## Critical Perspectives on Gentrification: a brief review

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**ABSTRACT**

The trend of the birth of new residential areas in the branding of modern cities, such as Meikarta, also occurs in cities worldwide. People call it: GENTRIFICATION! Like a catastrophe, gentrification always seems to be followed by the emergence of social conflicts. Mass actions are taken to the streets to voice protests against vandalizing gentrification properties, and clashes with officials are carried out for one purpose: against the presence of gentrification. Unfortunately, gentrification research in Indonesia is roughly "useless" for blue-collar workers because it still does not provide any suggestions to face this problem. Rather than researching to celebrate gentrification, research with a Marxist perspective is needed to make a real contribution to urban blue-collar workers constantly haunted by the threat of being evicted from their modest homes.

## INTRODUCTION

A few years ago, people seemed to be terrorized by advertisements for the super luxury residential area of Meikarta (new superblock megaproject near Jakarta). Dramatically, the ad depicts the depravity of Jakarta's megapolitan ecosystem, which is dangerous for humans. As a way out, the ad offers a new residential area full of all the sophistication of modernity called Meikarta. This ad is for a new super-large residential megaproject in the Bekasi area carried out by Indonesia's property capitalist giant: the Lippo Group. Developed on an area of 500 hectares, with an estimated investment of 20 billion US dollars or Rp278 trillionaire, Meikarta is believed to be the most important city to support Jakarta's depravity. Meikarta targets white-collar workers who still do not have housing in Jakarta. The advertisement proved effective in creating enthusiasm for Meikarta. On the first day of sales, around 16,800 units were sold out, regarded as the most apartment unit sales in one day. Unfortunately, the megaproject is now stalled in the problem of origin, which leads to corruption cases (Tirto. id).

The trend of the birth of new residential areas in *the branding* of modern cities, such as Meikarta, also occurs in cities worldwide. Abu Dhabi, Rio De Janeiro, Cairo, Seoul, Karachi, Buenos Aires, Istanbul, Damascus, and, most famously called Shenzhen, have all experienced similar phenomena lately. South African developing country cities like Cape Town also experience the same phenomenon (Lees et al., 2008). People call it: GENTRIFICATION! As a concept that continues to evolve and be debated until now,

gentrification has a variety of meanings. However, take it easy; contemporary urban experts who struggle with this theme have been kind enough to provide the most flexible and straightforward explanation. Simply put, gentrification refers to the process of transformation from areas with poor physical conditions (read: slums) or also land that can be vacant in urban areas into various kinds of luxury properties that can only be enjoyed by white-collar (or "middle-class") workers or other properties for commercial functions (Lees et al., 2008).

There is no need for special education to be able to feel the signs of gentrification. When in a short period, luxury residential properties for white-collar workers such as apartments, condotels, real estate, or other properties such as malls, hotels, and shopping centers appear rapidly in urban areas, gentrification inevitably hits the region. Unfortunately, this term, which comes from English, still needs to be included in the everyday language of people in many developing countries. Therefore, those in their neighborhoods who experience gentrification often only see it as ordinary urban development (Lees, 2014). However, gentrification is more complex than urban development as imagined.

Like a catastrophe, gentrification always seems to be followed by the emergence of social conflicts. Gentrification looks to be a terrible process because it is rejected by society, especially the working class and, more specifically, blue-collar workers. The rejection of gentrification by blue-collar workers is even rife in developed countries. Mass actions are taken to the streets to voice protests *vandalizing* gentrification properties, and clashes with officials are carried out for one purpose: against the presence of gentrification. The loss of life during clashes is no longer avoidable; it has become a cost known to demonstrators. They may be against gentrification; it is *jihad* for them. On the sacred day of the working class around the world – *May Day*, gentrification passes as the main agenda agreed to be fought together. Because of its importance, gentrification in developed countries is equivalent to the issues of wages, education, health, and food. So why is gentrification so disruptive to the lives of blue-collar workers?

