

Invited Lecture 8

Is a gentrified city a healthy city?

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Abstract

Background: Gentrification is among the most transformative socio-spatial processes of our times, reshaping places worldwide by reconfiguring their socioeconomic, cultural, and physical landscapes. Gentrification has become increasingly transnational, as local gentrification processes are now linked to global capital flows and the movements of a mobile middle and upper class, including lifestyle migrants, international students, and tourists, primarily from wealthier countries. Gentrification alters living environments and leads to displacement, both of which might have health impacts. Thus, evidence is needed to navigate the public health challenges stemming from gentrification processes. **Objective:** In addition to framing the topic within the broader literature and the Portuguese context, this talk aims to summarize the evidence generated by the HUG project (PTDC/GES-OUT/1662/2020), funded by the Foundation for Science and Technology, which aimed to understand the public health impacts of gentrification in Porto area. **Methods:** We conducted several complementary studies involving participants from EPIPorto, a population-based cohort from Porto (Portugal), and a purposive sample from the community. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were employed, including interviews, Photovoice, and observational studies analyzed using regression models. **Results:** Research conducted within the project revealed that gentrification reshapes urban life, bringing both economic revitalization and a range of negative outcomes such as increased stress, pollution, housing displacement, weakened social ties, and greater health inequalities. Older adults appeared particularly vulnerable, experiencing rising living costs, mobility challenges, social isolation, and mental health decline. Findings also pointed to a growing sense of alienation, loss of community cohesion, and impacts such as depression among older populations. Housing insecurity was associated with loneliness, poorer cognitive function, and a diminished perception of healthy ageing. Displacement further contributed to psychological distress, social disconnection, and worsening living conditions. **Conclusions:** Porto has become a significant site of transnational gentrification, driving up housing costs and profoundly reshaping the city's social and physical landscape. The studies presented here identified a range of health impacts associated with gentrification, with some benefits but predominantly harmful effects.

Keywords: gentrification; urban health; displacement

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