

Gentrification in Brooklyn:

*Pioneers' misbegotten search for community and the
emergence of a new socio-economic class*

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the emergence of a new socio-economic class*

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Abstract

This thesis explores the process of gentrification in the United States' most populous city, and particularly in its largest borough, Brooklyn. This process has brought about a change to the socio-economic composition of the residents of Brooklyn, which has become increasingly apparent since the end of the 20th century. The gentrifiers of Brooklyn first arrived from the 1950s and on at a gradual rate. They formed a new *kind* of class that has been praised for their considerable openness towards diversity, liberal values and artistic inclinations. The effect that this new "creative class" has had on Brooklyn is apparent in the most recent Census: a large percentage of the poverty-stricken African American community in the borough has noticeably emigrated during the past two years, while the creative class is prospering. Utilizing the fieldwork which I did in Brooklyn, I address how the creative class represents a new kind of urban homogeneity. It is different from the urban capitalist setting in Manhattan. Nonetheless, it is overly optimistic to believe that Brooklyn's creative class, even with its broadly inclusive attitude, can generate a better and more inclusive kind of urbanism.

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1 Introduction

The steady increase of the urban population has made the city the common inheritance of humankind. Aristotle long ago proclaimed that humans were “zoon politicon;” a political animal that becomes a man when living in a society amongst others in a polis that is governed by laws (LeGates & Stout, 2015, p. 14). Since humanity has chosen to live in cities over the course of history, we are, indeed, in Edward Glaeser’s words, “an urban species” (2015, p. 707). The rise in population and the influx of people into cities has magnified the importance of the global capitals – including Manhattan. However, what has caught my attention is the question of why the “other” borough of New York City, Brooklyn, which is larger in area and was once looked down upon, has become the most sought-after location in New York. In contradistinction to white-collar Manhattanites, Brooklynites, since their arrival in the 1950s and on, have been distinguishable by their combination of being affluent and creative. The situation in which industry deteriorated during the postindustrial era created nostalgia for community among middle-class whites who sought after a culture that countered the one of the modernized city. Brooklyn’s ethnically diverse lower- and working classes provided the invading middle class with an authenticity that was mistakenly assumed to be the foundation for achieving this community, right on the doorstep of Manhattan.

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the rise of a new middle class, which Richard Florida has called the “creative class.” The influence exerted by this emerging class is ironic in that their belief in the value of diversity has led to socio-economic polarization. The excessive gentrification of Brooklyn’s neighborhoods is the direct result of this inflow of hipster, middle- and upper-class whites. Gentrification means an increase in property prices that contributes to increased segregation and the displacement of the poor in Brooklyn’s disjointed neighborhoods.

I began my research interested in the increasing gentrification of neighborhoods in Brooklyn, realizing that I too am part of this particular process in Oslo by my romanticization of the Grünerløkka neighborhood – Oslo’s Brooklyn – since I moved here to attend the university. I recognized that I too sought to be part of a creative middle class rather than a corporate, white-collar affluent one that lives in Aker Brygge – Oslo’s Manhattan. Moreover, I moved from a small town to study at the university with the aim of buying an apartment in Oslo, which furthermore makes me a gentrifier. I chose to conduct fieldwork in the hipster mecca of Brooklyn as I thought it provided a unique history of this particular class.

Furthermore, my interest was propelled by the social change which the creative class and the landscape in Brooklyn represented, and how this social change relates to its history and culture. During my time in Brooklyn, I realized the evident paradox of that which is thought to be a diverse and inclusive community was, de facto, polarized. On another level, through my research I have found that the initial gentrifiers have claimed an authenticity that is derived from the preceding residents in Brooklyn. In the words of Sharon Zukin: “a city is authentic if it can create the experience of origins” (2011, p.3). Ironically, the original ethnically diverse Brooklynites had neither a social cohesion nor promoted this authenticity that the first gentrifiers romanticized – making the gentrifiers’ claim of authenticity transparent. These themes, among others, will be explored in the following chapters.

1.1 Theory, methodology and sources

American Studies is an inherently interdisciplinary field, drawing from traditional disciplines including history, anthropology, literature and the social- and political sciences, among others. As I have chosen the field of urban studies, the above-mentioned disciplines are all applicable when studying cities. However, it is worth noting that in this thesis I am placing an emphasis on the disciplines of social science, in particular urban geography, urban sociology, urban economics, urban planning, and architecture (LeGates & Stout, 2015, p. 5). This thesis applies an interdisciplinary qualitative design to explore gentrification in Brooklyn. Through a historical narrative, it combines a historical source-based methodology with fieldwork that includes direct observation and interviews, in which the latter additionally serves as this thesis’s primary source.

Narrative research calls for a heterogenous set of textual narrative data, including historical documents, policy documents, books, journals and reports (Ameel, 2016). This thesis relies on such diverse secondary resources as well as information from reputable websites and newspaper accounts. As the topic of this thesis is a current process, the newspaper articles serve as a central source of information when focusing on the recent results of gentrification in Brooklyn. In a call for more qualitative methods in urban research, Bond & Thompson-Fawcett argue: “[t]he tiny details, often reduced and overlooked in analysis, can reveal the depth of the meaning people have for places and spaces with which they identify. Narratives provide a means to make sense of and understand social phenomena and individual experience” (2008, p. 56–57). This thesis uses historical narrative to make

sense of the evolving phenomenon of gentrification, and it implements fieldwork to understand different individual experiences of gentrification.

I begin the second chapter of this thesis with a history of New York City in order to include several causes of what has led to the evolution of Brooklyn's hipster socio-economic class. I look in particular at economist Edward Glaeser's book *Our Urban Species* in order to address how Manhattan's economy has affected the prospering of Brooklyn. Therefore, including the narrative of those who were the first to be blamed for gentrification in the borough is inevitable, and this relates to the urban history of Manhattan and Brooklyn. "Historical narrative is based on the presupposition that particular events are connected with what happened before, with contemporary developments in other fields, and with what came afterwards; they are conceived, in short, as part of a historical process" (Tosh, 2015, p. 125). Events such as out-of- and into-the-city movements have proven to be historical phases that have left a great impact on the city with both detrimental and progressive consequences, which is also applicable to the urban process of gentrification. The process of returning to urban neighborhoods, which was pioneered in the 1950s, has turned out to be a major collective transition that cannot be explained purely by human intentions (Tosh, 2015, p. 126). In retrospect, we can see how urban policies, the economy and shifting industry have also left a great impact on the reasoning of why gentrification occurred. Historical narrative, therefore, serves as an explanatory tool that covers various causes and some recent consequences.

Seeing gentrification as a historical change, one can include a diverse set of theories to understand its process. "Historians are often influenced by theory [of] the idea that demography, the study of growth and development of population, holds the key" (Tosh, 2015, p. 182). Urbanization is theorized to be amongst the most significant factors for leaving a great impact on Brooklyn's gentrification. Additionally, identity theory by Louis Wirth is used in the composition of the narrative to exemplify a white- and blue-collar urban character of the "alienating" city. But the main set of theoretical foundation in this thesis is cultural anthropology, the study of the meanings by which people live in a society. Within this, I review the cultures, values, economies and practices of the first wave of gentrifiers in Brooklyn.

The historical narrative in Chapters 2 and 3 begins with the insights found in Suleiman Osman's book, *The Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn*. This source contains a complete description of what occurred before and in the initial stages of gentrification in Brooklyn from the 1940s to the 1980s. When discussing why Brooklyn was not the perceived

community the first gentrifiers, who are termed the “brownstoners,” searched for in the postindustrial era, Osman’s book is crucial. Additionally, Kay S. Hymowitz’s *The New Brooklyn* portrays what Brooklyn was, is, and what has been sustained, added, and lost in its remarkable transformation. This source is used throughout Chapters 2, 3 and 4 in this thesis. As both authors have lived for a long time in the borough, they provide a valuable insider’s view. As a source regarding the contemporary socio-economic class that has evolved in Brooklyn, urban studies theorist Richard Florida has written *The Creative Class* and *The New Urban Crisis*, in addition to several articles that are used largely in Chapter 4 and the Conclusion. With articles published in 2019, his work is among the most recent scholarly work this thesis relies upon.

In addition to the historical narrative through secondary sources, this study relies on personal observation and interviews that are used to offer further insight into the results of gentrification in Brooklyn in terms of studying those who live with these consequences. By combining a source-based approach with fieldwork methodology, the research provides an up-to-date examination with a foundation in established empirical evidence. My fieldwork lasted from the end of February until mid-March 2019. The initial method used during my stay in Brooklyn was direct observation. As an eye witness, I closely observed the borough firsthand to gain an understanding of its settings and individuals and their forms of behavior. I collected field notes, which detailed the characteristics of the local setting, conversations and the behaviors of the residents, and photographs that I include here in order to illustrate the settings of Brooklyn. Furthermore, I used the qualitative method of conversational interviews with people I met in different areas. Information from these interviews are included in Chapter 4 and the Conclusion. Since my aim was to gain information about different socio-economic classes, I did not limit myself to a uniform series of questions as flexibility was required in order to converse with the interviewees about their dissimilar experiences of Brooklyn.

The meetings with the interviewees were characterized by chance and serendipity (Okely, 2012, p. 51). The anthropological method of direct observation followed by conversational interviews is a commonly used practice. In my case, this was integrally linked to the activity of walking, observing and soaking in the neighborhoods of Brooklyn – some of them were vibrant and hectic, and others almost completely quiet. This is how I understood where to look for interviewees. Although I met them purely by chance, I looked for ones who were representative of the people in Brooklyn. “Kelly,” the owner of a music-themed café and bar in Williamsburg, which is an increasingly gentrified area in Brooklyn, happened to

be on a break from work when I stopped by for a coffee. Without knowing that she was the owner, we started talking and I realized that this presented a perfect opportunity to ask her some more questions and take notes as she herself understood that she was a “gentrifier.” Since she was interested in my topic, she had no problems with letting me use her information anonymously.

The two other interviewees I used to represent the new socio-economic class in Brooklyn were “John” and “Sarah,” whom I both approached while they sat working at the Brooklyn Public Library. After many attempts to talk with various people at the library, these two gave me some of their time to tell me their stories. Both of them were aware of the change in the borough that they were a part of. “Jerome,” however, kindly told me his story when working his shift at the hotel I stayed at in Bushwick in the eastern part of Brooklyn. He was of African American origin and had lived in the neighborhood all his life. Belonging to the ethnic working class in the city, he provides dissimilar information to what the previously mentioned interviewees gave. In the conclusion of this thesis, I include “Rachel,” whom I met in an Uber taxi while exploring the city on a cold winter day in March. She was a Jewish woman of Polish descent who in this thesis serves as a narrative representing the white, 19th century European population in Brooklyn that has noticeably emigrated from the borough since the 1950s and up until the recent time. Due to owning the apartment she lives in, she was able to remain where she was in the Jewish enclave in the northwestern part of the borough. The case for those in her family who cannot afford to buy or rent as a consequence of gentrification and increasing property taxes is, however, a different one.

My interviewees constitute a diverse group of people who differ from one another in terms of age, ethnic origin, education, career and life histories. Although “Kelly,” “John” and “Sarah” were from different states in the U.S., they did, nevertheless, all fall into the category of the new hipster socio-economic class of Brooklyn. They shared the lifestyle characterized by having creative middle-class careers that they have chosen with their interests as motivating factors contrary to “Jerome,” who worked solely because he had to earn money. However, my interviewees represent a very small fraction of Brooklyn’s residents, and henceforth is it difficult to draw a conclusion based on only them. Yet, they all fall under the socio-economic classes that this thesis – among many other scholarly works – identifies as such: the white, ethnic working class who were largely there during the Industrial Era, the group of black (and Latino) immigrants, and the affluent hipsters who have emerged to become a new and creative class of gentrifiers.

1.2 Delimitation

Since I was not able to do extensive fieldwork in Brooklyn, my primary sources of material gathered during my trip do not constitute the predominant data in this thesis. I therefore rely greatly on secondary sources – particularly in relation to the history in Chapters 2 and 3. My thesis is specifically limited to those responsible for gentrification in Brooklyn since they slowly started arriving in the 1950s and have been arriving up until the present time. In terms of this timeframe, a historical account will be given in the second chapter of this thesis to serve as a framework for analyzing the changes in Brooklyn that have occurred since the mid-20th century. When discussing the emergence of the new socio-economic class in Brooklyn, I focus largely on their lifestyle in terms of social, financial and cultural capital through a sociological narrative. That is not to say that economic and political theories are not evident in the study of gentrification, but as my research is restricted to Brooklyn, I have, as many scholars have done, chosen to focus on the specifics of the culture of the new affluent elite. Where relevant to my examination, I will comment on the new socio-economic class in general and in relation to Manhattan – as it has not solely emerged in Brooklyn. Nonetheless, the geographical scope of my thesis is restricted to Brooklyn.

