

Territorial Stigmatisation, Gentrification and Class Struggle:

An interview with Tom Slater

Forthcoming in

Tainted Urban Spaces: Producing and Contesting Territorial Stigma

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1) Ultimately, we would like to use this opportunity to invite you to retrace your thoughts on the matter of territorial stigmatisation. But, as an internationally recognised scholar, some people might be more aware of your reflections on the topic of gentrification. Was there any key personal experience that somehow led to your work on issues of gentrification, displacement and neighbourhood stigmatisation?

My interest in the closely related issues of gentrification, displacement and territorial stigmatisation goes back to my undergraduate days in London from 1995-8. I was a student at the wonderful Department of Geography at Queen Mary, University of London (in those days Queen Mary and Westfield College), and the extraordinary teachers there (especially David M. Smith and Miles Ogborn) helped me to understand the profound changes I was observing not only in east London (the university campus is on Mile End Road), but also where I lived in Tooting (south London). The same week in which I completed my final exams, the landlord of the small Victorian terraced house that I was sharing with two others informed us that he had sold the house for a 'packet', which didn't surprise me at all (you could almost smell the gentrification in Tooting at the time!). The landlord had always been prompt if we encountered any problems with the house, and he did show considerable regret that we had to find somewhere else to live pretty quickly, but the minor upheaval created by this particular incident of displacement did make me wonder how we might have reacted and coped if we had put down roots in the neighbourhood, how we would have found somewhere else to live if we had been elderly, socially isolated, or unemployed with young children, to name but a few vulnerable, stigmatised categories. As it transpired, we could not find anywhere else to live in Tooting, and had to migrate to the more expensive district of Clapham, where we moved into the very first flat we could find: a fairly cramped space with numerous maintenance issues and a far less competent landlord. In the midst of a few petty battles with this individual over the inadequacy of the central heating system and his failure to install a new kitchen properly (or even install it at all, for the first few weeks that we lived there), I recall thinking, "What if we were more vulnerable?"

But the real game-changer for me was Toronto, where I did my PhD fieldwork (2000-2). Following the suggestion from another graduate student, I immersed myself in the neighbourhood of South Parkdale, one of the few areas of central Toronto yet to experience intense gentrification, and therefore one of the last bastions of affordable housing in the central city area. It quickly proved to be the ideal observatory for a methodical analysis of capital flows, displacement, stigma, and class struggle brought about by neoliberal municipal and provincial policy. Much of the neighbourhood's housing stock consisted of large Victorian residences that had been illegally subdivided into tiny apartments known locally as 'bachelorettes'. These apartments had two rooms, one serving as the living and sleeping space with a kitchen in the corner, the other being a bathroom. Many of the occupants of these bachelorettes were people who had been discharged from two nearby psychiatric hospitals in the 1980s under the rhetoric of 'care in the community', the language used by the Ontario provincial government to justify massive mental health care spending cuts. But these bachelorettes also housed new immigrants to Canada, including many political refugees seeking asylum.

At the time that I began my research, gentrification in South Parkdale was just beginning to gather momentum, for three reasons. First, surrounding neighbourhoods had gentrified, and the central city housing market was becoming tighter and tighter, causing middle-class people to look towards areas where affordable and attractive properties could be purchased or rented. Second, the City of Toronto government was attempting to eradicate the significant stigma attached to South Parkdale via a policy of legalising and cleaning up its bachelorette buildings – part of an overt effort to attract middle-class families to live in the district, justified by the language of creating a 'more balanced community profile' in a part of the city famous for having a high percentage of single persons living in small rented dwellings. Third, some landlords were taking advantage of the 1998 weakening of tenant protection by the Provincial (Ontario) government by making life very difficult for their tenants, with the hope of getting them out of their properties and attracting a wealthier class of tenant, or selling the buildings they owned for a tidy profit. Once I had established the causes of gentrification via a varied panoply of research methods (analysis of official statistics, the scrutiny of policy documents, lengthy interviews with community organisers, government officials, middle-class homeowners and artists, and ethnographic observation of various neighbourhood forums), it struck me as impossible to gain a full understanding of the impact of gentrification on the existing residents of South Parkdale without talking to those low-income tenants living at the bottom of the class structure. With help from people who I encountered (officially, a strategy of 'snowball sampling'), I managed to make contact with people for whom the gentrification of their neighbourhood was nothing but stressful, worrying, and upsetting. Most of these particular interviews were quite harrowing, listening to the stories of socially isolated people struggling to make rent at the same time as they were struggling with debilitating mental health problems for which 'care in the community' was a spurious, empty slogan. But one encounter in particular has haunted me ever since, and will all my life.