## THE PROBLEM OF MAINSTREAM PERSPECTIVE ON GENTRIFICATION

Although there is a broad scope definition, each group still interprets gentrification differently. The mainstream sees gentrification as a phenomenon of urban physical quality renewal. The reference stems from the tendency to replace the term gentrification in various European urban policies with *Urban Development or Urban Renewal*. The emergence of change was triggered by the stigma of gentrification in the 80s, which considered it a description of a lousy process: "*bad words*." We will discuss his vices later. To minimize stigma in society, the term "development" was chosen to replace it. Such a term, it is hoped, will better represent the effect of improving the physical quality of urban environments arising from gentrification. The result is entirely satisfactory. Most dictionaries and common sense explain gentrification as a renewal of the city's physical space. The new meaning of gentrification made it famous as a symbol of the city's progress (N. Smith, 2007).

The implications of emerging a new meaning of gentrification in academia are considerable. Mainstream researchers, however, often interpret gentrification in this way. The resulting research is no longer critical but instead justifies the urban rejuvenation produced by gentrification. Because it is viewed positively, research with this point of view is increasing and dominating the academic world of gentrification as a mainstream view (Slater, 2006). The process of the mainstream view is also primarily influenced by the trend of the absence of a critical view in gentrification studies.

For mainstream scientists, gentrification is thought to be born from white-collar workers' preference (consumption taste) to choose to house. Individual consumption appetites are considered to increase the demand for goods effectively. In this case, the item they asked for was a modern residence, the result of the renovation of a former blue-collar worker residence in the city. The high interest in housing is like this because: the price is lower when compared to building a new residence, strategically located in the middle of the city near entertainment facilities, and finally, can save transportation costs from the place of origin. Because the white-collar workers who trigger gentrification come from the same class descendants who previously chose to leave and live in suburban areas, gentrification is sometimes called "the movement for the return of white-collar workers from suburban areas." (N. Smith, 1979).

They are interpreted as city renewal, making the impact of gentrification so eagerly awaited by the city government. The mainstream considers gentrification to be creating urban modern neighborhood areas. With it, slums will disappear in favor of modern white-collar settlements or commercial centers. This kind of property, it is believed, triggers the construction of various urban facilities: cinemas, supermarkets, modern stores, restaurants, to private schools (Atkinson, 2004). This conjures the standard view and births the myth that gentrification will bring renewal and usher in the city of dreams.

City governments, especially in developing countries, hate the existence of slums. Governments often grumble that slums and their inhabitants are a bigger problem than the biggest problem in cities: flooding (Voorst, 2018). Referring to the dense targets of the "*Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),*" slums are set as a problem that must be addressed by the city government "somehow." Solving the problem of slums is complicated and tiring for them. The presence of gentrification is undoubtedly a tremendous blessing for the city government. Gentrification can replace the role of the government to solve the problem of slums "free of charge" so that the government does not need to provide large budget allocations for slum planning programs. Unfortunately, the demand for the "SDGs" target makes the government forget that slums are the only places that provide affordable housing for the urban poor with vulnerable jobs: buskers, fried food sellers, odd workers in markets, laundry workers, or *cleaning services*. Again, they also forget that providing affordable housing for people experiencing poverty is none other than the government's responsibility (Kusno, 2012).

For those who live in slums, gentrification is considered to bring many positive benefits. This assumption also denies accusations that gentrification only benefits white-collar workers. Unmitigated gentrification is believed to provide benefits from economic, political, and social aspects (Byrne, 2003). Economically, gentrification is believed to create jobs when white-collar workers with busy lifestyles need the help of domestic "services ."Now blue-collar workers are considered the right people to occupy these vacancies: they can work as domestic workers, laundry workers, food vendors, gardeners, shop assistants, or restaurants that will also appear. However, are these jobs worth the risk of losing their cheap housing? Of course, it is very doubtful. Naively, gentrification will improve the quality of democracy when blue-collar and white-collar workers can sit together in their new communities to solve their interests. However, is not the relationship between the two unbalanced, so what is more logical to coerce the interests of white-collar workers? Economic status still has a significant influence on shaping social stratification. Then socially, pluralism will be created in society if there is a mixture of these two layers so that the threat of marginalization of certain social classes can be avoided. In practice, ongoing

gentrification will still cause blue-collar workers forced to move, and in the end, the environment also becomes exclusive.

