goes, forms the basis of the rent-gap in the inner city, which Smith (1987: 462) suggested is the disparity between the actual capitalised ground rent (land value) of a plot of land given its current use and the potential ground rent that might be obtained if it were put to higher and better use.

In Smith's analysis the rent-gap is the necessary hub of any theory of gentrification because when the gap is wide enough, land developers, landlords and occupier-developers (a category of people who purchase and renovate property before moving in) realise the potential profits to be made by reinvesting in abandoned inner-city properties and preparing them for new inhabitants. This closes the rent-gap by means of higher and better use of land. Consequently, Smith (1986: 24) concludes that "the devalorization of capital in the centre creates the opportunity for the revalorization of this underdeveloped section

of urban space", the crux of this argument being that gentrification takes place because capital returns to the inner city, creating opportunities for residential relocation and profit.

Smith's (1996) most recent work graphically presents the idea of gentrification as a kind of spatialised revenge on the poor and on minorities, who are apparently seen as having "stolen" the inner city from the "respectable" classes. He thus proposes the "revanchist city" thesis, which considers the privileging of middle-class desires and the effects of the advancing gentrification "frontier" on other class divisions. The rhetoric of an urban or gentrification frontier operates, Smith argues, to conceal the underlying violence of the process. For him, the inner city is not a scene of cohabitation and peaceful interaction but a combat zone in which capital, embodied by middle-class gentrifiers, battles it out, block by block, house by house, to retake the city (Lees 2000: 339). However, criticism has been increasing levelled at Smith and others over the past decade. On the whole the focus of these challenges returns to the root of production-side arguments — the rent-gap theory.

Firstly, as Hamnett (1991: 180) suggests, the rent-gap theory does not tell us anything about the gentrifiers. In his view, "although the gentrification process does involve capital flow, it also involves people, and this is the Achilles heel of Smith's supply-side thesis". As Slater (2002: 6) points out,

> gentrification cannot take place without a 'pool of gentrifiers' [...] who desire to live in the inner-city [...] people have individual preferences regarding their place of residence, and Marxist analysis [...] seems to eschew this concept in favour of an approach which emphasises the centrality of capital fluctuations within urban areas.

Secondly, various critics have noted a number of problems related to the application of rent-gap theory in empirical research. Ley (1986), the key proponent of consumption-side explanations, pointed out more than a decade ago that "almost ten years after its first presentation [the rent-gap theory] has still not been made empirically accountable". Indeed, as Slater (2002: 6) points out,

> many critics observed that gentrification is not simply the renovation of an abandoned housing stock; new residential development is very much a part of a gentrification landscape, and may involve very different prerequisites to the rent-gap.

Finally, a third and related concern stems from Ley's (1986) critique of Smith's treatment of the inner city and suburbs as part of a systematic whole in developing the rent-gap theory, when other research demonstrates that it is possible for the devalorisation cycle to be intercepted by gentrification at an early stage in the life of a neighbourhood. This, in Slater's (2002) view, challenges the whole concept of the rent-gap, as substantial inner-city devalorisation relative to rising suburban land values was a cornerstone of Smith's thesis.

2.2 Consumption-side explanations of gentrification

In response to Smith's work and echoing more general discursive turns in the social sciences (Harvey 2000), gentrification researchers linked to consumption-side arguments focused on the characteristics of the gentrifiers as being of paramount importance in the understanding of gentrification (Slater 2002). This view supports the idea that property must be "ripe" for gentrification, but insists that the process cannot occur without the quite separate phenomenon of people wanting to occupy inner-city dwellings. However, the question that immediately follows is what forces underlie this demand. In this respect the literature reveals that such forces are connected but very complex, although generally promoting one or two major demand (consumption) factors. However, as Slater (2002) convincingly notes, it is perhaps better to discuss the main approaches to consumption in turn in an attempt to represent a pervasive theme in the literature: that of a series of changes that have constituted one of the principal buzz-phrases of gentrification — the emergence of a complex and fragmented "new middle class".