One afternoon in March 2001 I went to meet a young woman, a Tibetan immigrant who arrived in Toronto with her family in 1998 as political refugees. She invited me into her home, a bachelorette apartment that housed her, her husband and their three young children. The place was remarkably tidy and clean given the overcrowding, but there was a pervasive smell of damp in the entire building, and the alarming cracks in the plaster of the walls suggested major structural faults. I sat at their small dining table whilst she served me a cup of Jasmine tea. I asked her about her landlord,

and she responded at length with a terrible litany of problems including harassment, bullying, rent increases, and unresolved maintenance issues. By the end of our conversation – interview seems a rather cardboard word for it – she was in tears as she reflected on her family’s situation. If they complained, they faced eviction from the building, and if they didn’t complain, they remained tenants trapped with an unethical landlord apparently devoid of compassion, living in sub-standard accommodation and dreading another rent increase letter. As I thanked her for her time and stood up to leave, she showed me the awful letters she had received from her landlord (as if proof were needed), and then asked politely if there was anything I could do to help her and her family. These are the situations that ‘social research methods’ classes and textbooks cannot prepare you for. This woman had welcomed me, a complete stranger, into her home, and told me all about the miserable predicament that she and her family were in, and I was leaving with what social scientists call ‘data’ whilst leaving her with tears running down her cheeks from the ordeal of describing her situation. As I wiped my own tears away on the streetcar heading back towards my apartment, I felt that the very least I could do was fulfil the moral obligation of writing about the social injustice that was the gentrification of a neighbourhood in the West-End of Toronto. This was, after all, just one example of many sad situations brought about by the fact that there was a lot of money to be made from the changes happening in that neighbourhood. The crucial analytic lesson was that the stigma attached to South Parkdale, far from being a barrier to investment, was actually very convenient indeed for institutions and individuals trying to extract profit from urban space.

2) You were evidently already involved in determining what the material and social consequences of gentrification are, but could this experience have participated in forging the academic that you are today, and your understandings of what academia is supposed to strive to achieve?

After completing my fieldwork in Toronto and then in New York City, where equally depressing accounts of displacement were conveyed by my interviewees, I arrived back in Britain in September 2002, more or less in the middle of writing up my thesis. That month I headed for a conference in Glasgow entitled “Upward Neighbourhood Trajectories: Gentrification in a New Century”, in order to present my work, meet other scholars working on similar questions, and learn about gentrification in other contexts. Over those two days some presentations were very informative and displayed a clear sense of social justice on the part of the presenters, but my lasting memory of the conference is the sense of genuine surprise and dismay I felt listening to the perspectives offered in many presentations, particularly from scholars based in Britain. In a breathtaking retreat from social critique, there were numerous accounts delivered under the rubric of ‘positive gentrification’, ‘sustainable regeneration’, ‘middle-class belonging’ and ‘urban renaissance’, to name a few. Some scholars were even talking about ‘policy-driven gentrification’ as if it was a new development - before going on to advocate such policy! After my own presentation, which I gabbled dreadfully because I was nervous that my critical take on the process would not be appreciated by the audience, I was asked by one delegate, “You told us about all the negative things you found, but where are the positives?”

I hoped that this conference was to prove an aberration (perhaps a reflection of its slightly boosterish title), but in the years that followed it was impossible to ignore a general trend in the literature on gentrification, matching a trend in the research funding proposals and manuscripts that I was receiving for the duty of peer review. Many scholars were writing about middle-class gentrifiers as if they were the only ‘agents’ involved in gentrification, the only voices that mattered. A torrent of

publications – outputs from a stream of policy-oriented research projects – had emerged on gentrifiers' everyday lives, dilemmas, desires, all divorced from any structural context but positioned as theoretically salient via appeals to Pierre Bourdieu's masterbook *Distinction* (1984), yet completely missing the political purchase of that book and of Bourdieu's scholarship in general (it was telling that nobody felt it relevant to quote Bourdieu on the not insignificant matter of what he famously called *La Misère du Monde!*). Particularly troublesome was the apparent rightward shift of scholars once at the forefront of analysing class inequality in cities, who were now smoothing over inequality and smooching policy with writings that showed not a glimpse of the analytical and political tradition from which they emerged. Endowed with plausibility by the sheer weight of 'policy relevance', and reinforced by thinly-veiled sentiments that effaced the working classes whilst empathising with the middle-classes, for me such scholarship truncated and distorted an understanding of the ongoing articulation of class and space in cities. This was happening at the same time as high-profile work emerging from America which argued that concerns about displacement caused by gentrification were overblown, as government housing databases apparently offered little evidence of high rates of 'exit' of low-income people from gentrifying neighbourhoods. In February 2006, the day I received yet another manuscript to review on the dilemmas of the middle-classes (in gentrifying London), I felt compelled to intervene, so I penned a critique of the literature entitled "The eviction of critical perspectives from gentrification research". Judging by the correspondence that I received (and still receive) from those supporting my argument and those angered by it, it seemed to touch a nerve. I have always felt that scholars have something of a civic duty to intervene when myths and misunderstandings begin to circulate, and also to shine light on issues that are too important to be left without critical analysis and reflection.