There are a number of methods that could have been employed when researching the community and emergence of a new hipster class in Brooklyn. Quantitative research is also a common approach that provides statistics about immigration and emigration of people with different socio-economic classifications, or the quantitative research of interviews can be utilized. Importantly, numerous scholars acknowledge that historical narrative with cultural analysis of those experiencing and being part of the change is an important technique. Informants themselves are only dimly aware of such changes in demography and social conflict (Tosh, 2015, p. 126). It is, therefore, advantageous to incorporate qualitative established data.

1.3 Thesis outline

This thesis consists of an introductory chapter, three internal chapters and a concluding chapter. The introductory chapter initially clarifies the purpose of the thesis. It further describes the methods and the sources that are applied, including a brief account of the interview subjects, and maps the theoretical framework for the research.

Chapter 2 provides a historical analysis of New York City as it was flourishing, particularly in relation to Manhattan and Brooklyn's urbanization. The main focus in this

chapter is devoted to the evolution of urban identity and urban life in a modernized city such as Manhattan versus the preservation of buildings with an emphasis on their authenticity in Brooklyn. It traces back to the millennium shift between the 19th and 20th centuries in order to see Brooklyn's transition from a lower- and working-class suburban area, to a now prospering urban place with an increasing affluent class.

Chapter 3 first and foremost includes a conceptualization of gentrification. It further explores the community in Brooklyn from the 1950s and until the 1970s, and how the ethnically diverse Brooklynites did not obtain the social cohesion the first wave of gentrifiers alleged to have found. The chapter seeks to define these first gentrifiers, the brownstoners, and their reasons for choosing preindustrial Brooklyn instead of modernizing Manhattan. The last part of the chapter presents a current mapping of gentrification in Brooklyn on the basis of the brownstoners.

Since the brownstoners' intention to move to Brooklyn has become a backdrop against which the second wave of gentrifiers came, Chapter 4 further elaborates on the more recent immigration to the borough. I narrow the scope here and focus on their self-contradictory values in terms of what gentrification has brought upon those lower-class, ethnically diverse people. Since, theoretically speaking, the gentrifiers value both diversity and openness towards everyone, yet, their gentrification proves that they are not living by these values. Finally, a concluding remark based on my main arguments and key findings is presented in the Conclusion.

2 The Making of Brooklyn

2.1 Introduction

This chapter traces urbanization in New York City since the 19th century particularly as it has occurred in the case of Brooklyn. Through examining different studies of New York's urbanization, we see a continuity in the process of urbanization in the city in correlation with the rise of a less civic-minded and more self-enclosed community. This process has occurred intensely since the millennium shift. In addition to Brooklyn's influx of an educated class moving from the suburbs since the 1960s, the growth of population in New York has led to the middle- and upper middle-class fleeing from an increasingly more expensive Manhattan to Brooklyn with the result that gentrification has been increasing. Brooklyn has long been known as an area that has been home to various social classes, but the escalating housing costs that have accompanied gentrification have driven residents with a lower income out to the periphery of the borough.

Due to Brooklyn's industrial history and massive immigration into the borough by different ethnicities, it has generally been known for its older building stock: Victorian townhouses, brownstones and industrial buildings. The housing stock and the multiethnic inhabitants gave the formerly independent city its characteristic appearance. With the growth of urbanization being largely due to white, middle- and upper-middle-class residents settling in Brooklyn, the look of the borough has changed, particularly in the former industrial districts. Although its physical façade still consists of its distinctive streets and buildings that many of us have seen in movies, pictures and magazines, the inside of the buildings has changed due to the gentrifiers' yearning for restoration instead of rebuilding them in a modern style. Their aim for preserving the buildings was, and to some extent still is, to provide a sense of originality that is contrary to the abrupt changes that were due to modernization particularly in the postindustrial decades from the 1950s and on. Consequently, the former residents have been outpriced and replaced just like the inside of the buildings were (Osman, 2011, p. 5). Scholars within the field of urban studies have henceforth questioned the social character of Brooklyn, in terms of the community's cohesive characteristics, due to comprehensive change that has occurred recently in over half of the area. Discussions about the newer residents' motive for moving to Brooklyn are often considered to be exemplifying 'a search for authenticity'. This search can be understood as a

result of the less traditional and more individualistic urban life in the great cities, in which ‘authenticity’ becomes more obscure in the homogenous high-rise buildings. Therefore, I will discuss what denotes an urban way of living in New York, particularly in Manhattan, before I compare it to the one in Brooklyn.

However, I find it vital to introduce this chapter with a brief background of how New York has become one of the world’s financial centers that has been generating a growing affluent society, which has affected the standard of living in the more suburban-like Brooklyn. Furthermore, I will map Brooklyn’s urbanization process since America’s industrialization, and how its population increased in spite of great challenges.

Whereas Brooklyn and Manhattan are boroughs in New York City, along with scholars and many New Yorkers I, too, am referring to Manhattan when citing ‘New York’ or ‘the City’. This comes from the Act of Union in 1898 in which Manhattan, Brooklyn, the Bronx, Queens and Staten Island became the boroughs constituting New York City. As Manhattan held the administrative and financial power and was the most urbanized out of the five boroughs, it became the city’s center after the consolidation. Although geographically Brooklyn is located in the center of them, it henceforth became one of the four “outer boroughs” of New York City. (Hymowitz, 2017, p. 26).

2.2 New York: the financial center

The process of urbanization has evolved to become a global phenomenon that has led to the majority of human beings to live in cities. It is estimated that by 2050, 75 percent of the world’s population will be living in urbanized areas (LeGates & Stout, 2015, p. 20; Taylor, 2018, p. 1). Although urbanization can be traced back hundreds of years, it was the industrial revolutions that led to a higher density of people in the cities of industrialized nations since the 18th century. Along with industrialization, transportation technology evolved, and globalization arose. This is where New York’s business started to grow. Their port became America’s most important, shipping flour and wheat in the late 18th century and later on attracting more workers to the manufacturing industries built around the harbor (Glaeser, 2015, p. 709-710). With the growth of industry, more people moved to the city for work and New York became the most urbanized city in what became the United States of America.

The Progressive Era that followed the decades after the 1890s was a period in which there were enormous changes within New York City. The second half of the 1800s saw an acceleration of incoming residents with an increase of 3 million people in only 50 years

(Rees, 2016, p. 2). This meant that there were approximately 3.5 million residents living in New York City in the year of the consolidation of the five boroughs. With the influx of settlers, the working class expanded subsequently to meet New York's demand for construction labor. Housing, bridges, railroads and roads became the workplace for many people, and work in the last of these was continuous due to the automobile becoming more accessible to consumers (Rees, 2016, p. 8). The crowded city did not only expand horizontally, but vertically as well with skyscrapers in Manhattan going up. The skyscrapers' development from the 1890s to the 1920s became a big factor in increasing Manhattan's real estate values and thus became a cause for outpricing former house owners and renters. This further led to the severely overcrowded way of living initially for the working class, who only could afford small apartments in either tenements or skyscrapers (Rees, 2016, p. 7). But the Progressive Era was also known for its harsh working conditions for manufacturing workers, and New York City had the biggest garment industry in the nation (Helgeson, 2016, p. 7). The garment industry was largely manned by Jews, both from Germany and Eastern Europe, and the port was vital for the industry's shipping. Other large groups of immigrants in the first decades of the 20th century were mostly Italian or Irish, who also constituted much of the city's working class. Additionally, the Great Migration beginning in 1915 led to New York's Harlem and Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant becoming predominantly African American (Helgeson, 2016, p. 13).

Though the world economy of that time initially strengthened New York, later on it contributed to an economic weakening of the city in the first half of the 20th century, and again in the 1970s. The financial struggles rather intensified in the decade during the Great Depression that followed the Wall Street crash of 1929. However, in the decades that followed the crash, New York's working class managed to succeed in organizing themselves. The New Deals of 1933 and 1935 helped energize the U.S. labor movement. Unions succeeded in creating better conditions for blue-collar workers (Helgeson, 2016, p. 19). But even though workers' conditions were improved, deindustrialization impacted the cities' working classes the most. "The waterfront workforce in New York City went from 35,000 in 1954, to 21,000 in 1970, to a mere 8000 in the late 1980s" (Hymowitz, 2017, p. 37). Globalization's further expansion towards cheaper ways to produce goods across the world diminished the position of companies in New York with garment production from China as being one of their main competitors (Glaeser, 2015, p. 710). New York's harbor, which initially benefitted the industry, eventually became weakened due to new inventions.

However, neither manufacturing competition nor the Great Depression stopped the City's progress. New York prospered in the so-called economic "postwar boom" set off in part by the rapid increase in population after World War II (Taylor, 2018, p. 6; Davis, 2015, p. 21). This included a building boom in the 1950s and 1960s, but overcrowding and homelessness were also consequences of this (Angotti, 2017, p. 37). After the postwar boom, the period of the 1970s until the early 1980s were bad overall for American cities. New York lost over 10 percent of its population, and other former industrial urban areas declined as well. Cities were struck by the loss of manufacturing industry, and violent crime, drugs and poverty expanded. Harlem, in Manhattan, and Brooklyn's ghettos were close to being impacted the worst (Hymowitz, 2017, p. 155). This, however, did not affect New York's strongest businesses. While the economy of nations suffered through being damaged by the war, American firms came to lead on a global level and many were stationed in Manhattan. Additionally, New York's bankers made the city into one of the world's financial centers through managing international finance (Glaeser, 2015, p. 710; Taylor, 2018, p. 5). Consequently, Manhattan became the home and location for successful businesses.

Almost by definition, cities include all social classes. But due to deindustrialization in the latter part of the 20th century, an urban crisis arose in American cities from the 1960s and on. Due to economic decay, the middle class chose to move to rural and suburban areas. The cities were left in a state of poverty. A turnaround began at the end of the 1970s. By that time, Manhattan's financial innovators started to thrive, and the affluent newcomers to the borough continued to increase in numbers. Accordingly, Manhattan began predominantly to be the home of people above the economic level of the working class from the end of the 1980s and on. As urbanization in Manhattan increased, competition within the job market did as well. This further led to even white-collar workers being priced out of Manhattan, and many of them had to move to Brooklyn (Osman, 2011, p. 5). Down-, mid- and uptown Manhattan is now almost entirely inhabited by residents above the level of the middle class, with the exception of Chinatown and Harlem. However, due to rezoning laws being adjusted in the early 2000s that allow for expanded construction, the two Manhattan enclaves where primarily Asians, Latinos and blacks live are rapidly gentrifying and many of their longtime residents are being outpriced (Morse, 2017, p. 97; Stein, 2017, p. 134). Moreover, the City is famously known as being home to a number of the richest Americans – who were in fact responsible for the increase in wages in New York while the rest of American economy stagnated during the Great Recession of 2009 (Florida, 2017, p. 7; Glaeser, 2015, p. 710).

The ups and downs in the fortunes of Manhattan have affected Brooklyn, but despite their proximity, Brooklyn's progress is distinct.

2.3 Urbanization and the evolution of Brooklyn

As stated in the introductory chapter, Edward Glaeser suggests that we have entered the “first urban century” as such a huge percentage of the world's population choose to live in cities. He further describes the city as “the absence of space between people and companies,” and that cities “*are* density” (italics in original text) (LeGates & Stout, 2015; Glaeser, 2015, p. 707). In order to understand the concept of city and urbanization, one can compare the terms urban with rural and city with town (Taylor, 2018, p. 3). Urbanized areas are usually defined by having a higher population density than rural places, and cities are often more busy and bigger in contrast to smaller, more quiet towns. Additionally, Peter Taylor proposes that one can view the terms city and urban as processes, and not only places or fixed terms. He describes it as “changing human relations whose outcomes at any one point in time are the places we think of as urban and city” (Taylor, 2018, p. 3). This is applicable to the once rural Brooklyn that developed into an urban area. Brooklyn was largely agrarian before it steadily became industrialized beginning in the late 18th century and then rapidly towards the end of the 19th century. The Industrial Era made Brooklyn the home of many workers in manufacturing who throughout the 19th century built the brownstones and townhouses who shaped it into a “suburban” place (Hymowitz, 2017, p. 24). It prospered to become its own city in the middle of the century. However, it lost its political independence in 1898 when it became a borough in the government entity of New York City (Hymowitz, 2017, p. 26).