Worthy *of panacea*, gentrification is even considered effective in solving the problem of urban poverty. It is said that this process will create a "*social mix*" between white-collar workers and blue-collar workers, seriously breaking the concentration of poverty in a region. The logic does make sense: gentrification would "bring" white-collar workers to live in the middle of blue-collar settlements and bring about the effects previously discussed so that blue-collar workers increase economically. "*Social mix*" is also a trick that can get the area out of poor areas. Certainly, a fantastic achievement for a government that can solve the problem of poverty, even with such inconsequential tricks. The logic of the "*social mix*" that goes in the same direction is intriguing. Why doesn't the "*social mix*" work the other way around: bringing blue-collar workers to live with white-collar workers in their exclusive areas (Slater, 2006)? It is easy to see that the "*social mix*" is a subterfuge to provide moral legitimacy and gain support for gentrification.

Moreover, the existence of concrete evidence of the positive effects of gentrification is challenging to find in various studies. Far from dreaming of positive benefits, as empirically suspected, gentrification initially brought a severe problem for blue-collar workers: *displacement* (Atkinson, 2004). This serious problem will be explicitly discussed later.

## MARXIST VIEW ON GENTRIFICATION

The mainstream view that interprets gentrification as urban progress has masked the dark process of social violence behind it. Historically, gentrification originated from settlements in urban areas of London after World War II (Lees et al., 2008). When the city's economy began to rise, there was a unique and new phenomenon in settlement of the Islington district of London. The phenomenon is a succession of settlements of blue-collar and *unskilled* workers by white-collar workers who began to come to work in the city.

Etymologically, gentrification comes from the word "*gentry*": a social class designation with a "different" position in the stratification of 18th-century English rural agricultural actors. Despite having sufficient land, the *gentry* did not gain an equal position as landlords because they needed noble titles. However, they are also reluctant to be equated as a class of agricultural workers because they feel they have a respected social position with sufficient economic welfare. This class is filled by those who have influential professions, such as religious leaders or aristocratic government officials. Their existence in society is striking because their lifestyle tends to be classy even though they are not aristocratic. In the era of industrial capitalism, this class is filled by white-collar workers who used to work in the financial services sector. More and more professions, such as academics, company managers, civil servants, and bank employees, have fallen into this category. The current trend – dominated by Weber's view of class – is to refer to them as "middle class." Because of the many conceptual problems of the term "middle class" (Gubbay, 1997), It would be better to throw this term away and replace it with white-collar workers only.

The term *gentry* was borrowed to indicate that the arrival of people from this class replaced the existence of blue-collar workers (Lees et al., 2008). In urban developed countries, their numbers swelled significantly along with deindustrialization. The closure of factories during deindustrialization made financial services born as a leading sector in urban areas that replaced industry. The need for white-collar workers eventually increased and attracted educated people who originally lived in sub-urban areas to work in the city. However, with the condition of the city land that is already overcrowded, then where will they live?

The "former" settlement of blue-collar workers appears to answer that question. Deindustrialization also means losing blue-collar jobs because most are manual factory workers. The loss of jobs that collaborated with the "sudden" increase in residential rents no doubt forced them to leave their homes. This former settlement was then renovated according to the lifestyle of modern white-collar workers, so they were interested in changing to rent it. Most of them are young families with one to two children.

Class succession, however, is the more emphasized meaning of the gentrification process from this point of view. This later became the critical meaning of gentrification and was categorized as " *bad words*." Because it can expose succession, class analysis is considered the backbone that preserves the critical meaning of gentrification (Slater, 2006). Indeed, gentrification will change the physical quality of urban environments, but blue-collar worker housing must be sacrificed first to create it. Without class analysis, succession in gentrification cannot be seen, so what arises is only a process of spatial renewal.

Speaking of the causes of gentrification, mainstream assumptions about individual tastes are not empirically proven. It needs to be revised to explain a complex process based on assumptions of individual rationality, such as an appetite for consumption. The evidence is that in Philadelphia, the North American city that experienced gentrification in its early days, there is no evidence that many white-collar workers are returning from the suburbs. Empirical data shows that more white-collar workers from other cities occupy gentrified housing than those from suburban areas. The actions of one party alone still need to be more vital to have a significant effect on shaping the work of the housing market. This view from the beginning was naïve because it ignored other parties in the property market who play a role in producing commodities: developers, landlords, lenders, real estate brokers, to the government. Rather than consumers' tastes, they play a more significant role (N. Smith, 1979).