3) Your work on gentrification has led to several oft quoted articles, but it has also led you to collaborate with people like Elvin Wyly and Loretta Lees in one of the most comprehensive texts on the topic (2008). We would be interested to know more about how working with these scholars influenced your own thought.

In 2003 I took up my first teaching position at the University of Bristol in a policy studies department. As most junior scholars in their first teaching post will tell you, it's hard to get any research done when you are starting out, as you have to write a lot of lectures from scratch (or, at the very least, reshape existing lectures you inherit). Bristol was really tough – I was made to do an enormous amount of teaching, at one point teaching on 9 different undergraduate courses! When I was putting together a couple of lectures on gentrification, I noticed very quickly – with some surprise - that there was no book that took a panoramic view of a huge literature and made sense of it all for students. E-mail conversations with Loretta and Elvin followed, and we quickly put our heads together and proposed the *Gentrification* book to Routledge. I think we all enjoyed writing it, and I learned a great deal from the challenges of co-authorship, where we had to work really hard to tie together our sometimes quite contrasting thoughts and approaches into a coherent narrative. From Loretta I learned about class analysis and conceptual questions relating to geographical scale; from Elvin I learned about capital flows, land rent, and the power of quantitative methods propelled by a critical imagination. I hope that book helped (and still helps) a lot of students understand gentrification: why it happens, who decides, and who suffers because of it – and how people have fought back.

4) You have also had the good fortune to dialogue with people like Peter Marcuse and Neil Smith, who has sadly left us a few years ago and you have movingly written about his work - and his personality - in a recent tribute (2012). You also wrote a strong defense of Marcuse's critical stance in "Missing Marcuse" (2009). Once again, we can only assume that both these renowned urban scholars have had some influence on your own work. Are they your main inspirations for critical scholarship?

There is no question about that! All of us have certain writers who move us, inspire us, guide us in some way. Peter's intellectual stamina is extraordinary – he's nearly 90 years old and I wish I had his analytical and political energy at my current age! Peter was very helpful to me when I started thinking in much more depth about the displacement question. The papers he wrote in the mid-1980s on the causes and consequences of displacement in New York City are masterclasses in the logic of concept formation and in theoretical/empirical clarity. When all that work came out in America denying displacement via statistics on low-income household mobility, it seemed essential to revisit those papers as they offered an understanding of displacement beyond the human ecological tradition of 'who moves in and who moves out' of neighbourhoods. To help with an analysis of displacement in overheated real estate markets, Peter brings to the table *exclusionary displacement* (when a low-income household is prevented from living where it otherwise may have lived due to gentrification) and *displacement pressure* (when a low-income household voluntarily vacates a home because a neighbourhood is changing so dramatically it no longer offers the vital, affordable and support services it once did). I had found evidence of this in my own fieldwork, and so much scholarship was coming out in all kinds of contexts showing the same dynamics.

What Neil Smith's work means to me and to so many critical social scientists is well known. He left behind a glorious body of politically engaged scholarship that will continue to amaze and inspire future generations of students, scholars, and activists. One thing I could add to the tribute I wrote is that there are lessons to be learned from Neil in terms of how to write. He was a beautiful writer, with an extraordinary talent for articulating complex ideas and processes in accessible, lively, provocative, elegant prose. I despair at the grotesquely opaque, obfuscatory, pretentious writing I sometimes encounter in academic journals, and British male cultural geographers are among the very worst culprits as, (mis)guided by Nigel Thrift, they struggle to wrestle the latest faddish theorist or concept to the ground. Perhaps I am missing something in this work, but I have tried to read some of these contributions and I simply do not understand large chunks of them. Now, I am prepared to admit that this could be because I am in need of some kind of cerebral reboot, and it could be because Thrift is not (to me anyway) a clear writer. But it worries me that these authors cannot see that incoherent, deliberately ambiguous, foggy text is likely to achieve very little politically; on that point, many do not even appear to recognize that some of the theorists whose ideas they are working with (e.g. Deleuze) were Marxists.

5) You have become something of an academic-activist, stressing, as you often have, that the university should remain a critical institution. Some see tension between these two poles and others even go as far as to claim an incommensurability between these two positions, pointing to the fact that the interests involved in each case somehow diverge. How can one respond to this? Is

it possible to reconcile academic analysis as data gathering and theory building with emancipative goals, and did you experience such tensions in your own field work?