Suburbs are often thought of as having emerged after World War II due to pro-growth housing policies. Their growth is also seen to be caused by a fear of the increasing number of blacks in the inner cities. Like these later suburbanites, Kay Hymowitz argues, the new Brooklyn residents in the 1800s also wanted “quiet, spacious, private homes, perhaps with a bit of green space – homes benefitting their new [middle-class] status,” but they had to live near the more rapidly industrialized city of Manhattan that provided their jobs (2017, p. 24). Suburbs can therefore be traced back as far as industrialization, providing a social character that shares the valuation of a life less hectic and more spacious than an emerging city.

The urbanization process in Brooklyn also reflected the growth of the industrial working class. Due to Brooklyn's long coast line and the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825, one of the world's largest concentrations of shipbuilding activities developed. This included

an immense increase in residents. From there being 6000 rural and agricultural Brooklynites in the beginning of the 1800s to becoming an industrial working class of 150,000 in the 1850s, the city began to prosper. Workers from mainly Ireland, Germany and England had traveled across the Atlantic Ocean, and they were the first immigrants to start Brooklyn's urbanization (Hymowitz, 2017, p. 16). The "rest" of the European migration to Brooklyn of the 19th century started to arrive in the last two decades of the century, of which the largest groups were Russian Jews, Italians, Poles and Scandinavians(Hymowitz, 2017, p. 19-20).

The new Brooklyn residents brought forth a variation of cultural aspects to the borough, and many of these are still present to this day. The Jews from Poland opened their synagogues, bakeries and butcher shops, while many German Jews were known for working within the textile industry. Poles moved to the cheaper areas of Williamsburg, Brownsville and Borough Park, but the German Jews could afford the more expensive brownstone houses in the suburban western part of Brooklyn. However, the workforce and the traditions of a large migration group, the Italians, impacted Brooklyn the most in the Industrial Era. As people flooded into Brooklyn, the need for housing and workplaces provided a lot of construction work for skilled Italians. Though they were the poorest and most discriminated against at the time (aside from the few African Americans that were there), they managed to give Brooklyn their famous Italian cuisine, which still characterize the borough to this day. (Hymowitz, 2017, p. 30).

Although Brooklyn prospered with urbanization during the Industrialization, its tough "hood" reputation originated with the first Irish, Italian and Jewish immigrants that came after the 1880s. As Hymowitz describes, their indigent backgrounds and mistrust of the law led to violence in the streets (Hymowitz, 2017, p. 30). Gangs formed around different ethnicities, leading the most unfortunate of them to grow up in unsafe ghettos. However, the worst ghettos in Brooklyn's history did not take shape until a great number African Americans settled there after the 1930s. The former German and Jewish neighborhood, Bedford-Stuyvesant, became a ghetto for poor blacks after a trainline opened in 1930 providing a direct route from the ghetto in Harlem. This, in addition to the Great Migration from the southern U.S., led to an immense increase in the number of poor blacks particularly in central Brooklyn's "Bed-Stuy." (Hymowitz, 2017, p. 31-32).

Brooklyn had one of the first free black communities in the United States, providing a safer home for about 500 blacks in the mid-19th century. Though they were noticeably segregated, a black middle class emerged who managed to open orphanages, churches and a home for the elderly. However, their once small community in Brooklyn was not capable of

helping the large numbers of African Americans who were arriving during the Great Migration in the 1910s and again from the 1930s and on, leading them to become the most vulnerable group in the borough. Not only did the borough not provide enough help for the many poor among them, but the Great Depression had struck the nation during the same period of time. With New York being one of the most stricken cities, Brooklynites suffered equally – putting construction projects and a lot of workers on hold. (Hymowitz, 2017, p. 31).

Then conditions began to change. The mainstay of Brooklyn's urbanization, industrial jobs, began to decrease in the 1930s together with the rest of New York's decline in the garment industry, but the rate of loss of manufacturing jobs rapidly increased beginning in the 1960s. The industrial decline significantly affected the borough's residents, depriving them of the jobs they and their families came for. New technologies created more efficient methods than manpower previously provided. Brooklyn's sugar refineries, beer- and shipping industries were largely replaced by innovations, reducing the number of manufacturing workplaces by half in only a couple of decades before 1975 (Hymowitz, 2017, p. 37; Osman, 2011, p. 10). Consequently, both Brooklyn's economy and population dropped. From the 1950s throughout the 1970s, over 400,000 people moved away. The middle class consisting of the oldest migrant groups, such as the Italians, Jews, Irish and Poles, moved to suburbs outside of and peripheral areas within Brooklyn. But what was most detrimental to Brooklyn's economy was that many whites took advantage of the newly built highways and left the city entirely. Consequently, poor residents flooded in. Puerto Rican immigrants, who escaped the corruption in their home country, and poor blacks were the populations increasing the most in the 1960s. Their unfortunate circumstances left the once industrially driven borough with a predominantly uneducated and unskilled lower- and working class. The violence, crime and drugs came to be the factors that pushed many middle-class residents away, leaving the area as having one of the worst American ghettos in the 1970s. This was similar to cities like Detroit (Hymowitz, 2017, p. 39).

In contradistinction to Detroit, however, Brooklyn is located right next to America's main "office" for finance and innovation, Manhattan. White-collar, middle-class workers from Manhattan started gradually renovating and moving into brownstone houses in the western part of Brooklyn starting in the 1950s (Osman, 2011, p. 11). The postwar economic boom in Manhattan slowly rubbed off on the closest Brooklyn areas. However, Brooklyn was struck by the same urban decline as Manhattan in the late 1960s. But while Brooklynites who were able to afford it fled, a new middle class continued to increase in size. Educated suburbanites moved to cities as the postindustrial job market slowly developed from the

1970s and on. By the 1990s, creative and technology-based sectors had begun to flourish (Hymowitz, 2017, p. 5). This new middle class that settled in the borough coined the term “Brownstone Brooklyn,” in the late 1960s in an attempt to create a distinct identity for their new place. They initially moved to neighborhoods in Brooklyn Heights and the former “South Brooklyn,” which they eventually gave the names Boerum Hill, Carroll Gardens and Cobble Hill to the area, before expanding into Park Slope in the 1970s. Being close to Brooklyn Bridge, these were the most developed areas and home to former middle-class Brooklynites. Brooklyn Heights was the borough’s most commercial area, and still is to this day (Osman, 2011, p. 19). Brooklyn’s new middle class was among many other ones consisting of whites across the U.S. that were part of the “back-to-the-city-movement” in the late 1970s. This movement into poor cities, as Osman puts it, “[...] has been one of the most striking developments in postwar urban history” (2011, p. 8).

The “brownstoners” were the first sign that a large, highly educated workforce was evolving in Brooklyn. In other words, they were the very first “gentrifiers” forming a new postindustrial middle class. A survey from 1975 found that their main occupations were within “law, writing, teaching, editing, architecture, banking, psychology, and psychiatry” (Osman, 2011, p. 11). Other professions on the rise were often related to art, technology and engineering, which all paid high enough salaries so these people could restore cheap, yet strongly built, brownstones from the previous century. The new middle class rapidly rose in the 1970s, and they started to come predominantly from suburbs around New York. This sort of urbanism extended into Park Slope, which increased the area’s median income by 17 percent in the 1970s. However, the rest of the borough did not benefit from their prosperity as the median income dropped in general by 7 percent (Osman, 2011, p. 276).

2.4 Social conditions in contemporary Brooklyn

Like other American cities, Brooklyn has failed to educate its poor. As the poor were largely African Americans and Latinos, the middle-class job market became predominantly white. After the millennium change, Dumbo and Brooklyn Heights started attracting both affluent workers from Wall Street and other upper-class residents. By 2010, these areas had become very gentrified and are now considered to be upper-class areas (Hymowitz, 2017, p. 9).

Whereas the prosperous parts of Brooklyn are still flourishing to this day, low-income residents are multiplying too. On the one hand, the middle- and upper middle classes have benefitted from New York’s boom. The decline in the 1980s gave them even cheaper homes

and more entrepreneurial opportunities in Brooklyn, which has continued to attract more urban dwellers up to the present day. “Private-sector employment grew by almost 20 percent between 2003 and 2012, nearly two times as fast as the rest of New York City” (Hymowitz, 2017, p. 2). On the other hand, poor Brooklynites have not gained much from their fellow citizens’ success. They have rather been bunched into undeveloped areas, and their numbers have increased as well. The lower-class residents of Brooklyn form a quarter of their population – and in the last decade has increased to having five of New York’s poorest zones. The inequality in Brooklyn has severely grown with the increasing of the population of the poor by over 400,000 since the 1980s. This has given the urbanized borough a rise in population of 20 percent, which today adds about 2.5 million residents to America’s most populated city (Hymowitz, 2017, p. 2-9; U.S. Census Bureau, 2019).

2.5 The modern urban character

The history of urbanization has led to a frequent inquiry into why people choose to move to large cities. Often studied are the collective character structures of societies within rural towns, suburbs and inner cities, and how these may differ from one another. There is disagreement whether the social characteristics of suburbs differs from the inner city, urban way of life. According to sociologist Herbert Gans, both inner city populations and suburbanites tend to keep their former culture and personality, and they continue to identify themselves through those (LeGates & Stout, 2015, p. 115). On this basis, those residents do not adapt to any particular dominant behavior. This is a counterargument to Louis Wirth’s book *Urbanism as a Way of Life* from 1938, which provides an early “sociological definition” of urban life that suggests there is a distinct urban personality (2015, p. 116).

Wirth looks at the theory of urbanism through the characteristics of the city by looking at the relationship between “numbers of population, density of settlements [and] heterogeneity of inhabitants and group life” (Wirth, 2015, p. 117). According to Wirth, these characteristics combined lead to the existence of a distinct “urban way of life,” in which a wide range of people evolve an “urban personality.” However, making a distinct characterization of millions of urban dwellers is problematic, especially when considering the wide range of different ethnicities of New Yorkers of the 19th and 20th centuries. Instead, Wirth looked at three characteristics of the city combined together, and what they might mean for the population in these places. Wirth refers to the city as a “mosaic of social worlds in which the transition from one to the other is abrupt” (Wirth, 2015, p. 119). Hence the

typical urban life can be seen as a way of living closely together, yet with the backgrounds of residents being quite dissimilar from one another.

Wirth suggests, furthermore, that cities are not suitable for traditional family life. Some of Wirth's ideas are a little outdated. He tells us that women are more likely to be employed in cities and that there is a greater necessity for women to work in the city due to higher living expenses (Wirth, 2015, p. 121). This is generally more true today. But in other respects, his picture of the city as opposed to the ones he has of suburban and rural areas rings true. Urban areas have more single and unattached people, and the independent, single working woman symbolizes the importance of independence to the urban lifestyle. To be independent is, however, not glorified in Wirth's text. Because a city's population often consists of people who have not been living there their whole lives, they struggle to identify with each other's backgrounds. Due to this, as Wirth puts it, the "bonds of solidarity" are lacking and there is a tendency towards loneliness (2015, p. 118).

Individuality, independence and loneliness seem to be recurrent characteristics in dense and crowded cities. "The close living together and working together of individuals who have no sentimental and emotional ties foster a spirit of competition, aggrandizement, and mutual exploitation" (Wirth, 2015, p. 119). More and more scholars imply that the city itself is to be blamed for the lack of neighborliness, and that what Wirth suggests is indeed relevant to the modern city too. "[...] socialization in the modern city entails learning to ignore other people and developing a calculated indifference to the bodies with which one shares public transportation and the street" (Simmel, 1911, ref. in Dimendberg, 2004, p. 22). Being surrounded by the city's diverse masses, the residents' social solidarity has weakened. This ignorance and lack of emotional ties is further studied as reasons for the high rate of crime in cities.