In this perspective, the emergence of gentrification cannot be seen solely as a business response to changing consumer tastes. The mainstream view is erroneous when it supposes that the mere consumption of buyers descends from the sky. Consumption cannot be separated from the production side. People sometimes assume that reasons for proximity to the city or cheap gentrified house prices affect the appetite of white-collar workers to make housing choices. There is another factor that has a more significant role than both, namely: advertising. Advertising is the most effective way to shape consumer tastes (N. Smith, 1979). Of course, it is familiar to see various product advertisements that are so hypnotic in choice, whether because of the artist who starred in the ad, the advertising slogan, or the standards made by the advertisement. Beautiful is smooth white skin like a Korean artist, then buy authentic Korean whitening cream! This parable also applies to gentrification dwellings. The housing for white-collar workers is modern, close to the city center, and filled with many state-of-the-art facilities: hence... Let's move to Meikarta! Individual tastes can be constructed through advertising while the product has already been produced.

Property production is adequate and reasonable if it plays a significant role in causing gentrification than consumption. Moreover, property production is driven by the need to make a profit. Tremendous profits were made from the rent gap created in slums owned by blue-collar workers during gentrification. Marxist geographers use the theory of rent gaps in slums to refute mainstream assumptions (N. Smith, 1979). Slums that have aged and their physical quality has declined, experiencing a decrease in occupancy value or depreciation. During depreciation, the price of land rents that can be capitalized (dredged immediately) is

only small and continues to decline, it can be seen from the actual rental price of the dwelling.

Meanwhile, the level of potential land rents located in urban areas continues to increase due to the pace of construction of city facilities and speculation by property brokers. Finally, a "gap" is created: between capitalizable and potential land leases. The rent gap for housing production actors has a meaning as the emergence of profitable niches that call for exploitation. The only way to exploit this niche is to replace the previous weathered property with a new property characterized by "*highest and best use*"(Slater, 2017). This property is then sold into the final product of the gentrification process.

*"Highest and best use"* refers to the neoclassical economist's penchant for scientific language to make property products most profitable for investment. Differences in the economic characteristics of a region determine the most profitable type of property. Because of its goal of making properties "*highest and best use*," gentrification today has a wide variety of products, not always exactly like the previous ones. The economic structure of developed country cities shifted from industry to the service sector until the 1960s, followed by an outage of white-collar workers. This condition makes the settlement of white-collar workers the most profitable – "*highest and best use*" because of the large number of target consumers. In urban England, where many leading universities exist, many gentrification products are residential for students: student flats or apartments(D. P. Smith, 2007). Gentrification products can even be modern shops, as in Chile (Schlack & Turnbull, 2018). The most common trend now is the emergence of gentrification in tourist areas. Accommodation properties – hotels, villas, resorts, restaurants, or entertainment centers – that keep popping up eventually create luxury *enclaves* in many tourist cities (Gotham, 2005).

Aside from the rent gap, another advantage of gentrification relates to the role of property in capital circulation. The property is an absorber of investment from primary circuits (manufacturing industry). When overaccumulation and economic growth in the industrial sector are hampered, surplus capital needs to be diverted to the safest place, but it also can continue accumulating capital. Property development is the best answer. Investment in fixed capital, such as land and property, has a less risk threat than the primary one. Capitalists do not need to actively produce to increase accumulation because the nature of land values, even if left unchecked, will still increase. Other Marxist geographers called it *the spatial, temporal fix*(Harvey, 2003b).