Not in my fieldwork – more in my workplaces. I think it was the late great Stuart Hall who said that “the university is a critical institution or it is nothing”. Wise words that should be etched above all university administration buildings! Since getting my PhD in 2003 I have been stunned by the appalling neoliberal assault on universities in the UK, and watched the decimation of morale and collective endeavor via all sorts of mechanisms imposed by the state, of which the “Research Excellence Framework” (previously the “Research Assessment Exercise”) is most prominent. Neoliberal managers and supine senior professors, via a toxic blend of power, greed and neurosis, bring great shame upon themselves by showing not the least hint of squeamishness when pushing ahead with audit directives from above. The categories are so preposterous: how can scholarship be judged “world leading” when the panel members are often evaluating work way outside their area of research specialization, and when they have not read work published in any other languages? (I wish postcolonial theorists would start pulling apart the REF ‘world leading’ category!). The pawns and quislings of audit games also miss striking ironies: the latest obsession with research ‘impact’ purports to be about academics engaging with the world, when in concrete practice it requires untold thousands of person hours - and massive financial resources that could be directed towards research (especially postgraduate research) - engaging exclusively with ourselves. I cannot imagine anything more insular, introverted and irrelevant than telling academics to jockey for position and promotion via the production of ‘pathways to impact’ strategies that are seldom much different from crystal ball fortune telling. I wonder what would happen if all the bigwigs on the REF panels realised the power of collective social action, came together and stated, “We are not doing this any more!” HEFCE¹ would have a huge problem!

Are there ways to escape from this quagmire? Of course, but they are enormously difficult to achieve under the working conditions typical of the neoliberal university, where so much of academic staff time is spent locked into a bureaucratic cell that drains people of intellectual creativity and energy. Especially for early career scholars who may feel they can do little to subvert and speak back to power, I am increasingly convinced by radical pedagogy: the craft of nurturing and shaping critical citizens through theory and practice. The most exciting university teachers I have ever seen are the ones who invite undergraduate students to reflect on the particular circumstances of their own lives (e.g. getting into grotesque debt in order to graduate), and then help them radically analyse the brutal coupling of state power with free market logic behind it all (that had been naturalised and normalised prior to their arrival at university). I think this is what Stuart Hall was getting at in the abovementioned quote: higher education can and should be transformative in the sense of challenging students to see the world through critical lenses. Only by understanding why it is that higher education has been so utterly commodified can students reject the awful language of whether they are “satisfied” or not (on which my colleague Julie Cupples wrote a devastating critique²), and perhaps gain the ideas and courage needed to formulate strategies of resistance and revolt. Look at what happened in Chile from 2011 onwards: a geography undergraduate who had learned all about neoliberalism acquired the knowledge and courage to lead a student movement that ultimately led to the abolition of tuition fees.

¹ Higher Education Funding Council for England.

² See Cupples, 2015.

6) In your early work on gentrification (2004a, 2004b, 2006), you may not say so explicitly, but territorial stigmatisation is always somehow present. How would you say that these two concepts co-exist and do they reinforce each other in some way?

In numerous contexts there is a very strong relationship between the active defamation of declining working-class areas and their revamping for and by private real estate through public policies calibrated to the wishes and purchasing power of middle-class households. A raft of studies has revealed that state agents fashion and fasten territorial disrepute onto neighbourhoods (or even parts of neighbourhoods) and then invoke that very disrepute to justify gentrification strategies of varying intensities. For example, I have lost count of how many times I have read about stigma being activated and amplified in order to raze large public housing estates anchoring it, in utter disregard for the collective needs of their denizens. I think it's also very important to register the multisided political manipulation of territorial taint, whereby it supplies the symbolic springboard for and practical target of state-driven gentrification while also fostering the censorship of alternative policies of social investment that would frontally tackle poverty and housing disrepair in the chosen area. Once certain places become universally renowned and reviled across class and space as redoubts of self-inflicted and self-perpetuating destitution and depravity – and pictured as vortexes and vectors of social disintegration, fundamentally dissolute and irretrievably disorganized – then it becomes far, far easier for policy officials and developers to justify a wholesale transformation of those places and the expulsion of their residents as socially progressive 'regeneration'. Even that term, 'regeneration', is a stigmatizing label, for it suggests that the place to be regenerated is full of degenerate individuals (and the same with 'revitalization' – what was not vital about people living there before?). In England, the 'sink estate' has been invented by journalists and is repeatedly invoked by politicians (particularly since Tony Blair's 1997 visit to the Aylesbury Estate in South London to form his Social Exclusion Unit) to dramatise and denounce the poverty in disinvested council housing estates. Incidents of deviance or violence in and around these areas are routinely sensationalised and referred back to the allegedly intrinsic sociocultural traits of the residents fit to brand them as outcasts. Such symbolic buckling can quickly turn any neighborhood sporting drab but adequate housing into the spectre of a hostile environment ready to erupt in mayhem any minute. This is very convenient indeed for institutions waiting to profit from housing demolition and a thorough class makeover of urban space.