Whereas Neil Smith's account of production-side causality in gentrification shaped much of the earlier debate concerning the process, David Ley (1987) became a key proponent of the focus on the emergence of a new "consumption" class, which developed in the post-industrial service-based economic boom of the 1980s. Thrift (1987) labelled this new economic community "the service class" — a so-called "new middle class" that came into being through higher income, greater access to educational opportunities and a consumption-orientated lifestyle (cf also Butler 1997). In his view, higher levels of disposable income and a desire to save time wasted on commuting to

the workplace lead this group to place considerable demands on the housing market for inner-city properties and, where there is an absence of such properties, to the construction of completely new residential developments on old industrial land or "brown-field" sites.

Some of the most interesting research on gentrification from a consumption-side perspective comes from investigations into London's property market and demonstrates that a major gentrification impetus has been the increase in the professional and managerial employment sectors of the economy and this group's increased demand for selected inner-city residential areas (cf for example, Hamnett 1991, 1999; Lyons 1996, 1998). This research, along with the extensive writings of Hamnett (1991) indicates that attention should be paid to broader urban economic restructuring as a factor in the production of the pool of gentrifiers. Hamnett (1991: 186) puts this point succinctly when he states that "explanation for gentrification must begin with the processes responsible for the production and concentration of key fractions of the service class". As Slater (2002) among others notes, although this argument draws upon economic factors, it is fundamentally different from the classic Marxist analysis in the sense that people, as agents of gentrification, are given as much consideration as the logic of institutional capital. These considerations interact with the middle classes' demand for inner-city housing, which they see as a good investment. This demonstrates that both production and consumption factors are crucial motivating factors for gentrification investment.

Within the ambit of consumer-side arguments, and increasingly grouped under the heading of the "emancipatory city thesis" (cf Caulfield 1989, 1994; Lees 2000), there are a number of factors concerning demographic shifts in the urban populace: gender access to the workplace, cultural elements connected to education, interpretations of the historic urban fabric and identity-based characteristics. It is implicit in the emancipatory city thesis that gentrification promises the production and reproduction of sites of the social, political and economic struggle to subvert the dominance of the hegemonic cultures of consumption fixed into the spatiality of homogenising decentralised suburban spaces (Lees 2000). One of the hallmarks of this "new middle class" has been its ability to exploit the emancipa-

tory potential of the inner city, and indeed to create new, culturally sophisticated, urban class fractions less conservative than the "old" middle class. Thus, gentrification provides a space for "a new middle class" that lives in household units different from the patriarchal nuclear family, with work styles and requirements out of kilter with the traditional eight-hour, five-day week of the Fordist production class (Harvey 1990).

Lees (2000: 394) also notes that gender and sexuality, like the new middle class, are research themes in gentrification closely tied to the social construction of the emancipatory city. Indeed, the 1970s and 1980s saw gentrification literature tying the process to marginal groups such as gays, lesbians and other female cohorts attracted to the liberating space of the inner city. Whereas the work on gay and lesbian gentrification in American cities is well-known (for example Knopp 1995; Rothenberg 1995), the less famous work of Bondi (1999) and Lyons (1996) on gender and gentrification has been equally insightful. Bondi's (1999) recent detailed empirical investigations, in particular, provide an analysis of the importance of the patterning of life courses in the articulation of class, gender and gentrification that enriches the gentrification literature in a number of ways. First, she finds that the association between gentrification and the professional middle class is not an exclusive one and that some gentrifiers do not pursue a class-based housing strategy. Secondly, she stresses that local specificity and indeed the temporality of gentrification are crucial to understanding how the process of gentrification differs in various places (Lees 2000).

What has emerged from recent research is a rich empirically based literature that draws simultaneously upon a number of these themes. Viewed from a postmodern perspective this might seem obvious, but perhaps the most significant outcome of the gentrification research of the past few years has been the realisation that the process is not the same everywhere. Although there are generalisable features, both internationally and within individual cities, there are also many specificities that are equally important in any analysis of gentrification and particularly in comparative research (Carpenter & Lees 1995; Lees 2000). In addition to locality-based differences, there are also important temporal differences which Lees (2000) suggests are im-

plicit in David Ley's work. Thus it is argued that gentrification today is quite different from gentrification in the early 1970s, late 1980s or even the early 1990s. Temporality was the focus of the stage of growth models of gentrification back in the 1970s, but became less important as more theoretically sophisticated research was published.

