

Neighborhood Upgrading v. Gentrification: A Book Reviewer's Perspective

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Introduction

- Purpose: provide an update on the literature of neighborhood revitalization based on the book reviews I have completed the last 5 years
- For each article I will focus on (1) the author's goals, (2) the methodology, (3) the main findings, (4) takeaways
- First, What are the two types of neighborhood revitalization?
 - *Neighborhood upgrading*: physical improvement of an area with the existing population remaining in place
 - *Gentrification*: replacement of a working class population by a middle class one
- Are the terms mutually exclusive?

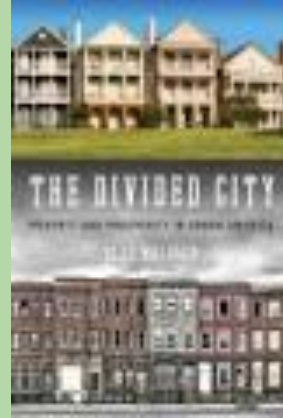
Outline: I will attempt to answer three questions

- A. Is neighborhood upgrading feasible?
- B. How are housing vouchers and voucher hotspots connected to neighborhood decline?
- C. Can neighborhood upgrading and gentrification co-exist?

A. Is Neighborhood Upgrading Feasible?

- Why is so much attention given to gentrification and so little to neighborhood upgrading?
- Does downtown revitalization help neighborhood upgrading?
- Which neighborhoods should get priority for neighborhood upgrading?
- Do tenemental neighborhoods offer lessons for neighborhood upgrading?
- What roles can community development officials play in neighborhood upgrading?

The Divided City by Alan Mallach



1. Aims

- Mallach seeks to Improve understanding of what has been going on in America's older industrial cities since 2000, why it is happening, and what that means for the future.

2. Methods

- Relies on census and other published information as well as his own experience as a consultant for many American cities.

The Divided City by Alan Mallach (cont'd)

3. Findings

- Although gentrification in legacy cities is important, it pales in comparison to neighborhood decline.
- Efforts by community development corporations (CDCs) to stem decline have proven futile.
- Far too little concern about neighborhood decline (diffuse forces) compared to anguish about gentrification (a visible 'enemy')

The Divided City by Alan Mallach

4. Takeaways

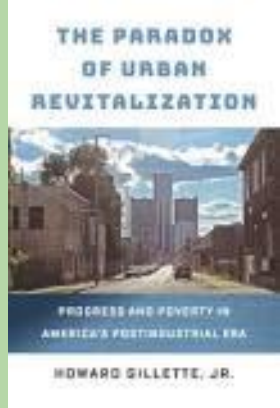
- Place oriented strategies are unlikely to slow or reverse decline because they don't address the causes of decline (e.g. poverty, unemployment, weak family structure).
- Because there is no "silver bullet" to solve the problem of neighborhood decline, planners have no choice but to keep slogging away and make incremental improvements.

The Paradox of Urban Revitalization by Howard Gillette Jr.

1. Aims:

- Seeks to explain why the surge in urban violence across America often occurs where downtown revitalization is most evident.
- “Urban revitalization brought with it a central paradox ... Success in adjusting to the demands of globalization and the economic restructuring it required, deepened existing divisions of race and class.”

2. Methods: Case studies of Baltimore, Detroit, Camden, Milwaukee, New Haven, Washington DC, Oakland, Pittsburgh, Newark NJ.



The Paradox of Urban Revitalization by Howard Gillette Jr.

3. Findings (3 of 9 case studies)

- *Baltimore*: has reinvented itself repeatedly (Inner Harbor, Winchester-Sandtown, Johns Hopkins University initiatives) but crime remain high and school performance is poor.
- *Washington DC* officials no longer promote Washington as “Chocolate City;” affordable rental housing has decreased but public policies have slowed the decrease.
- *Pittsburgh*’s technological strengths (a Google innovation center) has not yet translated into broad-based economic growth.



Google's Pittsburgh
headquarters in Nabisco
Baking Company Building

4. Takeaways:

- The good news is that cities are demonstrating increased agency to enact programs to promote equity and are benefiting from growing networks of organizational resources (unions, foundations, universities).
- The bad news is that the benefits of downtown revitalization have not solved America's urban poverty problem, even in the most progressive and technologically sophisticated cities like Pittsburgh.