8) For those who might not have read it, could you perhaps summarise your main argument in the article entitled "Your Life Chances Affect Where You Live" (2013)? Would you also like to tell us why you think the concept of territorial stigma provides a more adequate analytical lens when doing research on 'deprived neighbourhoods' than some of the literature that has focused on 'neighbourhood effects'?

In February 2010 I travelled to St. Andrews to attend an ESRC-funded seminar on neighbourhood effects, the first of three seminars that led to three edited volumes on the subject. The seminar was entitled "Neighbourhood Effects: Theory and Evidence" and it featured a truly international cast of speakers, drawing an admirably large and diverse audience consisting of academics from several disciplines, urban planners and policy makers. I arrived with an open mind, not knowing very much about the neighbourhood effects literature, and hoping to be enlightened theoretically, conceptually, methodologically, perhaps politically. But although the event took place in an excellent, collegial spirit, and the levels of scholarly accomplishment and analytic perspicacity were impressive, I left the

event shaking my head in sheer frustration, bewildered and bemused by the failure of every speaker to engage in matters of political economy, to acknowledge the structural causes of poverty, to pay much attention to the role of the state and of the institutional arrangements that would seem impossible to ignore in all the discussions of how 'where you live affects your life chances'. It seemed that there was an absolutely fundamental structural question being ignored: *why do people live where they do in cities?* If where any given individual lives affects their life chances as deeply as neighbourhood effects proponents believe, it seems crucial to understand why that individual is living there in the first place. Life chances will of course be very different for residents of very different neighbourhoods, but stating the obvious and 'controlling' for various externalities (especially popular amongst statistically-oriented urban sociologists) does not explain why such urban inequality exists. So, if we invert the neighbourhood effects thesis to: *your life chances affect where you live*, then the problem becomes one of understanding life chances via a theory of capital accumulation and class struggle in cities. Such a theory provides an understanding of the injustices inherent in letting the market (buttressed by the state) be the force that determines the cost of housing, and correspondingly, the major determinant of where people live.

I set myself the challenge of wading into that huge literature on neighbourhood effects, and the more I read, the more annoyed I became! Most authors in the genre are very sceptical about neighbourhood effects from the outset, yet they conclude by insisting that we need more (and more and more and more) research to see if they exist (via newer globs of geocoded data). So they keep on researching something they keep finding to be not very important! In much of this work there was a truly breathtaking disregard for, and even ignorance of, well over a century of theoretical advances in respect of how differential life chances are created in cities. There was almost no attention to the role of the state as a major determinant of life chances – in work that often boasts of policy relevance! At times there was near-evangelical belief in the 'concentrated poverty' thesis: the idea that when poor people are clustered together it leads to anything from a lack of positive role models to a school dropout culture, teenage pregnancy, crime, and poor employment outcomes, for example. (It is worth remembering that some of the most aggressive housing policies in the US and the UK that have involved demolishing people's homes in the name of deconcentrating poverty have seen academic input). But something like unequal educational attainment is more helpfully considered not as an offshoot of the way young people of different incomes behave, but as an offshoot of the unequal provision of public goods and unequal treatment by the state of the different areas. The degree of inequality between neighbourhoods with bad schools and good schools is not a property of the neighbourhood, but a property of the school system. So I ended that article calling for attention to the stigmatisation of poor neighbourhoods because I felt that scholarship in the neighbourhood effects genre was deeply implicated in that stigmatization. Why was nobody researching 'concentrated affluence' in extremely rich neighborhoods, and correspondingly, recommending policies aimed at dispersing the rich when their concentration may have caused such grievous collective disasters as the 2008 financial crisis?

9) Since the emergence of 'territorial stigmatisation' as a concept in the social sciences and Geography in particular, how would you characterise its main impacts? Has it changed the ways in which scholars research segregation and exclusion? What, if possible, would you say are the shortcomings of the work that has been done on territorial stigmatisation to date?

Geographers have actually been rather slow to embrace territorial stigmatisation as a concept, probably because they would prefer to start by thinking through what is actually meant by 'territorial', and because it's impossible to be a geographer without considering questions of scale. By contrast, sociologists, who have done the vast majority of work on territorial stigmatization, prefer to think through what is meant by 'stigmatisation', and tend to use 'territory' as a synonym for whatever scale at which the stigmatisation is happening (street, neighbourhood, housing estate, etc). I think there are many fruitful, cross-disciplinary discussions still to be had – but the problem is that different social science disciplines do tend to stick to their own epistemological pumpkin patches (or comfort zones). It's been exciting for me to have many (ongoing) dialogues with sociologists all over the world about territorial stigmatisation – I've learned a great deal about the sociological craft from scholars like Alfredo Alietti, Virgilio Borges Pereira, Catharina Thörn, Imogen Tyler, and Justus Uitermark. My PhD students, and the many students whose PhDs I have examined, have also been incredibly helpful in introducing me to work that I would not otherwise have time to find and read.