A growing trend in the body of literature on gentrification aims to move the research agenda beyond the production/consumption-side binary of the past three decades. While production-side arguments have been enticingly reconfigured as debates on the "revanchist city" and consumption-sidse arguments now figure under the heading of the "emancipatory city", agreement has apparently been reached that there is ultimately complementarity between the two approaches. Although there is much work to be done in developing a more theoretically appealing alternative drawing upon this realisation, the concerns of both schools are key to thinking through the role of gentrification in the South African urban context.

3. Gentrification studies in South Africa

In provocative press releases such "Residents of the Bo-Kaap staged a march over the weekend to protest against what they termed the 'gentrification' of the area" (*Cape Times* 2001: 5) and "Commercialisation and gentrification threaten the great qualities of the Bo-Kaap" (Yutar 2001: 15), the process of gentrification has recently emerged as a growing concern in South African urban redevelopment discourse. However, in seeking a local "voice" on the desirability of gentrification, South African research presents little that qualifies as a measured or informed response to the process. In fact, the local context currently offers only a handful of academic studies. This almost total absence of local research on gentrification must be understood against the recent dynamics of urban change in South African cities.

Inner-city decline across South Africa has been keenly chronicled for some time. Perhaps the most interesting work is that of Beavon (2000a, 2000b) who attributes the decline of central Johannesburg in part to competition for decentralised tertiary activities as far back as the 1960s when, for political reasons, government created two new municipalities, Sandton and Randburg, in what was at the time Jo-

hannesburg's northern periphery. Beavon suggests that, in order to secure their own tax base, these new municipalities competed aggressively for both retail and office business in central Johannesburg. This in turn led to dramatic urban development on the city periphery and along a number of decentralised suburban nodes. Subsequently, these patterns were discernible not only in neighbouring municipalities but also in Cape Town, Pretoria and Durban.

In addition, as demonstrated in a series of papers by Rogerson (1986, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 2000, 2001), industrial change in terms of facility location, land-use needs, and customer base, as well as national and regional economic cycles during the late apartheid era and thereafter, underpinned further disinvestment along with the suburbanisation of manufacturing and a range of related service functions. These processes of change in combination came to underpin the physical decline of South Africa's CBDs and their surrounding inner-city areas. While this process was most visible in Johannesburg and to a lesser extent in Pretoria and Durban, even Cape Town, often hailed as the South African exception, was until very recently subject to disinvestment from its CBD to suburban locations (*Cape Business News* 2002). In fact, current research by Donaldson *et al* (2002) demonstrates with reference to recent office development that this process is still taking place unabated (Table 1). Given that these processes have been in evidence for more than two decades, it is not surprising that the existing literature on gentrification is limited. Despite its scarcity, however, the research displays the two main theoretical approaches seen in international gentrification research.

Table 1: New office developments in CBDs and decentralised areas in four
metropolitan areas, 1995-2000

New office development — trends in decentralisation (square metres)						
Metropolitan area	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Pretoria:						
CBD	10.442	5.300	4.600	0	0	0
Decentralised	33.082	103.948	36.600	34.371	50.301	81.060
Total	43.524	109.248	41.200	34.371	50.301	81.060
Johannesburg:						
CBD	109.909	41.225	30.785	0	0	44.500
Decentralised	208.867	345.497	237.080	281.481	208.481	245.685
Total	318.776	386.722	267.865	281.481	208.481	299.185
Durban:						
CBD	5.000	39.218	3.500	2.700	0	0
Decentralised	3.500	9.691	33.457	58.611	15.098	13.800
Total	8.500	48.909	36.957	61.311	15.098	13.800
Cape Town:						
CBD	19.800	4.160	9.700	26.930	1.200	46.000
Decentralised	66.599	67.685	42.032	128.149	117.180	82.413
Total	86.399	71.845	51.732	155.109	118.380	128.413
National CBD	145.151	89.903	48.585	29.660	1.200	90.500
National decentralised	312.048	526.821	349.169	503.084	391.060	431.958
Total	457.199	616.724	397.754	532.744	392.260	522.458