2.6 Reviving urban life

The desire to overcome the conditions Wirth described has led to the development of a school of urban social ecology. Additionally, his descriptions of an urban personality have proven to be informative for urban planners who work with creating a sense of community in cities (LeGates & Stout, 2015, p. 115). It is the sense of community that the new middle class emerging in the 1970s were looking for when moving to Brooklyn, a place where they could express their individuality. Since the beginning of the 20th century, due to the large heterogeneity in cities, individuals have had to subordinate their personalities in order to meet

the demands of the masses. “Wherever large numbers of differently constituted individuals congregate, the process of depersonalization also enters” (Wirth, 2015, p. 120). This perception of the city, about Manhattan in particular, is still persistent.

The urban crisis of the 1960s not only led to the movement of the middle class out of cities, it also awakened a desire in them for an improved urban experience. This is where a new kind of middle class began to prefer the option of living in Brooklyn over being in Manhattan. This new middle class, that initially called themselves “brownstoners,” are known for romanticizing Brooklyn, specifically the western part of it, as being an authentic place. The term “authenticity” is henceforth frequently debated in relation to the gentrification of areas that are comparable to Brooklyn. In spite of the term’s complex definition, Hymowitz describes it in the following way: “It appears to refer to a people and a specific way of life rooted in a place over a long time, the opposite of the standardization of modern mass society” (2017, p. 55). Sharon Zukin’s *Naked City* studies the term more thoroughly and provides a similar conclusion by stating “[...] a city is authentic if it can create the *experience* of origins” (2010, p. 3). Ethnically diverse Brooklyn had developed its characteristic features for decades before the new middle class arrived after the middle of the century. An urban society had formed there that was different from the modernized one in Manhattan that had become unappealing for many middle-class whites.

Edward Glaeser enhances a rather optimistic point of view of cities like Manhattan by highlighting how “proximity, density [and] closeness” enable people to work together, and that the success of many of the entrepreneurs demands physical connection (2015, p. 711). Arguably, in Manhattan the competition has become too great and too expensive for new innovators to live there. This is another argument for those in the middle class who instead turn to Manhattan’s little brother Brooklyn as a place to live. Brooklyn is more affordable, and the spread of gentrification there from the late 20th century and on shows how it has become the home for new entrepreneurs (Hymowitz, 2017, p. 48). Although Glaeser applauds entrepreneurial success, he is not merely an optimist. Glaeser also acknowledges the rising level of poverty in cities. “The city may win, but too often its citizens seem to lose” (Glaeser, 2015, p. 709). This seems to have become applicable to many Brooklynites as well.

3 Mapping Gentrification

3.1 Introduction

As far back as the 4th century BC, Plato's *The Republic* stated that "Any city, however small, is in fact divided into two, one the city of the poor, the other of the rich" (Florida, 2017, p. 10). Brooklyn's increasing urbanization in the postwar period has, indeed, led to growing inequality between rich and poor. What was an ethnically diverse but largely white and predominantly working-class borough before World War II began to experience the rapid growth of poor and affluent populations. Working- and middle-class Brooklynites who could afford to move left for the suburbs – leaving the place to the more recently arrived residents.

In this chapter, I will map what occurred in the urban neighborhoods in Brooklyn in the 1950s and 1960s. Deindustrialization had clearly struck the once industrially-driven borough, and African American and Latino migration further led to a decline in the overall income of Brooklyn. Nevertheless, Robert Moses and his Slum Clearance Committee did attempt, and often completed, urban renewal projects in Brooklyn as well as in the rest of New York City in order to modernize the city and raise the standard of living in low-income areas. Not only did these projects have aspects to them that were often disadvantageous for those with the least financial clout, they were also opposed by the new middle class, who were in search for an authentic place that was different from the modernized cityscape of Manhattan.

Deindustrialization, urban renewal projects and the increase of an ethnically diverse underclass in Brooklyn were among the incidents that prompted the growing of the borough's creative socio-economic class. In the last part of this chapter, I address the characteristics of this group. But first, I will conceptualize the widespread phenomenon of gentrification.

3.2 Conceptualizing gentrification

Gentrification is generally perceived to be an urban process in which a low-income and working-class community becomes populated by more affluent, educated white residents. The term was first coined by sociologist Ruth Glass in 1964 to describe London's "working class quarters [that] have been invaded by the middle class – upper and lower" (Florida, 2014). Papachristos, Smith, Scherer, and Fugiero elaborate:

Broadly defined, gentrification is a process that changes the character and composition of a neighborhood, resulting in the direct and indirect displacement of lower income households with higher income households. [...] We conceptualize gentrification as a churning process that involves the in-migration of wealth and the outmigration of poverty, most often resulting in over time increases in median household incomes, property values, and presence of lifestyle amenities that appeal to the tastes – and meet the demands of – the wealthier residents. (Papachristos et al., 2011, p. 216–217)

Gentrification is a complex phenomenon that represents different ecological, demographic, political and financial topics, but simply explained, “classical gentrification,” as Halasz puts it, “has typically involved middle-income individuals and families inhabiting and renovating residential properties in lower-income areas” (2018, p. 1367). A lot of this has been seen in New York City, eminently in Soho in Manhattan and large parts of Brooklyn, in which it started even before the term was coined.

Other metropolises that were among the first to have traces of gentrification were Washington DC and San Francisco. In the beginning of the 1980s, for about two decades a postindustrial urban crisis had taken place in which those who could afford to move to rural and suburban areas left. However, these U.S. cities had already started to attract suburban middle-class whites who were more affluent whites starting in the 1960s. The dwindling industry called for new technology, and history once again repeated itself as innovation generated new kinds of labor. These innovations took place predominantly in the city. As mentioned in the preceding chapter, Edward Glaeser proclaimed that the city’s proximity provides a concentration of a workforce which fosters success, and this further attracted people who sought to substitute their more traditional suburban life with one in an urban area (2015, p. 711).

Moving to the city for work or to receive an education are among the needs, tastes and desires that ecologists study when examining those responsible for change in the form of gentrification to this day (DeSena, 2009, p. 11). In the first decades of gentrification, other ecological causes were also studied such as the rise of women entering into the labor force. Less traditional living arrangements that the city was suited for were also studied such as, for example, there being less of a need for space than what was generally demanded by larger families. However, this has become more common more recently. Furthermore, when there was a great need for housing for the Baby Boom generation, housing was then cheaper in the

declining city than in the suburbs from the 1960s to about the 1990s – making it easier to find both work and apartments in the city (Long, 1980, ref. in DeSena, 2009, p. 11). However, gentrification has since contributed to increasing real estate costs in cities to make them become exceedingly more expensive than suburbs and towns, which outdates this cause for gentrification.

Ever since gentrification began, the influx of knowledge workers to cities has kept growing. Back in the 1960s and 1970s, there were two ways that gentrification occurred. One involved people who moving into formerly upmarket residential neighborhoods that had been left during the time of financial decline. These residents were largely affluent and educated, and they preferred to settle in Manhattan rather than Brooklyn. However, I will mainly focus on the other way gentrification takes place here. Through renovating previously industrial and warehouse districts, often outside of the inner city, the new industry expanded into the suburbs by wealthy workers within other than traditional white-collar fields. This, along with workers from Manhattan not being able to afford living in the city center, initiated the beginning of Brooklyn’s gentrification. (Florida, 2017, p. 64-65).

Other causes of gentrification can be examined through the point of view of critical theory. Critical theorists rather study actions of the political economy such as government policies and investments of capital as being causes for gentrification. Zukin’s study of neighborhoods in New York City indicates that “the political economy takes on a cultural strategy that supports art and historic preservation” (Zukin, 1982, ref. in DeSena, 2009, p. 12). Smith suggests that the “back-to-the-city movement” of the late 1970s, an urban phenomenon associated with gentrification, implies that capital investment moved back to the city, and that people naturally follow capital (1996, p. 94). In addition to Zukin, Smith also believes that the culture industry, as exemplified by creative entrepreneurs, adds to the growth of gentrification. This has proven to have had a great impact on Brooklyn, more specifically in terms of creating a cultural capital which I will discuss in the next chapter.

Neil Smith argues that it is capital and production that are the main reasons for gentrification (1996, p. 36). However, his economic approach to the phenomenon is merely on the basis of Marxist theory in regards to the means of production. Smith viewed the rent-gap theory as the indispensable core to any theory of gentrification. He claimed that when the gap was wide enough, landowners and land developers would realize the possibility for rehabilitating inner city property and would then prepare them for new inhabitants. This implies that it is the motion of capital that is the leading force in gentrification, not necessarily desires and lifestyle (Tosh, 2015, p. 190). I argue that Smith’s Marxist economic

structure hypothesis cannot account for the reason that the buildings and the landscape of Brooklyn have become attractive to an entire emerging socio-economic class. Yet, the form of their lifestyle and its ancillary consumerism is not the solitary reason either. It is a combination of both the economic- and sociological explanations.

Viewing gentrification in its historical context is vital in order to understand how comprehensive it is today. Looking at the last century, we see a change in cities going from being rich to poor to rich again the same way that their neighborhoods have gone from being home to residential areas to generally being a location for commerce and industry and then reverting back again (Glaeser, 2015, p. 711). As the population in cities both shifts and increases, their demography and class structures change as well. It can definitely be said that cities can, and on a large scale do, revive due to gentrification. The main income for local governments in the United States comes from property taxes, and the people who are responsible for gentrification both increase these taxes and pay them (Florida, 2017, p. 69).

Though gentrification brings along financial capital with it, it does not benefit the city as a whole. Many criticize gentrification for the displacement of poor and low-income residents, but urban planners and developers reason that new-build gentrification, as opposed to the conversion of existing buildings, limits the direct displacement of former residents. However, the transformation of the surrounding neighborhoods leads to a lessening of the sense of belonging to the community, increasing rents that existing tenants cannot afford, a rise in property taxes that prices the children of older dwellers out of the area, and, during this process, shops, restaurants and cafés become too expensive – which are among the leading factors that have, and still are, indirectly outpricing lower-income residents (Hymowitz, 2017, p. 56; Halasz, 2018, p. 1368). Additionally, gentrification is often associated with being a leading factor for segregation in cities. "[...] tensions among the older and newer residents rise, affordable housing declines, homelessness grows, and the area becomes less racially, ethnically, and socio-economically diverse" (Atkinson, 2000, 2003; Atkinson & Bridge, 2005; Barton, 2016b; Freeman, 2005, 2009; Lees, 2008; Lees et al., 2007; Smith, 1996; Yoon & Currid-Halkett, 2015; ref. in Halasz, 2018, p. 1368). As the cities have increased populations of poor and low-income people belonging to different ethnicities, particularly blacks and Latinos in New York City, the indirect outpricing of them leads to more concentrated areas of those less affluent often being driven to the peripheral neighborhoods of the city. With the gentrifiers being predominantly white, this urban phenomenon becomes a racially-related topic as well.

Whereas gentrification raises ambivalence, change within neighborhoods in cities is natural and seems to be part of an everlasting urban process. Brooklyn's gentrification is largely discussed in terms of cultural aspects in regard to the new socio-economic class that gradually arrived after the mid 20th century. In the last three decades this class has expanded to over half of the borough, giving Brooklyn a distinctly cultural gentrification. And while the term has many different aspects, I will give much attention to the demography and class structure shift that is a part of Brooklyn's gentrification. The shift in Brooklyn was prompted by several causes, both by the residents collectively, and by the city's leaders. The most significant leader who brought visible change to New York City was the urban planner Robert Moses. His work was, and still is, considered to be highly detrimental, yet definitely advantageous for many Manhattanites and Brooklynites.

3.3 Master builder Robert Moses

“The Houdini of construction,” “master planner” and “construction coordinator czar” are some of the epithets used to describe Robert Moses – all suggesting his supreme position in many of New York City's renewal projects around the mid-20th century. He was a public official who was one of the most polarizing figures in the history of American urban development, and he is mentioned frequently in the study the urban development of New York City. From the late 1920s to the 1970s, he changed a lot of the city's landscape, arguably for better and for worse, with help from both state- and governmental support. Money provided from the 1937 federal Housing Act and Title 1 of the 1949 Housing Act was spent on high-rise buildings and highways, and over 600 playgrounds in New York City that were built on Moses's initiative. To the residents' joy, he also built pools and parks that are still treasured by many (Hymowitz, 2017, p. 35).

