

Opinions research about gentrification in urban space combine with phenomenon in Kunming

Shujing Li*, Xinjie Wu and Qian Sun

School of DianChi College, Yunnan University, Kunming, China

*Corresponding author: 378498070@qq.com

Keywords: Gentrification/urban space/Social class/ phenomenon

Abstract: This article mainly discusses the class, culture and economic factors based on the existing views on "gentrification". In addition, it will research the composition of space users in different social class, space usage and other phenomenon. It aims to dialectically study the definition, influence and result in Gentrification. We hope it can bring more thinking and attention to the gentrification in urban space. And we hope it can make contribution to the theoretical basis for further research on urban space design.

1. Introduction

In order to research the conception of gentrification in public space, I will contrast the different explanations in processing of gentrification in different authors. It is aim to analyze the cause of gentrification and to expound the different phenomenon in different background. In the end, I will give a conclusion and my arguments with some examples.

2. Factors

2.1 Social class

The changes in different social classes especially between one group with another higher one which results from the resettlement and social concentration. Additionally, individuals with similar culture, background, lifestyle or class-related consumer preferences gather together. Especially, the middle-class occurs very frequently in this phenomenon. Not a very population but minority of middle-class prefers to move to the rural region because the superior geographic conditions of inner city.

2.2 Culture

Aesthetic features and new local services are added into the environment construction. A good example of New York City Council is given that changed to be an artists' quarter. As a result, the area can protect artistic community in some extent and attract tourist. Similar point is given by Sharon Zukin (1991/2005): Manufactures, a working class and a service class spend reasonable energy on cultural production and consumption. Changing the factory-floor space to "loft" seems a good way to restore the industrial culture. People change their view to the city from material aspect to an aesthetically or historically landscape. Actually, with the improvement of material living standards, individuals begin to require a high level of the spiritual and cultural life. However, after the downtown experiencing gentrification, someone may find the vernacular scene is finished. The original culture is inhabited by new arts, wealth, and new service form.

2.3 Economic

Economic reordering of property values leads to new commercial opportunity and extension of private ownership of domestic property. When the function of a land should be changed, or an increasing or declining occurs in the value of the land, a new chance will happen because it is generally beneficial to change the use of a land. Land can be treated as the nature of space itself. As downtown

becomes larger and more expensive, the old structures are combined with new ones leads to a transformed its social meaning from “in” to accessible.

3. Phenomenon

3.1 The user group

In China, gentrification is always reflected in the program of government or manufacturers which locates in central area. The service object is the high-income group instead of the original users, or low-middle-income group. New upscale establishments tend to monopolize the most accessible locations in a city, such as the ground-floor areas near the sidewalk of a well-known shopping street.

In Savage, Ward and Warde (2003), it concerns much more in social grade and economic phenomena. Although middle class is not certainly similar with each other, because some of them are college-educated, some are not but own same social status, they share an area and communicate culture together. Gentrification provides middle class an environment to live with ones in similar status. They can share a public space without worry about the alien behaviour. And the location plays a vital role when choosing to move into a region. If they can find a place not far from the work site and convenient in shopping for daily life, there is no reason to refuse that. Then the problem should be how much of the land. Some areas become ripe for gentrification reason for the rent-gap. When the middle class can afford the price, they maybe do that for living or other profit-making purposes. Women enter the labour market in professional and managerial is an element in the gentrification. As women prefer to work out instead of staying at home, most of them would like to choose the location with convenient transportation so that they can take care of home as well as work normally. The gentrification shows how the formation of particular urban spaces is tied up with the development of social groups themselves.

Another symptom is the war against street markets. In order to beautify the urban landscape, the governments frequently destroy the street market blindly. It is very common in China because a number of non-residents can't get a job which results in street market turns into many people's livelihoods. This is similar with the point that New York City government intensified its efforts to remove the homeless from public street, commercial and residential areas.



Figure 1. Street marker, by the author.

This phenomenon runs counter to the conception of public space. Public space should be an area that open to everyone and equal to every individuals. The moment when it is defined as a public space, the most liberal use rights should be given to the public. It is helpless to ignore civilian needs and violently expel homeless people.