Source: Donaldson *et al* 2002

In research drawing heavily on "production-side" political econo-
my, Steinberg *et al* (1992) investigated the possibility of gentrifica-
tion in the east end of central Johannesburg. Their research draws
heavily on the premise that, by the early 1990s, there was a signifi-
cant rent-gap in Johannesburg and hence an opportunity for gentri-
fication to take place. They argued that the "crusade" for inner-city
redevelopment throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s had occur-
red in the context of "a broader economic crisis in South Africa"
(Steinberg *et al* 1992: 266). They contended that it was led by the
structural rise of finance in the economy and that it came at a mo-
mentous time, when urban desegregation permitted the space of the

city to play a greater role in the broader formation of class alliances (Steinberg *et al* 1992). They suggested that the most coherent approach of the local state and capital was gentrification, but of a particular sort, aimed at an ascendant fraction of the black working class more than at traditional white "yuppies". As a consequence they concluded that, in the light of the peculiarities of capitalist over-accumulation in South African cities, the chances of gentrification as understood in the international context were slim. In reflecting upon the case of Johannesburg's CBD, this prediction appears to have been very accurate. On the whole, however, this study lacked extensive empirical foundations and has not generated further debate concerning production-side gentrification in Johannesburg or elsewhere.

An equally limited body of local research has drawn upon the greater intellectual freedom afforded by the consumption-side arguments for gentrification. This movement is probably best reflected in the work of Garside (1993), Kotze (1998), and Kotze & Van der Merwe (2000) in Cape Town. The first research on gentrification to emerge in South Africa came from a descriptive exploration by Garside (1993) in Cape Town's Woodstock neighbourhood. It was shown that urban renewal processes started in the 1980s, when increasing numbers of more affluent people from the "coloured" community started to settle in Lower Woodstock (a white group area at the time), after a decision by a National Commission of Enquiry suggested that white municipalities could decide for themselves at what level and where racial desegregation could take place. Garside found that local home-owners who noticed the replacement of working-class tenants by middle-class tenants started to renovate their dilapidated terraced houses in the neighbourhood in order to secure higher rentals or selling prices. This process was also replicated in Upper Woodstock where white working-class people were replaced by middle-class professionals.

To date the most detailed and comprehensive study of gentrification undertaken in any South African city remains Kotze's (1998) doctoral thesis on gentrification in a number of Cape Town inner-city neighbourhoods. The objective of this highly technical study was to develop a gentrification profile for Cape Town, which in turn would underpin the generation of a gentrification model for the city. The

key focus of this research was to identify the gentrifiers in order to confirm gentrification and differentiate it from urban renewal in Cape Town's inner city. The research as a whole identified two neighbourhoods within the inner city that were actually experiencing gentrification processes — the foremost being De Waterkant, bordering the CBD to the north-west. While the historical impact of the apartheid state's relocation policies was in evidence in some cases, this investigation demonstrated that personal characteristics typical of the "new middle class" were the key drivers of gentrification.

Notwithstanding the fact that this study provided an appropriate starting point for further gentrification studies, not only in Cape Town but nationally, no current research appears to be following on from this exploration or testing its applicability to other South African cities.

4. Prospects for South African gentrification studies

Over the past two years there has been a significant shift in the cycle of decline witnessed in South Africa's inner-city areas. The introduction of city-centre improvement districts, commonly referred to as CIDs, and major infrastructure investment, including transport, conference facilities, and so on, appear to be bucking the trend of decay. These processes of change do not always take place in an even manner, and Cape Town has probably made the most progress. In fact, a range of multi-billion rand redevelopment projects, such as the V&A Waterfront area, the Foreshore and the CBD are transforming areas of the city into new spaces for living and working, as well as for leisure, and have gripped the public imagination across the country.