One of Moses's main motives for his building projects was to clear away the poverty-stricken slums of New York City, which was his argument when he fought for his case with the Slum Clearance Committee. New York City, and Brooklyn in particular, was increasingly populated by poor blacks and Puerto Ricans by the 1960s (Hymowitz, 2017, p. 38). Though the term “slums” is generally used in a social context in reference to poor people living in densely populated areas, Robert Moses and the Slum Clearance Committee rather used the term when describing a physical environment. They wanted to destroy and then rebuild the physical environments that were similar to those streets and buildings that brownstoners wanted to preserve. Given the decades of deindustrialization, the city had lost half a million

middle- and working-class whites by the 1970s which left a largely unskilled and poor population. On the one hand, the Slum Clearance Committee did manage to open public housing complexes in Fort Greene, close to Boerum Hill, in 1944 and 1952 which helped some of those in need. These provided almost 5000 units in total. On the other hand, the city planners were predominantly focusing on urban redevelopment in Brooklyn's brownstone area, and not the central, actual slums that in fact had been redlined by government supporting banks. Additionally, many bulldozed places were left to become parking spots through not being built as intended, which henceforth made residents who initially lived there forced out of the areas. Since the government projects led by Robert Moses in New York City actually did provide housing for many of those who did not even have water sufficiency in their former tenements, redlining of the worst low-income areas by urban renewal financiers made this an issue with both proponents and opponents, in which the latter argued that the outcome was racist since the redlined areas were largely populated by blacks and Puerto Ricans in the 1950s and 1960s. (Osman, 2011, p. 56-57).

Robert Moses and the Slum Clearance Committee, who ran New York City's urban renewal, argued that their projects were a necessity for fighting the slums, and their power increased even more with support from both private banks and the American Labor Party. With a lack of any architectural vision, the modern city's ideal at the time was rather embodied in "newness, mobility, impermeability, disposability, and openness; a modern political ideal, rooted in the Progressive movement and New Deal liberalism, [...] seeking both to centralize authority in the executive branch and to integrate local governments into a rational metropolitan system" (Osman, 2011, p. 59). However, this rapid exchange of old with new was more about the city becoming a modern one rather than considering architecture by the needs of its residents, which contributed to the perception of urban renewal as being ruled by an authoritarian bureaucracy instead of a government serving its public. To exemplify this, Robert Moses's most reviled project in Brooklyn was an expressway between Brooklyn and Queens that was mostly protested against for its extension through the working-class neighborhood Sunset Park in South Brooklyn. After protests from the area's residents, Moses decided that it would be elevated instead. Nevertheless, the elevated expressway did bring noise, pollution and undesirable traffic to the area, but the locals had no other choice than to plead against Moses's decision. (Hymowitz, 2017, p. 35).

Notwithstanding of these improvements, Moses was still met opposition from many people. He bulldozed old buildings in order to build new highways, and to build high-rise buildings to provide more homes in a densely populated city. However, the buildings did not

seem to have been designed with a variety of residents in mind. “From the outside, these new buildings all look as if they had all been designed by one mind, carried out by one organization, intended for one class of people, bred like bees to fit into these honeycombs” complained sociologist Lewis Mumford about the low- and middle-income apartments created with Moses at the head of the projects (Mumford, 1950). His superblock creations were despised by those not fond of the period’s ongoing urban renewal. Not providing any originality, these superblocks, the Civic Center and Concord Village all exemplified places of sameness, or, simply put, a “non-place” (Osman, 2011, p. 57).

3.4 Neighborhood demographics and change

While various scholars focused on policies about city planning projects such as those Robert Moses initiated, other scholars were determined to discover how the demise of community in the mid-20th century created conditions that Louis Wirth has described in terms of them lessening social cohesion. Newer studies confirm Wirth’s idea about the profound alienation of life in a big city. These show that, for example, civic engagement, particularly in the city, has noticeably declined since the mid-20th century. Robert D. Putnam argues in his text “Bowling Alone: America’s Declining Social Capital” from 1995 that this is a negative effect of the growth of urban life, which is in agreement with Wirth’s book over half a century after its publication.

With an increase of people becoming less civically engaged and more occupied with personal capital, the “social capital” that is “meaningful human contacts of all kinds that characterize true communities” has weakened (Putnam, 1995, ref. in LeGates & Stout, 2015, p. 154). Activities of civic engagement such as voting, attendance at public meetings regarding town or school affairs, political rallies or speeches, serving on local organization committees and working for political parties contribute to strengthening the social capital, but this has definitely deteriorated (Putnam, 2015, p. 157). Putnam suggests several reasons for this, such as the movement of women into the labor force. However, he adds that the civic participation of men has declined at the same rate. Another, more accurate, factor is of how mobility has disrupted root systems (Putnam, 2015, p. 161). Not having a continuity of people living in one place leads to a lesser feeling of ethnic affiliation with those others living there, which has indeed contributed to a decline in devotion to the society a person is a part of. Additionally, Putnam proceeds with Wirth’s argument about how people living an urban life are being less occupied with family and that the bonds of kinship have weakened by

when the increase of divorces is referred to (Putnam, 2015, p. 161; Wirth, 2015, p. 121). These factors combined help to paint an image of a cold-blooded society in American cities where the ties between humans have weakened – a way of life generally not ideal for new longtime settlers and families.

An attempt to change urban society was made in the 1950s and 1960s through a slum clearance policy with Robert Moses in the lead in New York City. Putnam argues that renovating physical capital comes at a high cost to “existing social capital,” meaning that renovation of an area will ruin the existing social community (Putnam, 2015, p. 162). As population density grew, the preserved places of the city, such as Greenwich Village in New York, were to be destroyed by clearing the slums to make room for either infrastructure or new buildings. Moses managed to change a lot of New York City’s landscape. Urban activist Jane Jacobs was able, however, to thwart some of his projects. She fought for preserving Greenwich Village and managed to save the area with the help of numerous supporters (LeGates & Stout, 2015, p. 149).

Jacobs’s victory regarding Greenwich Village in the 1950s was, *de facto*, accomplished due to the community around her that engaged in protecting the village. As seen through the perspective of Putnam, they were indeed an example of the active civil society he valued and furthermore considered to be dangerously eroded. A similar commitment to community was also in evidence later in Brownstone Brooklyn in the 1960s and 1970s. The social capital there came and went, but primarily within a white middle class. Putnam discovered that there is a negative correlation between racial and ethnic diversity and the formation of such a civic community, which turned out to be the case for diverse Brooklyn as well (LeGates & Stout, 2015, p. 154). The lower- and working classes did not participate in this definition of community, which relates to his proclamation regarding civic virtue being embedded in a network of reciprocal social relations (Putnam, 2015, p. 156). Putnam is not merely focusing on nostalgia for the 1950s in the sense of Jane Jacobs and her sociological approach, but as a social critic, he was engaged in the absence of policies for civic engagement. This absence, I argue, may be the reason for the lack of an inclusive community in contemporary New York City. Regardless of how preservation has led to comprehensive gentrification, Jacobs did achieve her intention in the 1950s, but this community has since been priced out.

To this day, writer and activist Jane Jacobs’s battle for the urban village is frequently cited by urban scholars. It was initiated with the feud over Moses’s proposal on constructing a highway through Greenwich Village in New York in 1955. Jacobs, who was a resident of

the neighborhood, managed to prevent the project from being built by utilizing her skills as a journalist and enlisting supporters. Her fight against what came to be called “urban renewal” did not end there. Her activism led to her book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* being published in 1961, in which she criticized big urban renewal projects. She did not take a break from her “battle for the city” after the book was published either. The fight continued as the proposal of the Lower Manhattan Expressway came only a month after her book came out. However, with great opposition from New York’s citizens, the expressway plan was thwarted as well. (Tyrnauer, 2016).

Jacobs was also important because she was one of a number of observers who engaged in debate about urban characteristics, but in contradistinction to those Wirth discussed regarding density and heterogeneity. She proposed instead an alternate set of desirable characteristics: “neighborhood vitality, social cohesion and the perception of reality of safety” (Jacobs, 2015, p. 150). Jacobs saw the city through an ecological perspective. It did not have to have an organizer or a dictator to function. It functioned through an interrelation between the different parts of the city, in which she specifically focused on the people. She believed that crowded sidewalks were safer than parks because the people were able to see each other and be seen at all time. Moses’s renewal plans would hence not only remove many homes, but according to Jacobs, create an unsafe community. Her idyllic description of Greenwich Village makes it sound like she was living in a cozy, warm community in the city. She glorifies the physical characteristics of the buildings, which were tenements that were built in the Victorian Era, and Jacobs praised them for their authenticity.



Figure 1. West 10th Street in Greenwich Village, Manhattan.

Preserved townhouses from the Victorian Era. With restaurants and bars on the ground floors, this area was full of tourists. Photograph by the author.

Sociologist and urban renewal critic Herbert Gans stated that he doubts that “the war on poverty and segregation can be won” (Gans, 1968, p. 360). He believed that it is false to think that the physical surroundings will determine one’s social life, such as Jacobs describes. He has criticized her for falling victim to the “fallacy of physical determinism,” and that Greenwich Village was a white ethnic neighborhood with a working-class culture in which she ignores “the social, cultural, and economic factors that contribute to vitality or dullness” (Gans, 1962, ref. in Zukin, 2010, p. 17). Ironically, the preservation of Greenwich Village has proven to outprice the diverse dwellers Jacobs referred to. Gentrification already started in the 1960s and today the Village is entirely occupied by the affluent, and, as is pictured in Figure 1, these dwellers have continued to preserve the buildings romanticized by Jacobs (Zukin, 2010, p. 227). This relates to Putnam proclaiming that people have become more occupied with their personal capital. Their search for community has instead led to a replacement of the diverse residents with new, gentrifying dwellers.

The community portrayed by Jacobs, or the “Jacobsian neighborhood,” was also to be found in the western part of Brooklyn of the 1950’s (Osman, 2011, p. 277). As mentioned in the Chapter 2, what previously had been called “South Brooklyn” was in the late 1950s split into neighborhoods and renamed as Cobble Hill, Boerum Hill and Carroll Gardens by the first brownstoners. These neighborhoods, in addition to Brooklyn Heights, Park Slope, Clinton Hill and Prospect Heights, were to become part of the designation “Brownstone Brooklyn” in 1968 (Osman, 2011, p. 19). But before this expression’s invention, which was brought on by the arrival of its new residents, the Brownstone area was not referred to as consisting of neighborhoods. This part of the borough was then home to about 300,000 people who were mostly working class or poor white ethnics and their descendants (Osman, 2011, p. 21). Contrary to Manhattan, they were living in buildings that had not been modernized as 80 percent of Brownstone Brooklyn was built before the 1920s, and henceforth fitted the Jacobsian neighborhood description that attracted the new middle class (Osman, 2011, p. 24).

The social capital the brownstoners longed for was something they found in Brooklyn. Away from the alienating city and traditional suburbs, they described their new home as a “neighborhood” (Osman, 2011, p. 38). Suleiman Osman refers to memoirs of brownstoners in Park Slope from the 1950s in his book about Brooklyn’s gentrification. The writers of the memoirs had initially perceived the neighborhoods as being “cohesive, safe, and homogenous enclosed space” (2011, p. 38). Yet one must bear in mind that the brownstone places in the western part of Brooklyn were initially inhabited by ethnic Italian

and Irish Catholic blue-collar workers, in addition to some Arab and Caribbean immigrants. Their working-class life was not one of ease. Many of them had to face the challenges of migrating from other parts of the world, and the reality of living in Brooklyn consisted of a life among gangsters and criminals (Hymowitz, 2017, p. 34). Though there was crime there and it was not a safe environment to live in, the higher degrees of racial tension and poverty were front and center in the borough. Either way, the “neighborhood” concept was not used by the previous generation of Brooklynites, and as Robert D. Putnam stated, there was in fact no social capital among the racial and ethnically diverse Brooklyn of 1950s.



Figure 2. Domino Park in Williamsburg, Brooklyn.

An abrupt transition from a preserved Victorian brownstone townhouse to a modern high-rise building characterized by Manhattanization. Photograph by the author.

The communities in the borough that were to become Brownstone Brooklyn had however a more affluent middle class among the largely low-income and blue-collar residents, one that did not resemble a Jacobsian neighborhood. In the area closest to Manhattan in Brooklyn Heights, there were white-collar workers, skyscrapers, a financial district, and a new Civic Center that were all built by the 1950s (Osman, 2011, p. 37). In addition to the modernized Civic Center, the Brooklyn Heights community Concord Village was one that did not escape Robert Moses and his Manhattanization. “Manhattanization” began to gain steam at the end of the 1940s as the building of skyscrapers, highways and

public housing were boosted during the postwar period, which led to the term being referred to an imagined technology-based modern city (Osman, 2011, p. 54). A common perception is that Manhattanization signifies “everything in a city that is not thought to be authentic” (Zukin, 2010, p. 2). While neighborhoods in Brownstone Brooklyn were romanticized for their authenticity, the new apartment complexes of Concord Village that opened in 1951 became a visible contrast amidst the area’s old constructions – as Figure 2 illustrates with the new building in contemporary Williamsburg. These modern buildings, and similar projects by Moses, were what Jacobs and the brownstoners were against.