3.2 Old buildings

In terms of the buildings, the massive demolition has become a trend in China. The old buildings gradually have disappeared from the urban transformation. It is necessary to retain a certain proportion of old structures in the building inventory of a commercial area to prevent a full-scale gentrification

of the public place. Undeniably, a lot of original buildings are reserved through rebuilt and added new function in the process of urban renewal. A famous project in an old block “XinTianDi” reconstruction took place in Shanghai several years ago, with most characteristic architectural mode of Shanghai, experienced transformation into a modern consumer District. It retains the original form of the building and renovation of the walls and roof. Thus, it is a good example in old building reserving and mixing with modern architecture. However, there is a huge change in the level of consumption in the region. Only Western expatriates, tourists, plus some Chinese business elite can be seen sitting in its Starbucks to enjoy the \$6 latte, because 77% of Shanghai families make less than \$430 a month. The original users of the land experienced a revolutionized and all scenes of daily life are replaced by art galleries.

Simply, gentrification is a by-product of the window-dressing and privatization in the technical level. However, it is obvious that the developers’ decision contributes much in the city gentrification. The social background in China combined with developers who aim to profit and government who want to respectability. Overall, gentrification is an expression of inequality and social closure (Savage, Ward and Warde 2003). And in Sharon Zukin (1991/2005), gentrification leads to the natural death in the downtown, but, it also makes the city grow.

3.3 Sidewalks

The expense of pedestrians and mass transit has recurred in China today. Actually, it is very common in Chinese cities that when it needs expansion of the roadway, sidewalks will be sacrificed tune in the first. Gentrification leads merchants continue to expand their territory, and private facilities are extended to the pedestrians, such a public space, so the pedestrian space is narrowed again even the mixture of bike lanes with pedestrian.



Figure 2. Sacrificed space in sidewalks, by the author.

4. Conclusions

It takes downtown as a starting point to analyze the performance of the economy and culture in the gentrification. When people need a restaurant as a market for eating rather than a place, the new awareness will influence the consumers’ need, so the new economic values. New economic values make it too expensive to preserve the cafeteria’s cultural values. Vernacular cultural is taken place by another kind of market culture which changes the downtown’s schedules day and light. Additionally, gentrification not only shapes the downtown but also extent its range. The function of the downtown is not only for banking, government, education and health care, but also added consumption, housing, and economic elements. Sharon Zukin says “from cultural to economic values”.

It is hard to tell whether gentrification brings good or bad in the city. I have a very typical example for gentrification in China. Shuncheng Block with the characteristics of Hui (a kind of minority) economic, replaced by a compound including a top commercial office space, mansion and a

commercial district. All the shops run privately in the block are disappeared which were their livelihoods. All the old buildings were removed. The original residents took place by the high-income groups which can be called high middle class. It increased almost ten times in the average level of consumption of the region. It is well known that in China, the government as well as developers can profit from doing a project like demolition or massive construction projects, or rebuilding projects. These are involved the political background. In terms of the culture, I deeply agree with Sharon Zukin (1991/2005), “the natural death in the downtown”. Like what said in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), “Expensive but contribute little; not really reduce the slum, but merely moving the slums to elsewhere, creating new slums greater range”. Indeed, gentrification in an area certainly contributes to economic growth and has relationship with government performance. Thus, in my opinion, gentrification is not intentional by developers, or government. It depends on the development of society, the political trends, businessman desires, and the change in lives of people required.

Acknowledgments

This work was financially supported by Yunnan Provincial “Fang Guanfu” Scientific research foundation project in 2019, which named<A research on the impact on public from “Gentrification” of urban space, take the downtown of Kunming as an example>, NO. 2019-1-C-25318000002159.

References

- [1] Miao, Pu. 2011. Brave New City: Three Problems in Chinese Urban Public Space since the 1980s. *Journal of Urban Design* 16 (2), 179 - 207.
- [2] Zukin, Sharon. 1991/2005. Landscapes of Power: From Detroit to Disney World. In *The Blackwell City Reader*, G. Bridge and S. Watson (Eds.), 197 - 207. Malden: Blackwell.
- [3] Savage, Mike; Alan Warde; and Kevin Ward. 2003. Urban Sociology, Capitalism and Modernity 83-96.
- [4] Jane Jacobs .1961.*The Death and Life of Great American Cities*.
- [5] Smith D. Studentification: the gentrification factory? *Urban Colonialism: Gentrification in a Global Context* Eds R Atkinson, G Bridge. London, Routledge, 2004: 72-89.
- [6] He S. State-sponsored Gentrification under Market Transition: The Case of Shanghai [J]. *Urban Affairs Review*, 2007, 43(2): 171-198.