These processes are also increasingly in evidence elsewhere in South Africa. The much publicised "Blue IQ" projects in Gauteng are probably the most far-reaching in their intention of regenerating large parts of inner-city Johannesburg (Blue IQ 2002). Whereas in most cases such development initiatives are built around an array of large-scale production and consumption facilities, perhaps the most interesting instance relates the movement of private rather than public capital to inner-city areas. Earning headlines such as "Joburg face-lift is already paying dividends" (*The Star* 2002), "Durban's CBD

is bouncing back" (Horner 2002) and "Back to town!" (Jordan 2000), a number of recent changes suggest that these CBDs are turning the corner and "again becoming hot property" (Horner 2002). The motive in most cases is succinctly stated as "investors being lured back by bargain-basement prices, falling crime and reliable rental" (Jordan 2000). Since there is a major rent-gap across South Africa's metropolitan inner-city areas, this comes as no surprise. It is also in the context of property's "being ripe for redevelopment" (cf Slater 2002) and the introduction of a range of facilities often drawn upon by the "new middle class" that possibilities for gentrification arise. In this context, then, we may interpret what follows as providing some outlines of the type of gentrification research which might be fruitfully pursued in South African urban areas.

In the first place, the fundamental point underlying the gentrification literature, whether local or international, is that the process implies displacement of a lower by a higher class group. Although volumes of research have been completed on apartheid displacement (cf Meth 2000, 2001a, 2001b) there has been little evidence of "typical" gentrification in South Africa. This observation opens up the question of whether such processes actually took place. While displacement processes in the apartheid mould may not be seen in the same light as classic "international" gentrification, the question does arise as to whether such processes were not in evidence in the past, albeit in the context of racialised spatial manipulation.

Secondly, the decline of inner-city areas has in many ways provided opportunities for new societal cohorts both to engage the urban economy and to find a place of residence in the CBD, mainly in formerly white working-class and lower-middle-income areas (Morris 1997; Rogerson 1997). Gentrification in the South African context does not need to take on the typical Anglo-American form in which it is generally closely associated with black-white displacement processes. On the contrary, in San Francisco black gentrification has been in evidence for some time, and something similar could be happening here. In contrast to the production-side gentrification research with its long tradition of portraying working-class urban blacks as the victims of gentrification (cf Lees 2000), a small but significant body of literature by authors such as Schaffer & Smith (1986), Taylor

(1992) and Downer (1999), demonstrates that blacks can also be agents of gentrification. In the local context this immediately raises the question of whether similar processes may be playing themselves out in post-apartheid cities.

In fact, there is a growing literature on the desegregation of post-apartheid urban areas (Christopher 2001; Kotze & Donaldson 1998; Kotze 1999) which demonstrates that this process has been uneven across the urban hierarchy in terms of where it takes place and what socio-economic groups are involved. It must be borne in mind that despite the close relationship between race and class in South Africa, a substantial black middle class is emerging (*Mail and Guardian* 1999). Many of those in this class can be classified as the "new middle class". Thus, in viewing desegregation data, we might suggest that far from black urban in-migration "lowering" former white neighbourhoods, movement towards white working-class displacement by increasingly upwardly mobile black professionals, less concerned about the inner-city areas being "black", may perhaps present evidence of gentrification. In addition, we might seek to answer questions as to whether these potential black gentrifiers share the same personal characteristics as their white counterparts, as well as possible problems related to racial difference in such cases, and so on.

On the other hand, black middle-class in-migration provides opportunities to consider "white" displacement in the post-apartheid context. One of the ironies of desegregation research in this context has been the eerie silence concerning the destination of "displaced" whites. To put this in a more concrete South African urban context, it is necessary to ask where the former white working and lower-middle classes of inner Johannesburg, Durban, Cape Town, Pietersburg or Bloemfontein, to name a few, have moved to.

Thirdly, the emergence of an increasingly large black middle class also raises questions concerning the possibility of gentrification in South Africa's formerly black townships. Whereas these areas are almost universally portrayed as homogenous dormitory towns and neighbourhoods of abject poverty and struggling working-class residents, this is certainly not always the case. Consequently, we might investigate the dynamics of neighbourhood change taking place in these

areas are and whether sites of gentrification might possibly be identified there.