3.5 Early geography of gentrification: “Brownstone Brooklyn”

The urban landscape in Brooklyn’s Brownstone communities of the 1950s and 1960s was clearly stricken by both deindustrialization and urban renewal in the form of Manhattanization. What Wirth depicted regarding the alienating city was then growing in the western part of Brooklyn. The bonds of kinship were further weakening with the loss of many working- and middle-class white Brooklynites, and Robert Moses contributed to this situation with a cityscape that quickly changed – one that, according to Putnam, eliminates existing social capital (Putnam, 2015, p. 162). As this landscape was thought of as being inauthentic by the brownstoners that started arriving in the middle of the century, and that the neighborhoods were being ruined by such projects as the expressway in South Brooklyn or the public buildings in Concord Village, the brownstoners expressed their displeasure with government development and public investment. They saw it as a symbol of liberal faith in government regulation and a modern urban ideal that called out for power that was centralized (Osman, 2011, p. 78). It was in opposition to what the first gentrifiers sought; “a new middle class would look to Brownstone Brooklyn for an alternative postindustrial landscape that they imagined was local, decentralized, historic, diverse, and unplanned” (Osman, 2011, p. 78). Thus, they turned against New Deal Liberalism and its centralized power.

One aspect that has been looked at to distinguish Brooklyn’s newcomers is that they predominantly fit into the “New Left” politically, differentiating them from the generally conservative industrial working class and the Old Left that was characterized by the New Deal liberalism of the 1930s. David Nye describes the “Old Left” by referring to them as the children of the New Deal, and in relation to how their optimism and faith in a democratic society after the Great Depression was characteristic of the Democrats of their generation

(2007, p. 61). The New Left, on the contrary, disagreed with believing that America could ever be a united people with one national character. Overall, this group emerged in the 1960s during the Cold War, many of whom in particular moved to Brooklyn. Scarred by Vietnam and later on the Watergate scandal, they no longer believed in America in the same way as the older liberals did. The New Left was still egalitarian, but they placed their focus on multiculturalism, racial divisions, gender and other social differences instead of on there being one type of American individualism with one national character. This American individualism was what the brownstoners sought to differentiate themselves from, both politically and socially. They longed for a different kind of landscape in which they could express their own individuality while being a part of a unified community. (Nye, 2007, p. 62).

The anti-bureaucratic new middle class that began to emerge in 1950s Brownstone Brooklyn can be seen as a movement that grew in response to Manhattanization. The work of Robert Moses provided improved infrastructure, public parks and pools, and buildings with better conditions than those that came before (Hymowitz, 2017, p. 35). This proves that Moses was partly right about building modern housing blocks for the poor. Irregardless of the positive aspects of his projects, the rushed building design with its minor consideration of the needs of the residents show that the preservationists had other valid arguments than just preserving buildings for their physical appearance. The rapid change did not suit those living there, although change was sought later in the decades of decline after World War II. While the low-income residents showed resistance to urban renewal due to the replacement of buildings by excessive modernist projects, it was the new white class that searched for authenticity that came to give the borough a radical social change (Osman, 2011, p. 81).

3.6 Mapping gentrification

Sharon Zukin explores Jane Jacobs's perception of a well-functioning neighborhood in the city fifty years later in her book *Naked City* (2010). Zukin discusses that the preservation of Greenwich Village has led to the area becoming highly gentrified due to an increase in population in the city. This is the same pattern that occurred and still is happening in Brooklyn, but, arguably, with another kind of gentrifier that seeks something other than an alienating city. Jacobs's description of Greenwich Village is an account of what Brooklyn's first gentrifiers, the brownstoners, saw in the borough. The once industrial, mainly blue-collar Brooklyn had not only attracted new residents because of cheaper housing, but also because

of the fact that it would provide a different lifestyle than an impersonal city would. They were in search of a place that had authenticity and social capital, and Brooklyn's brownstones and communities became their destination of "discovery." This further grew from the brownstoners to including even more people moving in and with this being responsible for the massive gentrification of the borough today – which Zukin, contrary to Jacobs, criticizes.

Although Greenwich Village resembled the brownstone areas of Brooklyn, even as early as in the late 1950s New Yorkers argued that it had not escaped the tourists and "the bureaucratic monster that spread across Manhattan" (Osman, 2011, p. 100). The opponents of the bureaucracy-driven Manhattanization preferred areas in the western part of Brooklyn and wanted to create a "Greenwich Village Far East" (Osman, 2011, p. 12). Scholars have more recently begun to study the characteristics of the first gentrifiers who chose to renovate brownstone houses since they started arriving in the middle of the 20th century from the suburbs and the city, and why they chose that once declining area in particular. The new middle class, though often affluent, did not fit into the categorization of the corporate, white-collar urban character. While often referred to as the "new middle class" and "brownstoners," other labels such as "knowledge workers," "white-collar proletariat" and "yuppie (young urban professionals)" refer to the highly educated segment of the evolving workforce that consists of different professions than those found among affluent Manhattanites. As a survey from 1971 showed, most of them were young, and over 60 percent of them had attended graduate school. (Osman, 2011, p. 12).

The identity of the original gentrifiers became blurred as gentrification became an expression of what Richard Florida calls "the creative class," which consists of "knowledge workers, techies, artists and other cultural creatives" (2017, p. xx). In general, they contribute to growth through a "creative economy" (Hymowitz, 2017, p. 158). This creative class has increased all over the U.S., and many share the same characteristics with the hipsters in Brooklyn. Richard Florida describes this class as those who have brought great economic success to large metropolises through what he called:

[The] 3 Ts of economic development: technology, talent, and tolerance. They had clusters of technology industry; they had great school systems and research universities that produced talent; and they were open-minded and tolerant, which allowed them to attract and retain talent regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. (Florida, 2002, ref. in Florida, 2017, p. xxi)

This class can be traced back to the brownstoners. In his book *The New Urban Crisis* (2017), Florida himself admits that the emergence of cities catering to the creative class has resulted in a growing gap between rich and poor that has surged and further led to an increase of outpricing people with lower incomes. Florida now states that these affluent, culture-oriented and numerous innovators that have migrated to Brooklyn have shown to have given rise to a different *kind* of gentrifier. Though they sought for a diverse Brooklyn different from the white-collar culture of Manhattan, they have ironically brought forth a new homogeneity of white wealthy people (2017, p. xxii). Their liberal values have attracted more criticism as they are contradictory to their affluent lifestyle. Through prospering, they have added to the American managerial elite that the gentrifiers initially sought to differentiate themselves from – making the formation of this liberal elite morally ambivalent.

4 After Gentrification

4.1 Introduction

After over six decades of increasing gentrification, the process has become both detrimental and beneficial for many urban dwellers globally. In its initial stages in the 1950s and its first boom up to the 1970s, the newcomers were rather a positive attribute to the declining postindustrial city. But with the growth of migration from low-income African Americans, Latinos and other ethnicities, gentrification's acceleration has led to displacing the ones who have not been able to adapt to what was going on. Neil Smith argues that "capital, not people" was the reason for gentrification after the 1970s, but it is rather a combination of both (Smith, 1979, ref. in Zukin, 2016, p. 204). I pay most of my attention to the impact of those segments of the population who were culturally inclined toward gentrification.

In this chapter, I clarify the effect of gentrification in Brooklyn, and review the complex phenomenon through two generations by defining them sociologically: the first group were the "brownstoners" and the second were the "hipsters," who belong to the recently emerged creative class. I divide them in such a way because generally the brownstoners' desire was to find a community that provided authenticity in the dwindling postwar period in cities from the 1950s to the 1970s. These initial gentrifiers were mainly members of the Baby Boom generation. However, using authenticity as an explanatory device for those gentrifiers who came after the 1970s is to some extent problematic. As Manhattan came to thrive financially in the 1980s after two decades of decline Brooklyn also began to prosper due to its proximity to the financial center of Manhattan. Brownstoners contributed to the growing prosperity by increasing the tax revenue for the city making it possible to follow through with building rehabilitation policies in the 1970s. The advantages of living in cities were then restored, which henceforth were the reason for the hipsters' emergence.

As the overall costs of living are noticeably higher in cities today than the 1970s, and modern industry has spread to rural areas as well. Arguing that capital is the leading factor when finding a reason for gentrification becomes more vague in the present time. Towns and suburbs provide cheaper housing per square foot than the gentrified areas of Manhattan and Brooklyn do. However, education and career opportunities are common reasons for young people to move into the crowded and expensive cities of today, and the culture in Brooklyn

has additionally contributed in making Brooklyn a battlefield of gentrification between preservationists and modernizers. Through creative careers, liberal values and investment in culture, such as preserving the romanticized façade of the buildings from 1950s Brooklyn, the new class in Brooklyn has carried on with the same cultural characteristics as those preceding them. The preservation of old buildings and the persistence of identity characteristics have instead formed the distinctive lifestyle of urban hipsters that are a part of the new socio-economic class Richard Florida portrays as the creative class. I mostly pay attention to their lifestyle in Brooklyn, which originates in the brownstoners who romanticized the borough's erroneously cohesive community, and their perception of the white, gentrifier lifestyle as being so-called authentic.

Urban gentrification has been an ongoing process for decades, leading it to be driven as a part of the lifecycle of young middle-class people. In order to understand why people choose Brooklyn instead of suburban New Jersey or modernized Manhattan, I examine the cultural, financial and social capital of what has evolved to be the creative class of Brooklyn. After the brownstoners, Generation Z and Millennial gentrifiers, whom I refer to as hipsters, have also moved to Brooklyn for its cultural and social capital (Petrus, 2012, p. 653). Through various books and articles in addition to my interviews with Brooklynites and personal observations, in this chapter I will put forth my findings regarding what Brooklyn is like today and how today's Brooklyn reflects the historical trends and sociological forces I have discussed in this thesis.

4.2 Cultural and financial capital

In the early history of gentrification, the brownstoners were proud of their new "neighborhood." It was an escape from the alienating modernity and capitalism that had taken over the cities, but in contrast to the middle class who escaped to the suburbs, they sought to find urban villages that provided a life in accord with their modern educations and attitudes. Among these attitudes, many of the brownstoners were against bureaucracies and new forms of white-collar professions, and they later discovered an interest in black culture. This interest emerged in the 1980s and became a characterization of the first Brooklyn hipsters. By living close to poor African Americans, they proudly referred to them as Brooklyn's anti-bureaucratic foundation. The black culture further inspired them to start listening to jazz and hip-hop, and many started to copy the style of African Americans. Even using typically black language and dancing were a part of their everyday life. In addition,

drugs, which initially were associated to Brooklyn's poor slums, became a keyword when defining what evolved to be Brooklyn's hipsters. (Osman, 2011, p. 106).

Whereas the brownstoners did not live among the poor African Americans, the first hipsters increased in number from the 1980s and on and moved closer to them. The brownstone houses in the periphery of Brooklyn Heights exposed them to a more "authentic urban life than that available to peers a few blocks away" (Osman, 2011, p. 107). However, their arrival still led to a reshaping of what they perceived to be as an authentic landscape close to the impoverished interracial tracts. Through their own interest, the hipsters have become influenced in particular by black culture, while many other bi- and homosexual hipsters found a place in which to openly express their sexuality. Even though in the initial stages they did not get to prosper without challenges and disapproval from other Brooklynites, it is ambiguous to further distinguish the hipsters from the first gentrifiers who also desired a countercultural escape. What they collectively had in common was their urban identity. As gentrification proceeded, the gentrifiers were less and less interested in being a part of a civic minded community, and they became less interested and respectful of the people around them. What both the brownstoners and the hipsters had in common was that they primarily belonged to an educated middle class who all engaged in the materialization of a cityscape that was a middle ground between the overdeveloped Manhattan and undeveloped slums (Osman, 2011, p. 115).