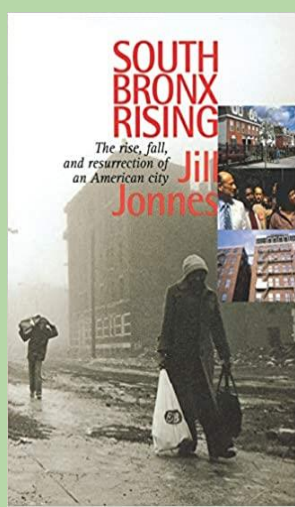
South Bronx Rising by Jill Jonnes

1. Aims:

- Jonnes examines the many complexities that led to the Bronx's terrible conditions in the 1970s and documents the amazing progress achieved since then.

2. Methods:

- Jonnes relies on newspaper articles, published records as well as interviews



South Bronx Rising by Jill Jonnes

3. Findings

- Demographic and economic changes (deindustrialization) made the community ripe for decline; construction of public housing and highway projects sped up white flight.
- White flight resulted from increased crime and the availability of housing in the Grand Concourse (a broad boulevard that indicated success).
- The Catholic Church, community development organizations played a key role in organizing residents using Alinsky style tactics; the City of New York and private foundations provided massive funding.
- Redevelopment included single-family homes (Charlotte Street) and higher density ownership townhouses elsewhere.

South Bronx Rising by Jill Jonnes



Charlotte Street before/after
revitalization

Melrose area 2002 and 1994

South Bronx Rising by Jill Jonnes

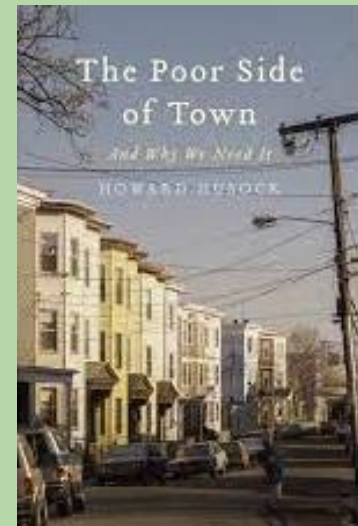
4. Takeaways:

- Some communities that are abandoned can be “rescued” under specific conditions.
- Despite the physical changes, the South Bronx remains one of the poorest urban congressional districts in the US; One of the most important challenges today is raising families out of intergenerational poverty.

The Poor Side of Town and Why We Need It

by Howard Husock

1. Aims: “follow the history of America’s housing reform movement from the Progressive period through urban renewal, to Husock’s proposals for ‘unreforming’ housing policies today.”
2. Methods: draws on Husock’s experiences growing up in a working class Cleveland suburb and his extensive writings on housing policies



The Poor Side of Town and Why We Need It by Howard Husock

3. Findings

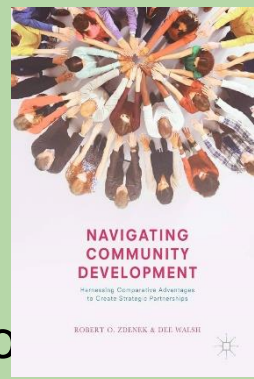
- Immigrants' used ownership opportunities in tenemental neighborhoods for upward mobility.
- Prior to WWII housing industry produced zones of “emergence for immigrants”*
- It would have been preferable to renovate old, historic neighborhoods than demolish them and replace them with public housing because public housing did not serve as a springboard for ownership and mobility
- Single-family, large lot zoning regulations excluding other than detached single family homes, in the suburbs prevent the poor from following the ‘tenement trail’ to the suburbs

The Poor Side of Town and Why We Need It by Howard Husock

4. Takeaways

- Husock envisions the creation of 'urban Levittowns' with affordable homes of one to four units on cleared public housing sites. Note: this is what has actually occurred in the South Bronx.
- The most promising approach for zoning reform is 'missing middle housing' (bungalow courts, townhomes, duplexes or triplexes and accessory apartments but persuading suburban residents to accept it will be difficult.

Navigating Community Development by Zdenek and Walsh



1. Aims:

- To create blended approaches to community development that involve “partnering with education, employment, health care and environmental groups.
- Identify the core competencies associated with community development (e.g. community engagement, project development, collaboration and partnering, fundraising) and to show how community development organizations can leverage these competencies through collaboration by finding partners that can perform well in areas where they are weak.

2. Methods: Seven case studies of successful revitalization

Navigating Community Development by Zdenek and Walsh

3. Findings (3 of 9 examples):

- Brownsville, Texas, the CDC of Brownsville along with Texas Community Capital spearheaded creation of the Community Loan Center which offers a low-cost, short term, credit product.
- Five suburban Chicago localities created the West Cook County Housing Collaborative which hired IFF, a nonprofit community development organization to manage the planning, application and implementation process.
- In Oakland, California the East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation created its Healthy Neighborhoods Strategic Plan which includes expanded partnerships with health care institutions and schools.