The real giant in this field is of course Loïc Wacquant, who has been a strong supporter and enthusiastic mentor. Wacquant's work is important because it reminds us that failure to heed the role of symbolic structures in the production of inequality and marginality in the city means that neighbourhoods are made into the cause of poverty rather than the expression of underlying problems to be addressed. He also warns that scholars who deploy the trope of the 'ghetto' for rhetorical dramatization in hopes of inciting progressive policy intervention actually contribute to the further symbolic degradation of dispossessed districts and thus to the very phenomenon that they should be dissecting. Viewed through Wacquant's urban sociological lenses, the state is not a bureaucratic monolith delivering uniform goods, nor an ambulance that comes to the rescue in response to 'market failure', but rather a potent stratifying and classifying agency that continually moulds social and physical space, and particularly the shape, recruitment, structure, and texture of lower class districts. His conceptualisation of territorial stigmatisation is therefore a crucial point of departure for empirical research. However, there is one aspect of his conceptualisation that is troubling, and requires much more evidence. He argues that territorial stigma is closely tied to, but has become *partially autonomized* from, the stain of poverty, class position and subaltern ethnicity (encompassing national and regional 'minorities', recognised or not, and lower-class foreign migrants). Now, this may have been the case in the two sites (in Paris and Chicago) where Wacquant conducted his famous fieldwork that undergirded the arguments in his book *Urban Outcasts* (2008), but close scrutiny of a mushrooming body of work suggests that the links between the stigma attached to the negative branding of a place and the stigmata of poverty, class, ethnicity, crime etc are very strong indeed, to the point of being interchangeable. In the numerous contexts that I have read and heard about, it is not the case that the bad name of a place has developed its own effects independently of the bad name of the people who live in it; rather, the two feed off each other to have major implications for residents of defamed districts. To take one example, I think it is impossible to sustain an argument that the 'sink estate' label in England only makes people think of degraded tracts of council housing; it has all sorts of very negative, disturbing associations with the class position of people living there. Furthermore, discourses of abjection, regardless of terminology, are usually classed, racialised and gendered *all at once*. So, I think there is a need for more systematic comparative inquiries into the production of both place stigma and 'people' stigma (if you will), and to trace and dissect links between them in different contexts.

10) It seems to be that the very idea of 'resistance' - used in the widest possible sense - to territorial stigmatisation takes little or no place in these conceptualisations. Those who would somehow develop the means of coping with this form of stigma are said to be somehow reproducing the territorial taint that is associated with their neighbourhood - through blaming others, trying to leave or actually escaping the neighbourhood, for instance. Do you see broader possibilities of resistance to territorial stigmatisation? Some of the work on territorial stigmatisation stresses the fact that structures of domination result in those living in tainted places somehow internalising the negative representations of the places in which they reside. A number of recent papers have suggested that this may not always be the case - and your article on territorial stigma in St. Paul's, Bristol (2012) - is part of this emerging literature. Why are the nuances and ambivalences that these papers highlight perhaps quite important?

Whilst it may very well be the case that coping strategies or protest strategies do reproduce territorial stigma, I think scholarship must analyse these strategies in the detail they deserve. It is very easy for scholars who do not have to live in stigmatised places to make these sorts of conclusions, but there are remarkable activities underway that often achieve a great deal against the odds, whether they be individual acts of defiance or collective, organised claims on a place. These tactics may be considered a minor irrelevance to a sociologist, but a stigmatised existence is a brutal one and it is crucial to uncover how people take a stand, and what has, can, or might be achieved. One of the more depressing outcomes of efforts to fight stigma is that the more positive image of a place that unfolds then paves the way for gentrification, ultimately leading to the displacement of those who fought the stigma. This happens because the underlying socio-political interests constituting urban land markets usually remain unchallenged, due to the magnitude of that task. So the question of land ownership becomes utterly crucial – who is going to profit from the efforts of local people to paint a more positive image of a place? Therein lies another example of the strong links between territorial stigmatisation and gentrification. It would seem that collective efforts (especially) to fight back against social abjection have to build in some kind of booby trap further down the road, a defence mechanism against the speculators and developers waiting to pounce on the inevitable media rhetoric that accompanies a reversal in fortunes for a degraded neighbourhood. Collective ownership and commoning strategies are crucial in this regard, but even these can be hijacked by powerful interests. So, I do see possibilities for resistance (and you can learn about these in published scholarship), but the structural constraints are enormous.

11) In your understanding, how can it be possible that those living in structurally marginalised neighbourhoods – places that are also highly stigmatised - sometimes develop attachments to the place where they live?

