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how to theorize and conduct research on sex tourism and prostitution.

Key Words: development studies, prostitution, sex tourism; tourism studies.

The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City. Neil Smith. London: Routledge, 1996. xxi and 262 pp., maps, tables, photos., graphs, notes, refs., and index. \$85.00 cloth (ISBN 0-415132-54-1); \$24.99 paper (ISBN 0-415132-55-X).

Reviewed by Eric Clark, Department of Social and Economic Geography, University of Lund, Lund, Sweden.

France has 1,081 so-called war-zones
(*Sydsvenska Dagbladet*, December 23, 1998:9).

Neil Smith's *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City* brings together some of the most important contributions to urban studies by one of its most innovative, influential, streetwise, and socially engaged researchers, spanning nearly twenty years. Smith's work has continuously been at the center of debates on urban geographic theory in general, and gentrification theory in specific. The book thus reflects developments within Marxian-oriented urban theory from the late 1970s to the late 1990s: from the political economy of class struggle over disinvestment and reinvestment in the built environment, to inclusion of aspects of ethnicity and gender, and the practice of discourse analysis to reveal ways of creating "frontiers," rationalizing and propagating views of others, and legitimating actions aimed towards wrenching profit from urban social space.

Two of the ten chapters are new, while eight are updated versions of articles and chapters previously published and often cited in the gentrification literature. The two new chapters (2 and 8) address the issues: "Is gentrification a dirty word?" and "Are gentrification experiences in European cities so distinct as to merit development of theories fundamentally different from those used to explain gentrification in North American cities?" Smith's answers are yes and no, respectively. His no is well argued, based on three case studies of Amsterdam, Budapest, and Paris, largely through secondary sources. I find it peculiar how some European academics can so easily assert that "North American theory" cannot apply here, for here we have harnessed free market forces with strong public planning authorities and welfare institutions; as if European societies were not molded by market economies, and as if North

American societies had no regulatory planning authorities or welfare institutions. These are matters of degree, not species. Smith's yes to the first issue I find, however, too categorical, closed, and short on sensitivity towards possible alternative histories and societal contexts: less uneven, not void of inequalities, but considerably more just and associated with less suffering. I will return to this below.

The book has two main threads which intertwine but are largely concentrated in three parts. One constitutes the main body of the text (chapters 3–9). It aims "to discern the economic geography of urban change" (p. 209) through analyses of how gentrification can be explained as one outcome of more general economic geographic processes, and how the "forces shaping the new urbanism are global as much as local" (p. 28). The other thread is considerably smaller and divided into two parts (two introductory chapters and the concluding chapter), but gives the book its title and flavor of critical social documentary. It aims to show how "the frontier discourse serves to rationalize and legitimate a process of conquest, whether in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century West, or in the late-twentieth-century inner city" (p. xv), and to give voice and support to resistance against displacement and injustices associated with gentrification and "revanchist" urban policies.

Smith's strongest contribution lies clearly in the theoretical analytical thread. Chapter 3, "Local arguments," is an expanded and revised version of his original formulation of rent-gap theory in 1979, a modern classic in the gentrification literature. Subsequent chapters broaden the scope and scale. Theoretical arguments are corroborated by empirical analyses, and the rent gap is put into a broader context, as a local expression of more global processes of uneven development (Smith 1990). Smith sculpts his perspective on

gentrification processes in ongoing critical dialogue with other researchers' views, making the book valuable not only for researchers versed in, but also as an overview for newcomers to the gentrification literature.

The second thread leaves something to be desired. Smith succeeds well with his purposes, and as social documentary and analysis of the frontier discourse, these chapters are valuable contributions. He graphically depicts the "marriage of convenience between art and real estate," between culture and capital (p. 20). He rightfully problematizes the ideologically loaded concepts of urban revitalization and urban pioneer. It is important to bring systematized "monstrous incivility" (p.18) and grim realities onto the worktable and into the seminar room. We need to do this more. We easily accept our own avoidance of grim realities close at hand, well-fed as we are by the media with misery and atrocities at a more comfortable distance. What bothers me here are rather instances of what I perceive as careless taking-on-board of standpoints that are very worthy of critical review. "Race" for instance, is frequently invoked along side class, gender, nationality, and sexual preference, as if it were a rational concept. That racism exists is undeniable, but "race"? Is racism anything more than the belief (conviction, or casual assumption) that "race" is a rational category? Some would store this objection in the neat conceptual box of idealism and liberalism. But there is a material basis for the objection which critical social scientists, especially in the U.S., are far too slow in recognizing.

Not unrelated, affirmative action seems to be beyond the pale of critical reflection. "Attacks on affirmative action" are indiscriminately bunched together with "street violence against gays and homeless people" (pp. 44-45). So, if I am against certain policies of affirmative action and hope we can achieve greater social justice in Sweden without introducing such policies, policies that institutionalize divisive lines, based on perpetuating and aggravating irrational conceptions of who "we" and "they" are, then I am in the same camp as gay-bashers and homeless-thrashers? Clearly Smith does not suggest this, but the polemic tone leaves few openings for critical reflection on those positions Smith would have us take for granted.

Finally, there is the point raised above concerning the definiteness with which Smith claims gentrification to be a dirty word. Clearly, "for those impoverished, evicted or made homeless in

its wake, gentrification is indeed a dirty word" (p. 34). But must it really "stay a dirty word"? Are there any real or imaginable contexts where the gains and losses of change are distributed such that there are no losers? Must gentrification be a zero-sum game? Where are the good examples of urban change? Where are the normative suggestions for policy formation in a positive direction? The book ends with a positive note on squatting. But the immediate implications in terms of property rights are not followed up. Could, for instance, change in the property rights of tenants set the stage for less conflict-ridden processes of urban change? If there are such great potentials in gentrifiable areas, is there no way to secure improvements in situ, not only of the built environment but also for the people in the area, without displacement? Or are we doomed to repeated renditions of "Custer versus the Sioux" (p. 231)? Is there an implicit argument here that a good city should not accommodate change, reinvestment, or conversion of land use? Smith's void here is due to his delimitation of purpose, so I readily admit this is unfair critique. In a way, it is a strength of the book that it so starkly reveals the urgency of researching and working on these very issues.

Smith excels at the use of newspapers as sources to bring untidy reality, social conflict, and power relations into focus. There are over forty references to articles in the *New York Times*, and at least as many more to other newspapers and magazines. He does this like few in the field, and with good effect, making wide openings in the protective walls of academic discourse. "Revan-chist" in the book's title draws a parallel to a militant political movement in France in the last three decades of the nineteenth century, seeking revenge against "both the working class and the discredited royalty" (p. 45). Appropriate then to underline the relevance of Smith's book with reference to a recent article in *Sydsvenska Dagbladet* (Guston 1998). Under the rubric quoted above, and an ingress stating that "The regular police dare not enter some areas without the extra protection of riot squads," Guston notes that "France has according to official statistics 1,081 crisis zones. The police call them war-zones" (p. 9). The *New Urban Frontier* is as relevant for casting light on problems in European cities as it is for North American contexts. Both homelessness and gated communities are on the rise in Europe. Smith not only unveils discourses legitimating similar developments in

North America, he also ties them to solid theoretical understandings of powerful underlying economic geographic mechanisms.

Key Words: displacement, gentrification, homelessness, rent gap, uneven development, urban conflict.

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- Smith, N. 1990. *Uneven Development*, 2nd ed. Oxford: Blackwell.