

# Issues of gentrification and displacement



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“ Twenty-five hundred years ago, Plato noted that “ any city, however small, is in fact divided into two, one of the city of the poor, the other of the rich” (Glaeser, 2014). Subsequently it is imperative to consider the factors that are causing a clear disparity in the standard of living within cities and how the process of gentrification supported by urbanisation has derived social inequality and displacement to exist within cities.

Urbanisation is a key process which allows us to understand the direct interlink between the causes of gentrification and provides direct reasoning for why people are drawn to reside in these areas and are motivated to create a home and a life for themselves in cities. “ An urban area is the region surrounding a city. Most inhabitants of urban areas have non-agricultural jobs. Urban areas are very developed, meaning there is a density of human structures such as houses, commercial buildings, roads, bridges, and railways” (Society, 2018).

An urban area can be in towns, cities and suburbs. Several urban areas are also known as metropolitan areas, or “ greater,” such as Greater New York or Greater London. The incessant flow of migrants from rural to urban areas is driven by their very human aspirations for better living conditions and working opportunities (HuffPost, 2018). “ While accounting for only 12% of its landmass, cities had 59% of all jobs in England and Wales. City suburbs accounted for 9% of all land in the U. K. but 44% of all jobs. City centers occupied 0. 08% of all land but 14% of employment.” (Talbot, 2018). As more people move into cities, housing the residents becomes a prime issue and often this means the government are pushed to develop run-down areas

to provide housing for the more affluent people moving in, starting the process of gentrification in the city.

Gentrification is the “ process by which working class residential neighbourhoods are rehabilitated by middle class homebuyers, landlords and professional developers” (Onlinelibrary-wiley-com. ezphost. dur. ac. uk, 2018). It is a fast moving process which results in the original working class residents being displaced as a result of more affluent people moving in. Subsequently the social character and nature of the area is exponentially changed.

“ 68% of the world population projected to live in urban areas by 2050, says UN” (UN DESA | United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2018). This corroborates the fact the trend of migration to cities is expected to continue and rise. A book written by Doug Sanders, *Arrival City*, showcases the stories of two billion people moving from rural to urban areas. He provides a journey to readers starting with Brick Lane in London to the back streets of Dhaka. From Watts in Los Angeles to Istanbul, outlining the process of gentrification. The writer does not find pathways leading to hell for the society, but “ a rich brew of aspiration, entrepreneurship and impromptu social organization” (Saunders, 2012).

People are driven to work in cities to create better career prospects for themselves, it allows households to have greater disposable income which encourages a higher level of spending to take place in the economy, thus increasing GDP levels and it raises the quality of life for residents, generating a positive multiplier effect. “ On average, as the share of a country’s

population that is urban rises by 10 percent, the country's output per capita output increases by 30 percent. Per capita incomes are almost four times higher in those countries where majority of people live in cities than in those countries where a majority of people live in rural areas." (Glaeser, 2014).

Inherently as the economy begins to prosper, the government is able to spend more in rehabilitating old, run-down neighbourhoods and revitalize the housing sector. This encourages the wealthier people to move into the area.

As the government focuses on re-inventing the social culture of neighbourhoods. House prices and rents tend to increase as the housing is developed from a run-down structure to a higher quality standard, not only to attract people to move in to the area but also to offer a better quality of living space to residents. In order for this to be profitable the prices are raised as the government acknowledges that the wealthier people are able to afford it and view this as a tactical way to increase their margins and profitability. Furthermore, this encourages re-investment into public services in the economy and helps increase general welfare for the public.

However, despite the positive aspects of affluent people moving into the neighbourhood, there is a strong stain left behind for the former residents as the social characteristics of the neighbourhood change. The higher levied charges on housing become unaffordable for the residents pushing them to be displaced out of their home. Often the old habitants become a minority in their home area and the more affluent people are seen to take over the area.