By the millennium change, an interest in street culture, such as hip-hop from the black community, was common among white Brooklyn hipsters, and it had spread into youth culture in general. What was once associated with a people who had been discriminated against, dangerous streets and what was perceived to be deafening music had led to a change in public taste, although the initial gentrifiers were apprehensive towards it having aesthetic qualities. It was partly Brooklyn's numerous hip-hop artists who sparked feelings of local pride that the gentrifiers aspired to adapt in their new community. Central Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant and Crown Heights were the birthplaces and inspiration of Nas, the rapper-impresario Jay-Z, and the late Notorious B.I.G. Serving as some of the genre's biggest artists, they introduced the area as being one of the centers of black culture and style in American consciousness (Hymowitz, 2017, p. 98). As their lyrics cover their experiences of struggling from growing up in the "hoods," anyone with a modicum of irony notices the incompatibility of the gentrifying white middle class and their aspiration to be authentic through adapting a culture they in reality do not originate from.

Whereas those responsible for Brooklyn's gentrification adapted cultural characteristics that did not originate from their white middle-class ethnicity, they, however, were those who brought innovation to the borough. While the working class from the mid-20th century Brooklyn struggled through losing jobs due to new technologies, the newcomers arrived with new ideas, creativity and new competencies. Their knowledge and interests fitted into the new forms of production that came along with the later modernization, making them not only distinguishable through financial capital, but also cultural capital. "Creatives" and "bourgeoisie bohemians" were the general names that surfaced when referring to those who were first gentrifying in brownstone Brooklyn, which described their individual, and often expensive, tastes in art and consumer necessities in combination with their value of being their own individual (Osman, 2011, p. 12). This creative- and affluent-oriented combination has since stuck with the gentrifiers of Brooklyn.

The rise of wealthy artists in Brooklyn has particularly been visible in Williamsburg since the 1990s, which lies in the northwestern part of the borough. This area is today commonly known for its hipster gentrifiers due to it being largely discussed when referring to the involvement of Brooklyn's artists. One can say that it is a mecca of hip youth culture. It is the most gentrified neighborhood in Brooklyn right after what was formerly South Brooklyn and Park Slope. The neighborhood's gentrification is clearly detectable due to Williamsburg's newcomers since the 1990s merely belonging to the middle and upper classes. However, it is also characterized by its numerous "artist-entrepreneurs" (Hymowitz, 2017, p. 64; Martucci, 2012, p. 92). Initially, the area appealed to young artists, students and real estate developers due to its industrial façade. Additionally, it was much cheaper than Manhattan and henceforth offered them a bohemian lifestyle in the city (Zukin, 2010, p. 42). But with capital investment in culture in what used to be a more affordable artist neighborhood, what attracts new residents in recent times is rather a more affluent form of bohemian lifestyle.

A definition from 1971 defines bohemians as belonging to a different world than the "protestant ethic of capitalism," which focuses on liberation and self-actualization through work (Young, 1971, ref. in Florida, 2002, p. 57). Although this is applicable to Brooklyn's first wave of gentrifiers in the 1960s and 1970s, the Brooklyn hipsters instead contribute to another kind of capitalist enterprise. David Bell stated in his book *Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* that "not work but lifestyle became the source of satisfaction and criterion for desirable behavior in the society. What has happened in society in the last fifty years – as a result of the erosion of the religious ethic and the increase in discretionary income – is that

culture has taken the initiative in promoting change, and the economy has been geared to meeting those wants” (italics in original text) (1976, p. 35). The artsy Brooklynites can hereafter be understood as being those who have sparked an economic change in the borough through their modern culture. Through creativity and innovative knowledge, often in relation to technology as well, the culture of this class is distinguishable by being creative *and* affluent.

Though opposition to the rich capitalists of the city and low rent attracted people to Williamsburg and Brooklyn in general, since the 2000s the neighborhood has risen in financial capital due to entrepreneurial energy among the artists themselves. Their middle-class background in combination with creativity and technology has led to new forms of capitalism. These, in the words of Florida, “are in effect extending their reach in ways that integrate formerly marginalized individuals and social groups” (p. 57, 2002). One of my interviewees had, for instance, opened a café in 2015 that switched to being a bar on the weekends in which she and other musicians could perform. The owner “Kelly,” a white 33-year-old woman from North Carolina, had moved to Soho in Manhattan in the beginning of her 20s in hope of working with music there. However, the high expenses in combination with too much competition in the music industry had, in the words of my interviewee, “taken the fun out of [music].” But the word that Williamsburg was the new creative neighborhood had spread, and with help from her parents, she managed to provide a place where fellow musicians could pursue their interest in music. Hymowitz also writes about different stories of Brooklyn entrepreneurs in which she refers to successful openings such as the retro style Wythe Hotel in Williamsburg, and art galleries, design businesses and restaurants are other common developments that meet the demands of the new class. Between 2003 and 2012, there was an increase of 101 percent just in design businesses, according to the Center for an Urban Future (Hymowitz, 2017, p. 68). Often, these entrepreneurs have no business experience, certainly with my interviewee, but their creativity, educations and often affluent backgrounds have given them advantages that the lower-income Brooklynites do not possess (Hymowitz, 2017, p. 65-66).

Other than opening themed cafés, having expensive interests or listening to hip-hop music and wearing sneakers, today’s Brooklyn hipsters are noticeable through more countercultural characteristics. The French mustache, beards and barbershops are a common sight in the gentrifying neighborhoods. Tattoos and an interest in rock music deriving from grunge street culture as well as the 1969 Woodstock Festival are further identifiers of popular culture which the hipster Brooklynites have adapted. Ever since, hard drugs have become

common among their techno clubs (Hymowitz, 2017, p. 63). However, an interest in their health in terms of yoga, vegetarianism and organic foods from local business enterprises are a rather positive attribute of the creative class. As shown in Figure 3, such yoga art studios were a common sight in the borough. Nevertheless, their proclaimed individualistic lifestyle adds to the hipster irony as the abovementioned characteristics have become so widespread among the gentrifying neighborhoods that their barbershops and yoga- and tattoo studios are to be found within every two blocks in gentrifying Brooklyn neighborhoods. Their claim to be authentic in terms of being unique individuals consequently becomes weakened as so many of the new socio-economic class share the same distinctive features. By endorsing a counterculture different from the corporate one in affluent Manhattan, they have instead evolved a new kind of homogeneity of wealthy white people (Florida, 2017, p. xxii).



Figure 3. Yoga art studio in Bushwick, Brooklyn.

A yoga art studio in a brownstone building in an industrial area. Photograph by the author.

4.3 Physical environment

In addition to the people of pre-gentrification Brooklyn, the physical environment is a main factor in what has been romanticized by the brownstoners and later gentrifiers. However, these buildings were not valued by the ethnically diverse residents living there around the 1950s who were thought of as “authentic.” Osman refers to studies that show that ethnic-white, Arab and Caribbean residents used to move away from their blocks after only a few years, and that few were actively engaging with their neighbors. They were instead meeting up with relatives who often lived other places in the borough. Despite the lack of purely

relating to their neighbors, the former people of Brownstone Brooklyn did however appear to have a strong sense of ethnic identity, and this was shown through their physical environment. The Old World working-class immigrants had left their mark on the areas with their Italian restaurants, Irish bars and spice shops, but their frequent relocation left these to be reinvented by later residents as something that would provide originality and a “soul” to the area. The seemingly exotic mix of enclaves was romanticized by the new middle class as being authentic neighborhoods that provided a special feeling of place, while in reality a priority was not placed on preserving them by the ones who supplied its ethnic characteristics. (Osman, 2011, p. 39-41).

The aftermath has proven that the brownstoners’ attempt to live an authentic urban life among the authentic ethnics has rather led to their own creation of neighborhoods that have come to be inhabited predominantly by whites. By restoring the characteristic brownstones and ethnic restaurants, bars and shops, they have arguably removed the original “authenticity,” and likewise pushed the original inhabitants away from the areas. The renovators that had entered by the 1970s, hipster or otherwise, were 99 percent white (Osman, 2011, p. 11). They did not mix with the other ethnicities. The rise of these areas that seemed to be neighborly, ironically, led to an outpricing of the people who supplied the originality to begin with. It can henceforth be stated that the new middle class did not adapt to the former way of living in Brooklyn. They instead arrogated to themselves the characteristics of other cultures that they found appealingly authentic.

The physical environment can hereafter be understood as a stand-in for a community for the earlier gentrifiers. The brownstones from the Victorian Era and townhouses that differentiated the borough from modernized Manhattan presented a neighborhood that was thought of as being a community with social capital. They were not wrong in thinking so; it was rather that the community was not there. There is a lot of value laid in the physical environment because it, indeed, creates a sense of a community (DeSena, 2009, p. 14). Though the community they sought for was not there, the first gentrifiers created a sort of community with a shared social capital when they started forming neighborhoods in the western part of Brooklyn in the 1950s and 1960s. These neighborhoods have become a backdrop for the new generation of gentrifiers. The brownstones, colorful townhouses and the industrial chic have a cachet for the new and creative generation. However, it is simply a setting or a scenery for their lifestyle. A lifestyle that is not only a physical aspect of community; it is moreover about a hipster way of life.

The vernacular architecture of Brooklyn represents a contrast to the shopping malls of modernism. It is the arena for opening their small enterprises and creative businesses. In Park Slope, the first bookstore was opened in 1971 by a couple who moved to the area following the brownstoners. The shop, which was called the “Community Bookstore,” continues to thrive today just like numerous other bookstores in gentrifying areas (Hymowitz, 2017, p. 53). Since then, the area has boomed with industrial styled apartments and stores that are characterized by the Brooklyn façade as pictured in Figure 4. These locally owned



Figure 4. Coffee Shop and Barber in Park Slope, Brooklyn.

*A common sight in the gentrifying areas of Brooklyn.
Photograph by the author.*

coffeeshops, barbershops, art studios, bookstores, and other stores physically represent the desired counterculture of the first gentrifiers who made the area prestigious to those preferring the gentrifier hipster lifestyle. Nevertheless, the irony is present here, too. What they looked for, the ethnically diverse restaurants, shops and bars, got lost in the process. Many whites own the Italian pizza restaurants, Irish bars and now are even gradually opening soul food restaurants that derive from black and Caribbean culture (Zukin, 2014, p. 140). The once sought after “authenticity” is henceforth lost, and what they are doing to the existing neighborhoods becomes problematic.

As stated in the preceding chapter, Herbert Gans criticized Jane Jacobs for falling victim to the “fallacy of physical determinism” and that such idyllic, diverse neighborhoods in the city would not solve the war on segregation (Zukin, 2010, p. 17). Although he was right when it comes to the now highly gentrified Greenwich Village, the preserved buildings

in Brooklyn have been the habitats of a still growing creative class and many migrants of different ethnicities. But the creatives' diversity-praising attitudes are not enough to overcome segregation. It is more than just getting rid of prejudices. It is an economic struggle for those who are now indirectly being outpriced and in addition now choosing to move away as their connection to the community has been lessened (Bill, 2018).

4.4 Affluent hipsters as the new “creative class”

Though the new middle-class Brooklynites from the 1960s were in search of social capital, one with shared values that provided a strong feeling of community that was the opposite of the urban character as defined by Wirth, their social character was not embedded in the residents who were there before them. Despite the preservation of the brownstone houses and their attempt to adopt cultural aspects of other ethnicities who had lived there before them, they were not able to bring a collective social capital to Brooklyn, just as Putnam illustrated. I would rather suggest that the social character of Brooklyn became split into two after the new middle class was formed by the 1980s. On the one hand, there were the brownstoners who romanticized the working-class and poor ethnics' neighborhoods in their search for a counterculture. On the other hand, there were the interracial ones who perhaps were “authentic,” but most certainly did not take part in the prospering of gentrifying Brooklyn. Perhaps unknowingly, unwillingly or by being merely naïve, the new middle class were able to create a social character of their own – different from the depicted urban one in the city, but equally different from the one of other Brooklynites.

However, the new middle class proved to have a more collective determination of their social character than that of the alienating city. Their progressive and creative characteristics brought forth a social capital different from the city, one that was more accepting towards individuality and self-expression that was different from the corporate world. They may not be fully “authentic,” but they have rapidly increased and become an educated, creative class that is true to their sense of self (Hymowitz, 2017, p.55). However, this sense of self appears to be quite similar for many within this respective class. Thus, the Brooklyn hipsters turn out to be a part of a widespread lifestyle of the creative class by sharing characteristics such as being largely white, creative and from a middle- or upper-middle-class background.