Navigating Community Development by Zdenek and Walsh

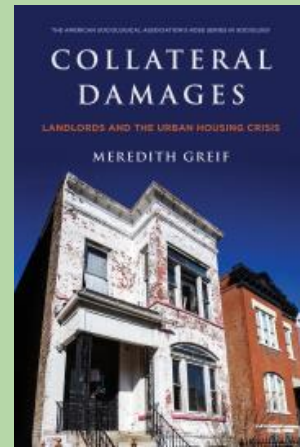
4. Takeaways:

- CDCs can achieve, at best, incremental improvements through greater collaboration and coordination.
- Community organizations can slow down decline but planners and other urban professional need to tackle the causes of poverty e.g. unemployment, substandard education, weak family structure.

B. Housing Vouchers, Voucher Hotspots and Neighborhood Decline/ Background

- Since the 1970s there has been a shift in housing policy from public housing to housing vouchers.
- Voucher recipients tend to be concentrated 'hot spots.'
- Hot spots are statistically linked to crime and lower property values.
- Policy makers need to balance off the interests of voucher recipients, landlords and neighborhood residents.

Collateral Damage by Meredith Greif



1. Aims: Greif seeks to uncover “the social and structural factors that incentivize landlord behavior that disadvantages tenants---and often violates a multitude of federal, state and local laws.”
2. Methods: A three year study of 60 landlords in the Cleveland metropolitan area.

Collateral Damage by Meredith Greif

3. Findings

- To avoid the costs of evictions (i.e. filing fees, lawyers' and movers' costs), some landlords employ informal, illegal evictions e.g., by removing apartment doors.
- Through criminal activity nuisance ordinances (CANOs), landlords are pressured into monitoring tenants' behavior on their property and helping to abate "nuisance activity" with the threat of financial or criminal sanctions.
- Rising water bills pose a threat to landlords.
- Suburban landlords are disinclined to participate in HCVP because housing inspections are burdensome and tenants are a "headache."

Collateral Damage by Meredith Greif

4. Takeaways

- Meeting the needs of tenants and landlords is difficult.
- Greif criticizes strict screening on equity grounds.
- But lax screening could lead to neighborhood decline and the withdrawal of landlords from the rental market.

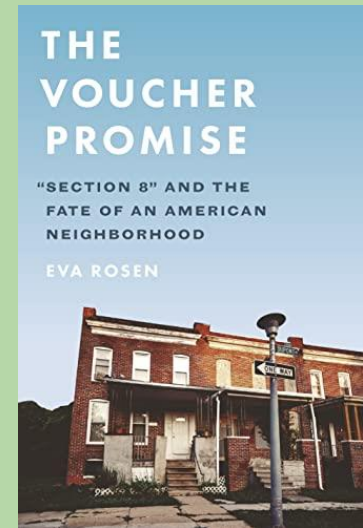
The Voucher Promise by Eva Rosen

1. Aims:

- Determine why many HCVP recipients relocate to high-poverty, high minority neighborhoods

2. Methods:

- Rosen moved into the Park Heights neighborhood in Baltimore and interviewed 80 residents and 20 landlords.



Voucher Choices by Eva Rosen

3. Findings:

- Households cluster in HCVP hotspots because their family is nearby, single family rental units are available and finding an acceptable home is difficult
- Voucher landlords have become specialists; select and recruit HCVP tenants
- Despite its crime and poverty, Park Heights has a lot to offer HCVP tenants

Voucher Choices by Eva Rosen

4. Takeaways:

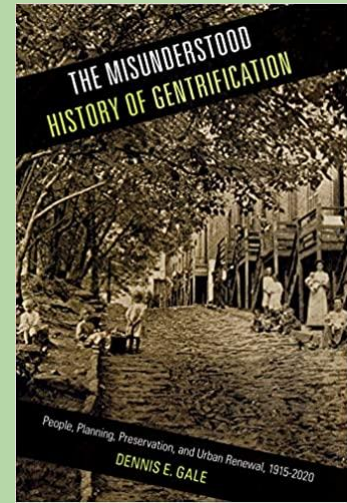
- Although HCVP migration was not the cause of Park Heights' decline; once HCVP migration began, it sped up neighborhood decline due to decreased confidence in neighborhood's future among landlords and homeowners.
- Deconcentrating voucher holders to higher opportunity areas can only be part of a solution; underlying causes of poverty need to be addressed.