The fiscal crisis that took place in New York left a strong stigma attached to many areas in the 1970s and pushed the city to re-invent itself. The Bronx

area was strongly associated with urban blight since. “ The area was deeply entrenched in a socioeconomic spiral that it has gradually shed. Now, the Bronx has become the latest avatar of New York City’s dizzying pace of revitalization in formerly working-class areas”(Bukspan and David, 2018). The rough image associated with the borough has been redefined by newly refurbished and luxury housing. Residents who lived initially in the area have seen a double-digit rise in house prices in 2017, thus forcing them out of the area due to it becoming unaffordable to pay. House prices are not the only issue residents face in areas undergoing gentrification. The production in supermarkets starts to change, attracting consumers of different tastes and preferences. In Bronx, supermarkets replaced shelves with organic and pricey products, which additionally increased the cost of living for residents and leaves residents with no choice but to look elsewhere to do their daily shop.

“ Mumbai’s social fabric is paying the price for its ambition of becoming a ‘ world-class city’” (dna, 2018). The city has “ emerged as a major financial hub in the global chain of financial centres. Mumbai’s location is eminently suitable for day-long trading across time zones” (Rediff. com, 2018). Mumbai is thriving in terms of economic prosperity, people from Gujarat are imbued with a strong set of skills which people are specifically specialised in the stock market field. They adapt and react instantly to changes in the market and respond rapidly to bids and offers.

“ With a hope market in India of trillion-dollar GDP, India is today one of the most promising territories in the world for an investor. When the rupee becomes fully convertible in the foreseeable future, there will be a major

step-up in the scale of investment and the Bombay Stock Exchange as foreign investment institutions, with their huge financial resources, can be expected to make a beeline for Mumbai. Unlike Shanghai, Mumbai offers the protection of a Western-type legal system, which is ultimately one of the most significant requirements of an investor” (Rediff. com, 2018).

Despite Mumbai being viewed as a city that provides shelter and support in terms of food and health and several other services to the public. There is a stained image for some parts of India that it has become an urban space that is not homogenous. It is apparent that the quality of life in Mumbai is vast and divided. The city’s social fabric is constantly undergoing change and the gap between the rich and the poor is widening. The two divided parts inhabit different economic, social, physical spaces despite the fact they share the same geographical territory. The strong contrast in the living standards in Mumbai are of such a high magnitude, which insinuates that two cities exist within one.

A village called Mahul is pervaded by gloom where 30, 000 people currently live in poor conditions as they have been rehabilitated due to their former slum homes being destroyed in order to redevelop the infrastructure in the area as part of a larger project. The residents “ live in 72 seven-storey buildings jammed together in the shadow of oil refineries, power stations and fertiliser plants. The air is pungent with the strong smell of chemicals. Sewage overflows into narrow streets. With the nearest government hospital seven miles away, masked patients stand in obedient lines outside homeopathy clinics, coughing” (the Guardian, 2018)

One of the projects is the Green Wheels Along Blue Lines cycle and running track. The project is expected to provide a dual purpose. One of them is to prevent the existence of illegal shacks by clearing the space around the pipeline, and provide an environmentally friendly and healthy route to the public for transport around the crowded city. Although the gentrification process no doubt is set to benefit society once the project is completed and provide a much safer, clean and more accessible way of transport, the displacement of residents remains a key issue. “ Rishi Agarwal, a Mumbai-based urban planner, believes that the city’s development is crushing its poorest citizens. “ It’s part of the larger gentrification, which is rapidly progressing in Mumbai,” he says. “ In the past two decades, the government’s intention has been to push the most underprivileged citizens to the outskirts in order to create housing near the centre for more affluent residents” (the Guardian, 2018) The displaced residents have been moved into rehabilitation centres without. The place faces a severe shortage of basic amenities such as ventilation and waste management. Mahul is depicted to be a place of hell.

Gentrification brings an array of benefits to society, as seen in Mumbai, in poorly developed areas it can be seen as an essential process to provide residents with a better quality of life and a safe environment to raise a family in. However, for the displaced residents, there remains a key issue of where to place the people whilst developing the run-down areas. A significant amount of thought needs to be placed on the accessibility of health care, schools, food amenities and living space which is safe and adequate to live in for the residents displaced.

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