The three interviewees I chose to represent the creative class in Brooklyn had all moved to the borough due to it suiting their lifestyle. “Sarah” had moved for her studies in

graphic design, “John” worked as a teacher and writer, while “Kelly,” as previously mentioned, was the owner of a music-themed café. Moving from different places within the nation, they had all found their place in Brooklyn. “John’s” goal was not to become rich, but to work with what he desired. This has proven to be a recurring theme among the wealthy hipsters of Brooklyn since their first arrival after the 1950s. Hence, they often relate money to be a means instead of the goal – differentiating them from the wealthy corporate Manhattanites. They do not disdain money, but it is needed to achieve their ends that, moreover, have resulted in many of them attaining wealth (Brooks, 2000, p. 47).

The wider media has contributed to putting Brooklyn on the map in such a way that the high density of the cultural elite has made the borough the hipster mecca of the world attracting people that are considered to have the same lifestyle. This has made Brooklyn in particular a target for the ridicule of those who constitute the new socio-economic class. David Brooks was quick to notice the evolvement of those affluent and creative types naming them “bobos,” as in the bourgeois bohemians, in 2000. Though he unselfconsciously counts himself among the “bobos,” he clearly reckons the irony of the gentrifier hipsters spending extraordinary amounts of money to exhibit their supposedly bohemian values. Richard Florida laid forth the values of the creative class in his study from 2004. Although he has turned away from it, its description of the people is no less valid. Among their values, he states that “members of the creative class endeavor to create individualistic identities that reflect their creativity. [...] They resist traditional group-oriented norms.” (Florida, 2015, p. 168). Furthermore, diversity and openness are other values Florida mentions that the creative class favors. But this individuality that Florida once praised has instead become a blend of a number of creative identities that appear to be similar to one another, making it questionable that those who live there are actually resisting the possible new norms of Brooklyn. It therefore is contradictory to their valuing of diversity. I argue that the Brooklyn lifestyle appears to be a model for those who live a wealthy hipster lifestyle. By endorsing this lifestyle, they consequently embody one particular identity as they come to share similar creative features and careers. In practice, this has weakened their standpoint on diversity remarkably so that their identity is commonly ridiculed. According to Florida, even a software company owner of Indian origin that worked with Chinese, Arabic and other employees had noticed the absent diversity stating “That’s [his employees] not diversity! They’re all software engineers” (2015, p. 169).

Florida did, however, elaborate and said that the diversity of the creative class is limited to highly educated, creative, and mostly white people since hiring based on merit is

strongly valued by them (Florida, 2015, p. 168). They support hard work, challenges and stimulation, and they are generally against mass consumerism provided by big brands and chains that dominate large parts of the industry due to a high ownership of capital and cheap global labor. To exemplify, there is only one Hennes & Mauritz clothing store in Brooklyn, as opposed to 20 in the smaller borough of Manhattan, and unexpectedly few Starbucks cafés in Brooklyn (H&M, 2019). Though the intentions of the creative class are good, their form of consumerism chiefly embraces smaller and often local enterprises. With the large number of creative impresarios in the borough, their form of consumerism has become more expensive for them as they have flourished. Instead of living on the bare essentials such as bohemianism implies, they spend money on expressing their creative identity through their appearance and other consumer goods. I acknowledge that it is ethically right not to support the use of cheap and unfair labor practices, and their support of local businesses is admirable. The irony is that what this new class stands for, in terms of bohemianism representing a simpler way of life, is deceptive as their hedonistic lifestyle is generally an expensive one.

As I initially suggested, the brownstoners that were the first to gentrify Brooklyn were in search of a social capital that did not in fact exist. However, they effected a new social capital with individuality, meritocracy, creativity and openness for diversity as being shared values. Instead of the depersonalization that Wirth portrayed in Manhattan, hipster class Brooklynites are more similarly constituted, which makes it easier to enhance their identities (Wirth, 2015, p. 120; Florida, 2015, p. 169). The meaningful human contact in a society that Putnam depicts to be fundamental to social capital is not imaginary in today's Brooklyn. "John" used to write at a café so often that he befriended those working there, "Kelly" had made new friends quickly, though she had to move and find a new social circle, and "Sarah" wanted to stay in the borough for as long as she could, hoping to find a life partner with the same desire as she had. Their bonds to Brooklyn seemed not only to be about career and lifestyle, but the people as well.

4.5 Booming Brooklyn is shrinking

Inevitably, Brooklyn was a more idyllic home for those of my interviewees who represented the hipster identity and the creative class. When I asked them about crime and safety, I found out that they were all living in safe neighborhoods. Yet, they were all aware of where not to go alone at night in Brooklyn, which was clearly communicated through the local news. I felt safe in the daytime, but Bushwick, the neighborhood I lived in, though it was gentrifying it

was generally considered to be unsafe at night as crime was common there. Just around the corner from where I was living, a rapper with the alias “Y.B.N. Almighty Jay,” who had grown up in Bushwick Houses, was almost beaten to death in the area with a glass bottle (Mahadevan, 2019). The Bushwick Houses is a public building complex with mostly poor blacks, in which murder and violence is still a common occurrence (Winston, 2019). One of the interviewees who was of a different socio-economic class than the others provided insight from living in a poor black area. “Jerome,” an African American man in his late 40s, told me that violence was still present in Brooklyn. Although he agreed that crime rates had decreased, he thought that violence would not disappear in his neighborhood unless the people doing it went disappeared. “Jerome” is arguably right in his estimation considering that education and work is what helps people get out of crime and poverty, and the world of high-tech creativity does not include many African Americans (Florida, 2015, p. 169).

As gentrification in Brooklyn keeps increasing, a recent study from 2018 shows that the most populous borough of New York City has started shrinking in population, and it is not the white middle class that is leaving. The study shows that it is specifically the African American community that is emigrating (Bliss, 2018). “Jerome” implied that crime affected the way of life there, and that it is not safe for those living there. Yet, he also mentioned that Brooklyn is not what it used to be – in the sense that he was longing for the way it was in his neighborhood before. I questioned him how that could be the case since the borough had higher crime rates and was more poverty stricken back then in particular due to the declining industry in the postindustrial decades. He agreed, but there was more hope for better times ahead back then. Although there was no social capital in Putnam’s sense in which they were engaged politically in their community, there was a sort of social cohesion among the African Americans and Caribbean residents. However, both “Jerome” and the black community have experienced that the change in Brooklyn has not been in their favor (Goodyear, 2013).

Looking further into “Jerome’s” feeling concerning change, a recent statistic showed that the African American community in Brooklyn has been reduced by 40,000 people in the year 2017 alone (Bliss, 2018), whereas the latest Census numbers show that now the population has shrunk to about 2.5 million people in Brooklyn, which is a decrease of about 100,000 residents since 2016 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). In the history of urbanism, flight from crime and social dysfunction in cities is not uncommon (Luccarelli, 2016, p. 203). However, the creative class has been increasing in numbers in Brooklyn along with the steady increase of the Latino and African American populations since the mid-20th century, in which the borough gained about 144,000 people in the period 2007-2017 (Bliss, 2018).

Although the effects of a financial crisis of 2008 contributed to slowing down the rate of increase in population, the first period of a continuous decrease in population began in 2017 and continues to the present day (Florida, 2019). The African American population in Brooklyn has not decreased until recently. Although crime is still present, it used to be a larger problem that now has reduced. It is therefore implausible that crime is the sole argument for why black Brooklynites are leaving. I suggest that it is rather the lessening of a feeling of community for those who have lived there for a long time – those who do not participate in the new social capital in affluent, hipster Brooklyn – that causes a social dysfunctionality that they are fleeing. The gentrification that was initiated by the search for social capital contrary to the one found in the isolating Manhattan, ironically formed a social capital that isolates those not fitting into the creative class.

5 Conclusion

Winner-take-all urbanism

While the small-town life of 1950s Greenwich Village Jacobs once touted has been taken over by the corporate city lifestyle of Manhattan, the youth culture has turned their interest towards cityscapes outside such metropolitan centers. The back-to-the-city movement after World War II, and again in the 1980s, has in fact its social origin in youth culture, and it is places like Brooklyn and Portland that have rapidly boomed with a young workforce based in the knowledge industries (Luccarelli, 2016, p. 204). This educated class in the now urban borough of Brooklyn, though encouraging a putative counterculture to the one of corporate white-collar America, has become a new elite that forges ever forward. This affluent creative class, in addition to the upper middle- and upper classes, are converging in cities like never before. Whereas the youth keeps contributing to this prospering, the backside of it is that those people of low-income families struggle, stagnate or fall behind. This process is, according to Richard Florida's recent study, called "winner-take-all urbanism" (2017, p. 16).

The liberal values of the rising hipster class in Brooklyn are in opposition to the segregation the borough is experiencing, in which they praise diverse communities. However, to blame them fully for the gentrification leading to the segregation in Brooklyn is not intended. To understand the hyper-gentrification in the United States, studying the history of urbanization since the 1950s is vital for seeing the complete picture of how urban society has developed in contemporary time. In contradistinction to European cities that historically were over time continuously home to their country's elite, their American counterparts fled their cities between the 1920s and 1970s, which left the city centers largely with poverty, immigrants and low-income residents. Those who could afford to move did not choose to go to urban settings until the late 1970s as the downsides of living in the traditional suburbs became more apparent when the cities modernized after their deindustrialization (Schubach, 2018). These gentrifiers did not only outprice people with low-incomes that had been there for a longer time, but also forced the youth to choose new places outside the cities as they were priced out. Now, these places are going through the same pattern. Instead of clearing areas of small buildings and replacing them with new high-rise buildings, the shift in Brooklyn is happening through a more gradual change through the restoration of old buildings. This is not only a preferred lifestyle that the borough of Brooklyn seeks, but the building of suburbia after WWII was initiated to meet the demands of society. This demand

has since continued to increase as the cultural preference is for urbanism, hipster or otherwise (Schubach, 2018).

The rapid change in the cities, and later suburbs, was limited by zoning laws that prohibited further building. However, Greenwich Village is a prime example of what happened when such laws were implemented. Since the area did not provide housing to meet the demand, the prices sky rocketed. With Brooklyn's resemblance to Greenwich Village, it is only a matter of time until the once poor quarters in the center of the borough become completely gentrified like the neighborhoods in former South Brooklyn (Schubach, 2018). Among my interviewees, there was a Jewish woman who had taken over the apartment her parents owned since they fled to the United States during World War II. It was located in a Jewish enclave in Williamsburg in Brooklyn, which is mostly inhabited by Jews who have built up a community with Hebrew schools and synagogues that are still present. The woman I spoke to, "Rachel," expressed her concern regarding gentrification due to her adult children having to move away from the expensive area. A study from 2018 proves that 31 percent of New York City's residents are homeowners, and when the prices rise, it affects the renters the most. "Rachel" had lived in Brooklyn all her life, but her children could not afford to either rent or buy. Henceforth, those with lower incomes are those who are the most impacted. (Schubach, 2018).

Rezoning laws that have expanded the building properties have, nonetheless, been enacted as a reaction to the great demand. However, in practice, none of these have been in favor of those who are most in need of support. The long-term trends of gentrification have been repeated in short-term changes related to rezoning (Angotti, 2017, p. 37). A research study completed in the period between 2002 and 2013 showed that a rezoning program intended to produce more homes in New York City, due to its increase in population, was chiefly benefitting the landowners. It generated immense value for them which resulted in higher property taxes, which further resulted in higher rents (Goldberg, 2015, ref. in Angotti, 2017, p. 37). The great demand for housing in the city is partly to be blamed on those who are affluent, but it has also been a long tradition that the poor and low-income single people and families live in the city due to the advantages of proximity. It is rather the amount people in between these social classes that are significantly shrinking in size. "As more and more middle-class fade, our cities, suburbs, and nation as a whole are splintering into a patchwork of concentrated advantage and concentrated disadvantage" (Florida, 2017, p. 199). This leads to economic segregation, wage- and income inequality, and housing unaffordability that hits those less fortunate the most. Few winners capture a lion's share of the spoils of innovation

and economic growth, and this tendency is spreading among the knowledge industry-based Brooklyn hipsters who are prospering economically, leaving the low-income areas to fall further behind. The gentrification in Brooklyn has, indeed, led to a socio-economic polarization in which larger proportions of the residents live in respectively rich and poor neighborhoods.

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