C. Can Gentrification and Neighborhood Upgrading Coexist

- Is gentrification a new phenomenon and if not what can we learn from earlier periods?
- How can a balance be achieved between neighborhood decline and rampant gentrification?
- How can affordable housing preservation and gentrification coexist?
- Does gentrification benefit or hurt existing poorer residents?

The Misunderstood History of Gentrification by Dennis Gale

1. Aims: provide a historical perspective on gentrification, something lacking so far.
2. Methods: Case studies of Boston, New York, and Washington, DC



The Misunderstood History of Gentrification by Dennis Gale

3. Findings

- 1920s: Neighborhoods like Beacon Hill (Boston), Georgetown (Washington DC) and Greenwich Village (New York) have a common feature, historic housing going back to 1700s.
- Post WWII to 1980s: embryonic gentrification (conservation) and redevelopment (urban renewal).
- 1990s to the Present: Gentrification debates employ a broader definition. Gentrification can mean virtually any form of urban development resulting in the replacement of low-, moderate- and even middle-income people- particularly racial and ethnic minorities- by those of higher socio-economic status.

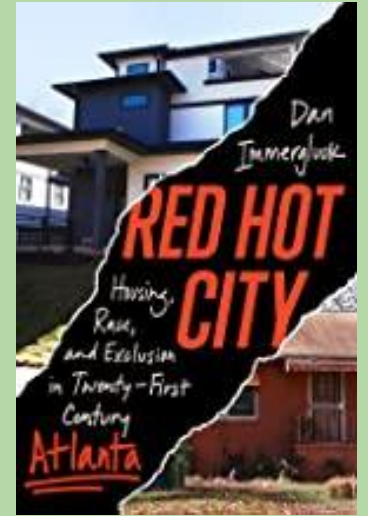
The Misunderstood History of Gentrification by Dennis Gale

4. Takeaways:

- Gale criticizes the demonization of gentrification based on presumed high rates of displacement; no evidence that gentrification speeds up out-migration.
- Criticisms of gentrification overly emphasize the costs as compared to the benefits.
- Rather than rail against gentrification, planners and others should find ways to support efforts by nonprofit groups to maintain and expand affordable housing in gentrifying neighborhoods.

Red Hot Cities: Atlanta by Dan Immergluck

1. Aims: Help planners and policymakers find a ‘third way’-- responsible reinvestment-- between neighborhood decline and rampant gentrification
2. Methods: combination of empirical research (e.g. the spillover effects of redevelopment projects) along with powerful housing advocacy



Red Hot Cities: Atlanta by Dan Immergluck

3. Findings: Immergluck writes about four inflection points when policymakers missed opportunities to reduce racial and economic exclusion

- 1990's and early 2000s Atlanta urban regime used Olympics as a way to make city more attractive to middle income families.
- Mid-2000s: the Atlanta Beltline (a 22 mile loop around the city core); tax revenue should have been used to create affordable housing foreclosure crisis.
- 2008-2012: Federal, state and local government should have helped low-income families buy vacant properties.
- Starting 2012, city and suburban governments carried out redevelopment projects, demolishing older and affordable apartments replacing them with mixed-use neighborhoods.



Eastside Trail. Atlanta
Beltline

Red Hot Cities: Atlanta by Dan Immergluck

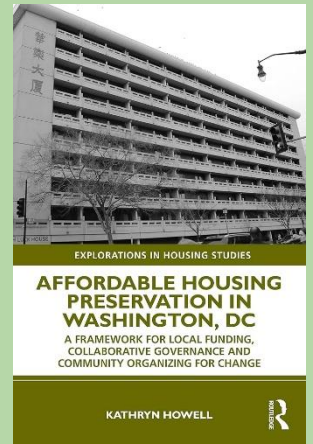
4. Takeaways

- I believe that expanding the meaning of the term “gentrification” is counterproductive.
- Immergluck uses “racialized gentrification” to describe city-wide changes rather than changes in particular neighborhoods (e.g. shift from a Black to a non-Black city)-- and shifts away from the role of homebuyers in fixing historic properties.
- Replacement is not the same thing as displacement.
- The term gentrification loses its analytic value when used in such a broad way.

Affordable Housing Preservation in Washington DC

by Kathryn Howell

1. Aims: Tell the story of Washington DC's move toward a preservation policy and the long-term struggle to use policy to acknowledge the rights of tenants in a gentrifying area
2. Methods: a mixed methods approach that includes 75 interviews with residents and others working in the housing preservation sector, participants, direct observation, and analysis of quantitative data.



