1st Discussion

1.

In Rezoning Harlem, we learn that rezoning is essential to the gentrification of Harlem. The process is both economic and political. Rezoning did not only displace the Black population in Harlem but it also increased the white and wealthier population there as well. However, the question for debate is: Are NYC's rezoning plans (created by the City) causing displacement?

First, according to Vicki Been who was the former commissioner at New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) and is now a professor at New York University, Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH) is necessary and that the City cannot adopt community-led rezoning plans, because these rezoning plans will "take many more years" for implementation. This refusal to pass community-led rezoning plans is also due to the immediately needs of children. Therefore, she argues "So, imperfect it (MIH; and the City's pro-developer rezoning) is, rezoning now to build more market rate housing, with the requirement that it include between 20 to 30 percent of the apartments as permanently affordable housing, is preferable to losing another generation to the no-growth, wall-the-city policies that follow from supply skepticism." In other words, Been argues that market rate housing is necessary because it could bring "affordable" housing to a generation of tenants (through tax-subsidies and pro-developer goodies) - even, when as Angotti argues, MIH is the "Trojan Horse" of displacement. Insofar that MIH is included in the zoning packages, therefore, the City's rezoning plans do not necessarily create displacement.

Second, Been also argues that 80% of NYC's affordable housing units are for "extremely-low, very low, and low-income" families. As Angotti argues, the measurement for the levels of income (how to classify low-income and middle-income) is involved with an AMI that does not reflect the low-income population within NYC, because the current AMI includes the wealthiest counties in NYS. Therefore, what is "low-income," "very low" income or "extremely" low-income for Vicki Been is questionable. MIH and its various tax subsidies will only help the developers; increasing housing stocks on the supply side does not translate into a balance between the supply and demand. The City's rezoning plans that involve MIH, tax subsidies, the protection for the wealthiest, will only cause more displacement.

After watching Rezoning Harlem, how do you answer the question of the debate? - Are NYC's rezoning plans (created by the City) causing displacement? What is "racist" about NYC's rezoning plans?

Required Films:

Rezoning Harlem [Co-responding to the Sylvia Morse reading]

<https://www.kanopystreaming.com/product/rezoning-harlem-community-fights-against-g>

Required Readings:

Tom Angotti – Land Use and Zoning Matter [PDF], in Zoned Out!

Tom Angotti and Sylvia Morse – Racialized Land Use and Housing Policies [PDF], in Zoned Out!

Sylvia Morse – Harlem: Displacement, Not Integration, in Zoned Out! [PDF]

We will be watching films on gentrification. It is important that you do not skip these films. Films are capable of showing several aspects of gentrification that written works cannot (affects, human Faces, etcetc.). You should think about these experiences as you read the written works.

To answer the discussion questions in 100-200 words. The answers should be written in 12-pt fonts. your responses should be referencing the assigned readings or videos. Your answers and responses should be concise and precise with supporting evidence. You are free to draw parallels to recent events as a point of reference. Students do not have to agree with the readings but should demonstrate a critical understanding of the readings.

2.

Classmates' comments/responses:

The rezoning plans created by New York City officials are causing displacement of low- and middle-income families that are predominantly Black. They are not being created for the benefit of the residents of the community but for the benefit of the city. Morse’s “Harlem: Displacement, Not Integration” details how Black and Hispanic residents of Harlem are being systematically pushed out of their community. By disregarding the income demographics of Harlem residents and encouraging “new developments [that] were outside of the price range of the average Harlem resident,” NYC subsequently has pushed these residents out of their neighborhood (Morse, 106). NYC’s rezoning plans are inherently racist because they target areas that are mostly Black and Hispanic. Harlem is a great example because it is internationally known as a center for African-American culture. The rezoning plans neglect the historical significance of Harlem and its place as a predominantly Black area. The rezoning plan created by the city does not protect the residents of Harlem or their businesses. Local business owners can no longer afford commercial rent or are evicted due to their landlords raising rent or selling to large developers. This discrimination that has not only pushed out residents, but the businesses that make the neighborhood a community.

Your responses to your classmates should be critical. This means that you should seriously evaluate your classmates’ comments/responses. Do they make sense at all? Can any of the comments/responses be linked to the assigned readings? If not, why is the author not doing so? Is the author making a new argument or simply avoiding a critical engagement of a serious issue? Why do you think the author is doing so? You should take a position on an issue and defend your position by referencing the readings or your own research.

3.

The following is a brief outline of the debating points between several authors. The question of the debates here is: what is gentrification?