The opportunity for rent inequality and alternative capital safeguards is exploited by actors who work collectively to produce gentrification. As the main play, the developer receives support from other colleagues, who also benefit from cooperation. Developers start production when the rent gap widens, so they can buy former blue-collar workers' homes cheaply, pay construction costs, repay loans from banks, and still sell their products at high profits(N. Smith, 1979). They do not need to worry about borrowed capital; financial institutions (banks) are ready to provide soft interest to property developers. The developer's profits increase when construction costs become so cheap due to the lack of wages for construction workers (Curran, 2004). Informal relations are the secret to cheap wages in the construction sector. Ironically, sometimes they come from blue-collar workers whose dwellings have disappeared due to gentrification. Unfortunately, the government is a servant of developers carrying out their accumulation agenda. The recent behavior of the actor needs to be explicitly understood later.

Entirely blaming the consumption appetites of white-collar workers can be wrong. They are just mere consumers of products who "coincidentally" have more welfare than blue-

collar workers. Countering individual appetites in choosing a location, as in many movements against white-collar workers, can be ridiculous. Appetite for consumption is a personal right unconsciously constructed by commodity producers. Therefore, the younger generation of Marxist geographers took pains to re-dissect the rent gap theory to discover the original enemy that must be fought in gentrification (Slater, 2017). Getting the same conclusion as in the previous discussion, a collaboration between production actors is the most responsible for the arrival of gentrification. Mutually beneficial social relations between them are used to take advantage of the widening rent gap.

Far from being heralded by the mainstream, the most apparent impact of gentrification is not simply the renewal of space, but class-based social violence called *displacement.* If translated into Indonesian, *displacement (*although slightly different) can be equated with expulsion. The difference is that displacement only occurs if the forced displacement experienced by blue-collar workers is closely related to the emergence of gentrification in their area (Slater, 2009). The dwelling they previously lived in will be sold and changed in function and rental price due to gentrification. Almost the entire *displacement* process is always about blue-collar workers, who force to look for the cheapest housing in the city because of their economic limitations.

In urban developed countries, they live in formal dwellings in the form of *flats* or weathered apartments in the *inner cities* (areas in urban centers in developed countries inhabited by minority communities with low incomes). While in developing countries, they inhabit informal dwellings of slum wooden huts, which stand illegally on land owned by others (on their share or not), the state, or even the banks of rivers (Ascensão, 2015). When gentrification arose, landowners would have preferred to sell their fields for huge profits rather than just rent them cheaply to blue-collar workers. The ways of prejudice vary, most often by increasing rents suddenly and in the extreme of directly forcing them to leave (Marcuse, 1985).

Even though it seems to be accustomed to expulsion, various problems are still unavoidable for *victims of displacement.* The most trivial example, they will lose much of the daily routine, sense of security, and social bonds that can be formed (Helbrecht, 2018). In developing countries with a culture of togetherness, social bonds between blue-collar workers in a residential community have the same significance as the nuclear family: saviors when things go wrong. Another and most disturbing problem is the increasing expenditure to rent housing (Atkinson et al., 2011). Cheap housing has become a rare item that is difficult to find because it has become expensive housing for white-collar workers. Housing in the suburbs, which costs less, becomes a rational alternative for them. Open without problems, and suburban dwellings forced them to tighten their belts. The reason is that the cost of transportation to work will increase with long distances. It is lucky if they have relatives who can ride. The last alternative, or not an option, is ending up *homeless.* Last winter, dozens of homeless people, possibly among the victims of *displacement,* froze to death on the streets of London. All the threats of this problem will undeniably also make the socio-psychological health of displacement victims worse: depression is a common thing experienced by *displacement* victims(Atkinson, 2015).

As a vital component that demonstrates the true nature of gentrification, *displacement* has various challenges to examine. From a methodological point of view, the *displacement* process is difficult to present in an accurate number (Atkinson, 2000). The victims to be recorded must have been expelled from the gentrified area when field research was carried out. Finding their whereabouts is a big, time-consuming, expensive, and energy-consuming challenge. On the other hand, the wider community, contaminated by today's positivist

paradigm, trusts exact science-style research that is imbued with tables and figures from quantitative data. Because quantitative data that collects detailed data on *victims of displacement* is difficult to find or does not exist. Expecting this data from the government will make us disappointed. The existence of data on *displacement* victims is tantamount to exposing the failure of urban governments to serve their communities (Herrera et al., 2007). Of course, no agency wants to show its depravity.

