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BOOK REVIEW

Green Gentrification: Urban sustainability and the struggle for environmental justice, by Kenneth A. Gould and Tammy L. Lewis, Abingdon and New York, Routledge, 2017, 182 pp., £110.00 (hardback), ISBN: 978-1-138-92016-3

Does greening whiten? Does greening richen? Does greening raise rents and housing prices? These are the core questions that drive environmental sociologists Gould and Lewis's recent book *Green Gentrification*. Building on research tackling environmental privilege (Park and Pellow 2011) and environmental/ecological gentrification (Dooling 2009, Checker 2011, Anguelovski 2016), Gould and Lewis contribute to this emerging field through their proposal of green gentrification as a process that fortifies environmental privilege for elites in the city. In this light the book makes a valuable contribution to a new strand of environmental justice research that has developed since the 2000s, unmasking how efforts to improve the environment can increase racial, class and other inequities as environmental goods become concentrated with wealthy and white populations. Green gentrification can thus invisibilise racial and ethnic conflicts as greening is appropriated into the urban green growth orthodoxy.

Through their exploration of five cases of urban greening in Brooklyn, New York, Gould and Lewis illustrate how greening outcomes are environmentally sustainable but tend to be socially unsustainable. The richest parts of the book are undoubtedly the case-based chapters, focusing on different typologies of sites – several rezoned from industrial to residential with either brownfield restoration or green space creation, one extensive park restoration and one new park alongside high density rezoning – with different actors initiating greening and varied community responses. The cases illustrate that achieving some degree of social equity in development outcomes only manifest when residents mobilise early on in the process to demand them, as seen in the Sunset Park case. Similarly, social equity can also be effectively resisted through the same process, illustrated by mobilised white, wealthy residents in the Brooklyn Bridge Park case actively resisting affordable housing development. All cases, nonetheless, illustrate the power of capital accumulation that both pushes and drives the

green growth coalition to achieve their development outcomes, a dynamic deeply intertwined, as Gould and Lewis underline, with institutional racism and real estate markets.

Indeed, real estate markets and institutional racism are two of several critical concerns within the emerging field of green gentrification that urgently require further investigation. They are also questions our research group at the Barcelona Laboratory for Urban Environmental Justice and Sustainability (www.bcnuej.org) aims to address through various quantitative and qualitative research streams. In particular, in the green locally unwanted land uses project (GREENLULUs) we work from the hypothesis that green urban amenities can be considered locally unwanted land uses for low-income and -minority residents because these residents are increasingly excluded from the benefits of new or restored amenities. Our research builds on Gould and Lewis' attempt to quantify demographic change surrounding new green interventions and moves one step further – by examining the scope and magnitude of (green) gentrification over entire cities (Anguelovski et al. 2017) in the U.S., Canada and western Europe.

In the remainder of this review, I touch on how Green Gentrification addresses the two previously cited critical concerns and why race, settler colonialism and financialisation require more extensive exploration in future green gentrification research.

A necessary but often missing first step towards tackling the entrenched reality of institutional racism is to problematise normative ideas about greening that underlie Green Gentrification and urban greening in general. The ecological, health, and economic benefits of green space overtly or covertly drive research programmes in many academic circles (including real estate economics or epidemiology), and green space as something inherently positive often appears as common sense in the popular press. While Green Gentrification and the research field to date asks the important question of who, exactly, reaps greening's benefits and other related social equity questions, more research is needed on the specific racial and class relations underlying the concept and creation of green spaces. Parks, for example, have historically functioned as spaces to discipline working- class and racialised bodies (Byrne and Wolch 2009). In the U.S. context, many African Americans have a painful historical relationship to woods and parks as sites of lynching, a history that can still define their sensation of safety when moving through “white” territory (Finney 2014). Gould and Lewis associate green gentrification with an influx of wealthy whites into greened neighbourhoods, but we feel that the field needs to push this further by addressing the roots of the racialised imaginaries of

urban greening as desirable in the first place.

Related to this is the need to delve into the historical role of land and consequently urban green spaces in the context of colonial and capitalist practices. Gould and Lewis allude to this in the conclusion, when they state: “green gentrification exacerbates the amenity gap between environmental refugees and the environmentally privileged, in a neocolonial process of resource appropriation” (p. 153). Unravelling the structural relations of settler colonialism that lie behind urban greening’s present is fundamental in order to delve into the continuum between the colonial and contemporary racial banishment – a racialisation of space – increasingly visible in cities (Roy 2017). This involves understanding, for example, how the greening of “empty” or vacant urban spaces can be understood as a form of accumulation by green dispossession rooted in racist, colonialist and capitalist ideologies and institutions (Safransky 2014) that portray urban land as “vacant”, “unused” or “marginal” to convert it into new (green) land uses and private profit.

Regarding real estate markets, Gould and Lewis propose that developers employ greening to lobby/manipulate local government to approve green urban (re)development in a green growth coalition, resulting in a situation where economic benefits move upwards and environmental hazards downwards. Deeper theorising is however needed on the financialised urban development dynamics and related actors that increasingly drive speculative urban (greening) practices. Considering that global financial markets, often aided by the capitalist state, actively shape cities (Weber 2010), it is critical to better understand, for example, how “green value added” streams are harnessed in financial instruments and markets (Knuth 2016). In other words, financial actors and processes – aided and abetted by the state – are playing an increasingly important role in generating the urban greening treadmill. Understanding how and why they act can shed light on environmental injustices as well as possible progressive reshaping of urban environments (Castree and Christophers 2015).

In closing, Green Gentrification makes an important contribution to this emerging field examining the social and racial impacts of urban greening, as it opens up the way for new studies measuring and unpacking the relationship between urban greening and socio-spatial inequality.

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