Fourthly, drawing on inconclusive but nevertheless suggestive evidence in Kotze's (1998) detailed empirical investigation of gentrification in De Waterkant in Cape Town, the focus on this area has been extended in recent work by Elder (2003) and Visser (2002, 2003a, 2003b) who have found that the area has again and in a very short period of time experienced rapid large-scale change into a key site for gay leisure and tourism consumption. Thus, the initiators of the gentrification cycle have been displaced by a new social and economic group. Visser's (2003a) study, for example, suggests that the displacement of middle-class white gay men by wealthier gay men from core regions such as Britain and Germany, has provoked no critique from social commentators. This process might form a basis for interesting international comparative research focused on the link between gentrification and tourism/leisure-led migration.

This, in fact, raises a more general and tricky question as to whether there is a hierarchy of social science research in which interpretations of white middle-class communities' displacement are denied importance purely on the grounds that this group can apparently fend for itself elsewhere in the property market. In what way is the middle-class experience of displacement less disconcerting than that of the working-class? These latter points relate to key sites in which South Africa's social scientists can contribute towards our understanding of both gentrification and post-apartheid displacement. Following from these questions, similar studies drawing on identity-based consumption in gentrification seem called for. Such investigations might also provide answers to the question as to whether processes of gentrification take place in the same way in different localities.

Fifthly, more direct questions concerning the desirability of gentrification in the South African urban context might be explored. For example, there is increasing concern about the erosion of the South African historic urban fabric (of importance to various races and political groupings) as many sites of historical, cultural and political significance have fallen prey to demolition on the grounds of their state of disrepair (cf for example Ansley 2002). In this context a

number of issues arise around the interconnection between gentrification, urban renewal, urban conservation and nation-building. In a post-apartheid urban society it is not as simple as in the international literature to insist that buildings of historical, cultural or political significance be supported by public funds, whether local or national. In South African cities issues of social justice in terms of more important basic service delivery do not allow for the relative luxury of placing the needs of a few hundred households above the needs of what are very literally the "poor masses". In any event, those affected by gentrification in inner-city Cape Town, for example, are relatively fortunate individuals compared to other urban communities locked into the townships and the urban periphery.

These sites have a further significance in terms of their importance as tourist nodes in central Cape Town and potential tourist sites in Johannesburg, Pretoria or Durban, to name but a few examples (cf Rogerson 2002). The inner city of Cape Town is a key component of (internationally driven) urban tourism and has also gripped the public imagination of South African urbanites elsewhere. In addition, literally tens of thousands of black and coloured Capetonians' livelihoods are dependent on the tourist flow to inner-city Cape Town. Thus, the rather awkward question arises as to whether we dare argue bluntly against gentrification, as does production-side research, on the grounds of the displacement of the few.

Finally, an issue of potentially significant research interest relates to rural gentrification in South Africa. The idea of "saving" quintessentially rural towns has existed for many decades. There is increasing evidence in the popular press that significant numbers of wealthy urbanites are obtaining second homes in these towns and villages (Roberston 2000). Most of the properties at stake are white-owned, many of them the residences of generations of rural townsfolk. Thus, issues of displacement are key to the processes taking place in these areas. A very contentious question emerging from rural gentrification is whether or not the consumption of these towns is beneficial to the impoverished rural areas of South Africa. The fact of the matter is that the influx of wealthy urban "weekenders" might be the only activity keeping these communities alive. Again, South Africa's resources are too scarce to draw upon the central fiscus to "save the

day", as it were, through nationally or provincially funded decentra-lisation projects or the like. Allied to the idea of weekend leisure movement to rural areas, one could also consider the potential impact of tourism on these economies and their populations.

5. Conclusion

This paper argued that in the light of significant changes in South African urban areas, and their inner cities in particular, the process of gentrification appears to be starting to take root and to become a po-tentially fruitful avenue of investigation. Whereas South Africa's cities have generally been understood as representing a "unique" urban form, many theoretical perspectives and urban processes generally re-served for consideration in respect of cities in advanced capitalist so-cieties, such as gentrification, are also of local relevance. In fact, as Parnell (1996) has suggested, important contributions can be made to these theoretical perspectives from the South African urban expe-rience, while also providing a basis for the integration of local scholarship into the international urban debate. Investigation of the potential research areas outlined above could go some way towards achieving this goal.

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