Even so, there are still many researchers who still uphold the critical perspective of gentrification to defend blue-collar workers. They are generally professional scientists who have studied gentrification for a long time. The critique of gentrification research lies in class analysis – which classes are displaced, and which classes are expelled – and shows the worst effects of *displacement.* Both are more than enough authentic evidence that gentrification will not change its meaning other than as social violence against blue-collar workers (Slater, 2006).

## GENTRIFICATION IN PERIPHERY CAPITALISM

The role of the state or city government behind gentrification is the most exciting phenomenon. It is not new when the city government cooperates with the compradors of capital rulers (read: being servants of interests) in the era of advanced capitalism like now. The increase in government involvement is particularly noticeable as gentrification spreads to developing countries. Initially, gentrification was thought to be only a particular case in cities in developed countries, Europe and North America. This allegation was far missed after the discovery of the emergence of gentrification in many developing countries after the 1990s. The leading cause of the contagious phenomenon of gentrification is closely related to the integration of the world trade system, known as "globalization." However, it is not only such integration that is meant here. Instead, it was a shift in the political-economic system of the post-1980s world from the originally Keynesian to the catastrophic Neoliberal system (N. Smith, 2006).

Neoliberalism describes the imposition of structural adjustment policies carried out by international financial agencies of developed countries – the International Monetary Fund &; Bank Bunia- to countries and cities in developing countries. Developing countries and cities are dictated to cut social spending and government regulation while being forced to support barrier-free trade and not curb the right of foreign investment to extract as much profit from its territory as possible. In other words, neoliberals often represent the trend of "government reform" to be more open to capital: deregulation, commercialization, privatization, labor market flexibility, public-private cooperation, and cuts in government subsidies to vulnerable groups(Lees et al., 2008). In short, the injection of neoliberalism forces the state to create an "investment climate" that supports capital accumulation. At the global level, state sovereignty must be subordinated to and subject to market mechanisms(Habibi, 2016).

The pattern of spreading gentrification to all corners of the world began in New York City when globalization also meant a change in the government's administrative system. Many cities in developed countries also feel pressure to make neoliberal structural adjustments. Under the grip of his paradigm, New York's administrative system in the 1990s was overhauled to make it more capital-friendly. There are various ways to do a remodel. The most common recipe is to eliminate policies that hinder investment pace: policy deregulation. This action is indeed very familiar to many state governments lately. Not only deregulation, but often, the government also subsidizes developers through various tax deduction bonuses(N. Smith, 2006).

The government's effort to be a servant to come and create gentrification in the city is one of the neoliberal development strategies prescribed. If it is like this, the consumption appetite of white-collar workers seems to no longer be of any use. The path of gentrification has become more systematic, reflecting the results of good cooperation between the government and the private sector, which is fully supported by state facilities (N. Smith, 2006). The city government prescribed this prescription, diagnosing several pretexts for problems (Hackworth & Smith, 2001). *First, the* lack of budget transfers from the central government forces local governments to become independent in finding sources of revenue. The great potential of property taxes in the process of gentrification became a seduction that entangled many of them to trigger their arrival. Then, as a "servant" who has been paid property taxes, the government must be a bodyguard during gentrification. Specifically, it refers to the escort of blue-collar workers' resistance who resist the arrival of gentrifications.

Furthermore, the neoliberal prescriptions adopted by urban governments force them to renounce their responsibility for providing for the social reproductive needs of blue-collar workers: public housing. Providing housing was then handed over to the market mechanism, whose production lasted during gentrification. Finally, they sometimes add that gentrification will bring the community jobs or increase tourism growth (N. Smith, 2002).

If we look at the journey's path, gentrification's development can be divided into three stages. At the earliest, it refers to the momentum of the discovery of gentrification after World War II. S*poradic gentrification* is the designation of this first stage because its appearance seems incidental to the city's development and separate from similar phenomena in other cities. Furthermore, when New York City experienced a financial crisis in 1973-1977 came the second stage of gentrification. At this stage, the capital that initially flowed into the construction of the sub-urban area returned to the development within the city. The crisis in the city has caused the quality of settlements to decline, giving rise to rent gaps that developers are hunting. In this second phase, the role of the government has begun to increase because it has begun to provide subsidies for developers interested in starting gentrification in the city. Then the final stage is the spread of gentrification with globalization, as described earlier.