A. Ruth Glass: "One by one, many of the working class quarters of London have been invaded by the middle classes - upper and lower. Shabby, modest mews and cottages - two rooms up and two down ... the current social status and value of such dwellings are frequently in inverse relation to their size, an din any case enormously inflated by comparison with previous levels in their neighborhoods. Once this process of 'gentrification' starts in a district, it goes on rapidly until all or most of the original working class occupiers are displaced, and the whole social character of the district is changed" (p.22-23).

B. Neil Smith: What is described by Glass can be witnessed elsewhere across the globe before and after the early 20th century (in France as well as in the U.S.). However, this does not simply mean "gentrification" happened in those times and spaces, because a sporadic description does not define what is gentrification. For Smith, "gentrification" is a global and systemic process - if not in this way, then anything goes - so to speak. "So what makes all of these experiences 'precursors' to a gentrification process that began in earnest in the postwar period? The answer lies in both the extent and the systemic nature of central and inner-city rebuilding and rehabilitation beginning in the 1950s." By 1960s, the process occurs at a systemic level and on a global scale, which means (a) at a economic level, (b) at a political level, and (c) including deregulation, privatization, dismantling of welfare services and so on. To add to the debate, Smith argued that gentrification is a "class remake of the central urban landscape," as well as is a process involving urban redevelopment and new development (which he previously rejected as being a part of gentrification). Lastly, he also adds to the debate that struggling over gentrification is indeed a political struggle.

C. Sharon Zukin: Gentrification is not only a matter of new developments, rather, it is also about a new mode of consumption patterns. Cultural claims are consumer claims. "Gentrification joins the economic claim to space with a cultural claim that gives priority to the demands of historic preservationists and arts producers... The cultural claim to urban space poses a new standard of legitimacy against the claim to affordability put forward by a low status population. Significantly, cultural value is now related to economic value. ... Large property-owners, developers, and elected officials realized that they could enhance the economic value of the center by supplying cultural consumption." However, Zukin is not saying that we should target the galleries as a result of gentrification's cultural consumption claims; rather, she emphasizes that cultural claims are created through the state, where the latter (the state) is the target of any political strategies that fight against gentrification. "In numerous cases, state intervention has reinforced the cultural claims behind gentrification's "market forces." [Targeting the "cultural" aspects of gentrification is to target the state]

D. Rowland Atkinson and Gary Bridge: gentrification is a new form of urban colonialism. Why? Gentrification comes from mainly wealthy Western countries (U.S. and Western European countries). It privileges whiteness and the rich. It involves privatization, deregulation, policies favoring certain developments. They also argue that gentrification is a global issue. Why? Because global processes happen at local neighborhood scale. For example, low-paid immigrant workers are in specific gentrifying neighborhoods, global elites moving into gated communities, the transfering of skill sets by the transnational cosmopolitan class (professionals who are highly skilled). The linkages between global processes to cities are outlined on page 58.

E. Tom Angotti: Gentrification cannot be separated from rezoning plans carried out by City governments, and these rezoning plans are there to support global political-economic process (the FIRE economy for example). Gentrification/displacement is a result of urban planning processes, which turns gentrification into a pro-developer, pro-displacement, pro-profit-making, pro-racism, pro-speculation process. The fuller version of this argument can be seen in the previous thread.

Please read and analyze the following NYT and Progressive City articles through the above mentioning debating points on gentrification:

https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/16/fashion/rebranding-the-bronx.html

https://www.progressivecity.net/single-post/2017/07/11/%E2%80%9CGET-READY-SUNSET-PARK-%E2%80%98BROOKLYN%E2%80%99-IS-COMING%E2%80%9D-THE-REAL-ESTATE-IMPERATIVES-OF-AN-INNOVATION-ECOSYSTEM

Are these articles using any of the theoretical perspective provided above? If they do, what are the key points in these two articles that are directly referencing the above debating points? Please give specific examples from these two news articles to make your responses. In your responses to your classmate, you should be as critical as possible (if they are making any sense at all regarding the debates and the linkages to these two articles).

Note: my notes are there to facilitate the discussion; there are detailed information that I left out intentionally in order to make the debating points clear. However, in your responses, you can use other points made by the same authors.

[Note: the following readings are referring to a debate between Tom Angotti and Vicki Been; they appear on different pages of the pdf file, and you are required to only read the selected pages.]

Tom Angotti – Zoned Out in the City: New York City’s Tale of Race and Displacement, p.1, 12-14 [PDF; titled Angotti debate; the reading starts on page 1 and continues on page 12]

Vicki Been – The Clear and Present Danger of Supply Skepticism, p.2, 15 [PDF; titled Angotti debate; the reading starts on page 2 and continues on page 15]