Affordable Housing Preservation in Washington DC by Kathryn Howell

3. Findings:

- “If there had been no investment in affordable housing through the mid-to late 20th century, it is difficult to imagine that the District would have housing affordable to extremely low-income households in its gentrified neighborhoods today.”
- DC’s policy and funding framework that helped to preserve affordable housing
 - Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act of 1980 (gives tenants to opportunity to purchase a building put up for sale)
 - Housing Preservation Fund of 2002
 - Community Development Block grant funds, 2004
 - The DC Preservation Network (DCPN)

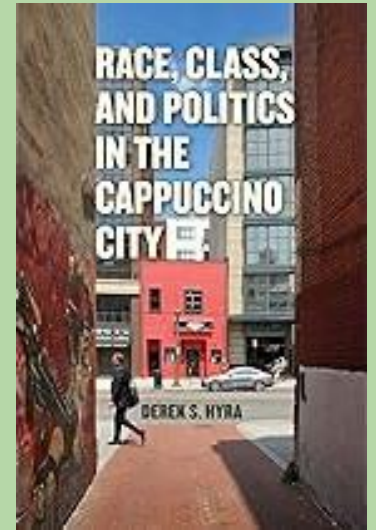
Affordable Housing Preservation in Washington DC by Kathryn Howell

4. Takeaways:

- Book highlights complexity of historic preservation “on the ground;” most buildings have gone through multiple processes of organizing, preservation, and challenge.
- Howell shows that “smart gentrification” (the preservation of affordable housing alongside middle-class household move-ins), is not only desirable but also doable not only in well resourced cities like Washington DC but is also doable in less-resourced cities like Richmond VA where Howell worked for years.

***Race, Class and Politics in the Cappuccino City* by Derek Hyra**

1. Aims: To determine whether gentrification benefits low-income residents who remain in place.
2. Methods: Ethnographic study in the Shaw/U Street community in Washington DC



***Race, Class and Politics in the Cappuccino City* by Derek Hyra**

3. Findings:

- Revitalization benefited long-time residents living in church-subsidized developments via reduced crime rate.
- As a result of cultural displacement (bike lanes, dog runs) long term residents resented new residents, resulting in reduced rates of participation in civic affairs.
- Little social interaction took place across racial lines and civic organizations became overwhelmingly white.

***Race, Class and Politics in the Cappuccino City* by Derek Hyra**

4. Takeaways:

- Gentrification yields benefits and costs to existing long-time poorer residents
- Gentrification would be more equal if neutral “third” places were developed like restaurants to bring residents together but whether this option is feasible is an open question.
- Gentrification is largely irrelevant to the question of how to reduce or eliminate inner-city poverty.

Conclusions

1. Prospects for neighborhood upgrading

- Place oriented strategies unlikely to reverse decline (Mallach, Gillette).
- Community development agencies can make incremental improvements in the quality of life of residents (Zdenek and Walsh)
- The South Bronx achieved a remarkable resurrection due to a unique combination of assets (strong funding, strong leadership, immigrants, ownership-based redevelopment, Jonnes)

Conclusions

2. Upgrading in housing voucher concentrations

- HCVP program development should incorporate perspectives from landlords (Grief) and tenants (Rosen).
- Planners and policymakers need to discourage the formation of voucher hotspots and encourage moves to high opportunity suburban neighborhoods.
- Such a strategy requires the acceptance and support of the program by residents, landlords, and officials in high opportunity neighborhoods.
- Such acceptance is predicated on strict but fair screening and monitoring of tenants by landlords.

Conclusions

3. Greater nuance and precision is needed for gentrification debates to be productive

- The meaning of the term has become so broad that it includes virtually any type of policy leading to the replacement of poor by affluent households.
(Gale)
- Immergluck's use of the term 'racialized gentrification' is an example of obfuscation.
- Unfortunately, planners and policymakers are unlikely to do away with the term.

Conclusions

4. Gentrification discussions need to reflect two other realities

- Smart gentrification (the preservation of affordable housing alongside middle-class household move-ins) is not only desirable but doable. (Howell)
- Gentrification provides benefits to long-term residents that stay in the subsidized affordable housing (e.g. reduced crime) as well as costs (reduced civic participation). (Hyra)
- How to promote greater social interaction across class lines is an open question.

**Thank you! I welcome questions and
comments.**

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Thank you for your attention!

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