Based on what I have read, and based on what I know from my own work, place attachment in such neighbourhoods is *usually* (not sometimes) very strong indeed. The 'concentrated poverty' that is so despised in scholarship, politics and journalism has considerable forgotten benefits. While a top-down discourse of isolation, disorganisation, and danger has long enshrouded certain areas, if one takes the trouble to look closely and especially to listen to people living in them, in spite of physical deterioration and nefarious repute, they value their dwelling place for anchoring dense webs of friendship and reciprocal support, proximate amenities, and local agencies providing services finely tailored to their needs. Martine August (2014) in Toronto has written brilliantly on this, focusing on what happened to the Regent Park housing project there. There is also a very substantial body of

scholarship that demonstrates the loss, even grief, people feel after being involuntarily displaced from such districts. I get very tired of people who review my work and who seem to find place attachment in defamed areas inexplicable, and then offer barbs like, “The author romanticises the working class”, even when there is ample evidence to show very deep roots to place that have developed despite everything life has thrown at them there. I think the trick here is, as Elvin Wyly has pointed out so well, to ‘let the data speak’, let respondents tell us in their own words what their neighbourhoods mean to them despite the discourses of disgust that swirl around and through them. Usually, what you find is the inestimable importance of social networks, kinship, and meeting points for the urban working class, rooted in place. These are things worth fighting for, and it is not ‘romantic’ to do so.

12) When rioting occurs in stigmatised neighbourhoods, whether in the USA, France, Brazil or the UK, does this not somehow deny that these attachments exist for a part of the neighbourhood? Does it not actually tend to confirm the 'neighbourhood effects' literature?

The neighbourhood effects scholars are rarely concerned with how clustering and concentration of people leads to radical action in the form of urban uprising! But if you look at the staggering amount of anti-austerity uprisings across European cities since the financial crisis of 2008, what you tend to find is not that people are smashing up their own neighbourhoods, but targeting symbols of the state. Take the 2011 riots in urban England. These were in large part a reaction to the violation of civic claims to equality from young people with almost no political representation (a product of the collapse and disappearance of traditional workers’ parties). It was ultimately because of this violation that state institutions such as the police and the school system - through their routine functioning - generated such massive rage and disappointment and were targeted for attack. This does not, of course, explain the widespread looting of stores that happened, but to a considerable degree it accounts for why so many young people took to the streets. The looting scenes of August 2011 made it all-too-easy for many across the political spectrum to make conclusions in the “mindless violence” register, and even easier to forget two hugely important precedents for the riots. Anger among youth was still simmering following the significant student protests in late 2010 at the tripling of tuition fees in England. The first of these culminated in the storming of the Conservative Party headquarters in central London, but the two subsequent protests carried less symbolic power due to merciless (and still deeply controversial) “kettling” by the police. The second precedent was the massive J30 (June 30th 2011) public sector strike across Britain, involving in excess of 750,000 public sector workers. The cause of J30 was the raising of the retirement age from 60 to 66, and the replacement of final salary pension schemes with a career-average system. However, J30 also included calls for an end to freezes in remuneration, an end to exhausting working hours, and the reversal of the steady privatisation of almost every imaginable aspect of the sector. If we look closely at the systematic assault on the welfare state in Britain (massive public sector cuts were being mooted by politicians with great enthusiasm in 2011, which goes some way towards explaining the anger of that summer) we can move a step closer towards understanding the shared indignity and dishonour among young people (especially) who feel abandoned and betrayed – and it becomes difficult to avoid the conclusion that austerity is, quite simply, structural violence against the working class.

13) You now reside in Edinburgh, and you recently published an article along with Hamish Kallin which is based on research that you conducted there (2014). Have you been able to uncover attachments to place taking hold in some of the housing estate neighbourhoods there?

The fieldwork for that study was done by Hamish – I just added some conceptualisations and helped with the data analysis. What struck me from the encounters Hamish had was the extent to which the despised and feared neighbourhood of Craigmillar was a place where remarkable things had occurred for decades, where people (particularly young working class mothers) had been crafting community, solidarity and possibility against the odds – and to international acclaim (via the amazing achievements of the Craigmillar Festival Society, led by Helen Crummy). But none of this mattered to those policy elites and private sector lobbyists with major interests in land and real estate, who felt that too many poor people were clustered together. Craigmillar is an all-too-familiar story of a place that could have been improved for people living there being razed to the ground for people who were not.

14) Some would say that, no matter how much we stress the attachments that residents have for their otherwise stigmatised neighbourhoods, these are ultimately unlikely to have any true and lasting influence on the ways in which urban policy is modelled. Do you believe that targeting a specific neighbourhood or urban area with some specific spatial policy can have any positive effect? Is there, in your opinion, any chance to continue spatial targeting - in terms of housing or the provision of public services - without stigmatising a territory? Is it simply that these urban policies are imbued by a set of neoliberal discourses?

This is a pressing research question and a difficult one to answer! At first glance, area-based policies appear logical, as if one place does have many more social problems than another place, it seems a no-brainer to focus all the policy resources and energy upon it. But to do this would be to ignore all the structural violence visited upon people living in poverty. To make a genuine difference in people's lives, interventions are required on a massive scale in the form of a genuine living wage or basic income, in the provision of truly affordable, decommodified housing, in healthcare divorced from business interests, in education that is universally outstanding. These are also area-based policies if you think about it, in that they would have a huge positive impact on the lives of people living in stigmatised neighbourhoods, but they are not seen as such. The usual response is that there simply isn't the money to do all these things, but this is nonsense - in the UK, the amount of money handed out in corporate benefits (via direct aid, subsidies and tax breaks) in the most recent financial year was enough to wipe out at a stroke this year's budget deficit. Sadly, the problem lies in the brain damage done by several decades of neoliberal ideology (bolstered by free market think tanks and a right wing stigmatising press producing ignorance) which cannot be erased quickly.

15) You have recently been travelling a great deal to discuss your research, including Chile. In light of the fact that a lot of the work on territorial stigmatisation has been conducted in what one might loosely call the 'global North', how is this addressed in regions that have perhaps received less scholarly attention - at least from scholars in Europe and the United States?

I think if we were ever to write a new edition of *Gentrification*, we would expand our geographical and epistemological lenses as the book (and *The Gentrification Reader* [2010] that followed it) is very Anglophone in scope and the most disturbing gentrification strategies today are in Latin America, the Middle East, South Asia and East Asia - and there is some fantastic scholarship emerging from those regions, which speaks to all sorts of larger theoretical questions about the pertinence of certain concepts and whether they are helpful or not in dissecting urban processes beyond where they were formed. However, I do wish that the debates between postcolonial/provincial and Marxist/political

economic urban theorists were not so jumped-up (for want of a better description). It strikes me that both these theoretical traditions are hugely valuable, with a great deal to teach students of social science and the humanities, and what matters most is that scholars learn from each other in their efforts to critique the disturbing transformations roiling cities from London to Mumbai to Buenos Aires to Nairobi. Of course, I am very much working in the latter Marxist tradition, and I know that a recent piece I wrote, "Planetary Rent Gaps" (2016), has annoyed some postcolonial theorists simply because I made the argument – drawing on available scholarship - that Neil Smith's rent gap theory is very useful in understanding urbanisation in parts of the Global South, and the fact that the theory was developed in the US in the 1970s is not a valid reason to 'unlearn' it in very different contexts. The challenge is to take it seriously, and if it turns out not to be useful, then not to use it. In terms of territorial stigmatisation, I would say the same – take the concept seriously, and it turns out to be useful in, say, Cairo, then use it. If not, then don't. It strikes me as anti-intellectual to write off a whole theory or concept for a whole region just because it isn't useful to one particular analyst working in one particular context! The anti-intellectualism is not one-way either: Marxist urban scholars are sometimes guilty of firing off ridiculous political accusations at those who prefer to look beyond flows of capital, class relations and state structures to understand problems in cities. I find these 'debates', if you can call them that, exhausting, but they are very much in vogue right now. The casualty, as ever, is actual research. As Jamie Peck (2015) has recently highlighted, very few people are actually doing the systematic comparative work that the 'new comparative urbanists' are calling for.

16) This is, of course, a rather difficult question but do you think that there is some way that territorial stigmatisation can truly be challenged successfully and, if so, how do you suggest this could be done?

One of the most important lessons I have learned in the last 20 years of research and in reading the research of others is that problems *in* the neighbourhood are not problems *of* the neighbourhood. Correspondingly, the tendency for people to recoil in horror at the name of a neighbourhood is indicative of the much wider problem of the inequalities produced by neoliberal capitalist urbanization. This invites a much closer consideration of the changing parameters of class struggle under these conditions. On this issue, I think Imogen Tyler (2013) and Kirsteen Paton (2014) are writing some of the very best analyses right now. As they have demonstrated, a signature outcome of over three decades of neoliberal urbanism has been the production of a double movement of 1) class decomposition (the growing class/generational splits among the middle classes, and the uncertain prospects facing the children of middle-class parents - all of which result in heightening disgust directed at people lower in the class structure due to fears of 'falling') and 2) class recomposition (a growing cross-class consciousness of inequality which emerges through spatial/local struggles against what David Harvey refers to as "speculative landed developer interests" in cities). But then there is a contradictory repertoire of protest tactics, where claims are made for space, centrality and housing as social *rights*, yet somewhat detached from the language and histories of *class* struggle. I do think that territorial stigmatization can be challenged successfully, but only if that language and those histories are at forefront of social movements, and at the centre of academic analyses. Quite simply, territorial stigmatization is an expression of class inequality visited upon cities, and addressing its production and consequences requires a close consideration of class power, anchored by questions such as: urbanization for whom, against whom, and who

decides? And, who decides who decides?! This edited collection guides us in the right direction, and is a significant step forward.

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