Two decades after its emergence, gentrification has crossed over to the developing world (Atkinson & Bridge, 2005). Many city governments in developing countries are modeled after New York City, which uses gentrification as a strategy to build cities. The doubling of this strategy is related to the university value of the New York administrative system to various developing countries through globalization. Cities in developing countries then also rolled out the red carpet to welcome gentrification. As a result, *Foreign Direct Investment* (FDI) has flowed directly into developing country cities since 1992. The attitude of the city government that craves capital investment to use various means to trigger its arrival illustrates a change in their character. From the beginning, and should be a managerial actor who manages the city to provide services to all its citizens, becoming an entrepreneur (Harvey, 2003a) who sells the area to developers.

All the changes and rapid developments of gentrification today lead to an important conclusion. Gentrification is now very global. The entire world's urban space is even resigned to global and local investment and re-investment, which intends to turn it into new property according to the needs of a more prosperous population: gentrification(Lees et al., 2015).

## THE URGENCY OF THE MARXIST VIEW

More than merely providing an analysis of the root cause of gentrification, the Marxist perspective on gentrification has a far more critical agenda. Habitation is the absolute right to social reproduction or the right to make life. When that right is in danger of being lost by gentrification, fighting for it is the most relevant course of action. However, journalists in various media outlets or mainstream experts often contrast blue-collar workers who risk losing their rights only with white-collar workers who take their place. The actual condition is not the case. Blue-collar workers seem pitted against white-collar workers, cornered as the sole cause of gentrification. When only blaming white-collar workers, the main actors who produce gentrification can hide and walk away quickly, free from all kinds of mistakes. Not just looking for scapegoats, this trick also impacts the increasingly divided white-collar workers with blue-collar workers, who are the same working class.

A Marxist view of the rent gap can straighten that misguided class fight. The rent gap shows the structural violence that hits blue-collar workers behind "urban development," "urban renewal" (in developed countries), and slum structuring or revitalization (in developing countries). The rent gap seeks to expose the fight between those who live in vulnerable homes and are at risk of *displacement* and gentrified production actors (developers, financial institutions, real estate agents, and governments) who produce high-profit property commodities through the exploitation of the profitable niche of the rent gap. Without using this perspective, precise class battles are difficult to obtain because the turnover of capital investment is neatly hidden behind gentrification (Slater, 2017).

Identifying the rising rent gap and the actors who create and use it for profit is vital for formulating strategies against gentrification. Activists and academics need to work together to identify precisely where developers, governments, and other capital agencies are going, tracking potential areas for gentrification. Then expose how the benefits of land use are determined only by them. Experts and activists also need to convince the public that it is a fatal mistake to determine land use in cities based on "*highest and best use"* and obey the capital accumulation needs of developers and coalitions. They must also uncover the dark side of the ever-lauded investment in the name of "economic growth" or "job creation." Meanwhile, every possible coordinated resistance strategy also needs to be tried. Everything is done to return the entire urban landscape under the sovereignty of society, not capital (Slater, 2017).

Unfortunately, such essential demands have not been answered in much gentrification research in Indonesia. In line with the foreignness of the issue, the amount of gentrification research in Indonesia is relatively minimal. Not only minimal, but some research is also still trapped in the mainstream perspective, which is only concerned with physical visual changes in cities. At best, only an analysis of the lifestyle differences between migrants before and after is added (Prayoga et al., 2013). Despite the shortcomings, one of them shows *displacement* because of gentrification. Unfortunately, recent research has only looked at gentrification as limited to the natural phenomenon of cities, not related to creating profits from urban land (Sholihah, 2016).

Fortunately, other studies show that cooperation between actors creates gentrification. This research emphasizes the birth of gentrification, the result of collaboration between the "Little King" (local government political elite) and the "Taipan" (big developers), which gave birth to institutional gaps. Similar to the rent gap, a gap born from declining institutional control over the influx of land investment allows capital to change the area as it pleases. Far from hoping to produce theoretical implications that could serve as the basis for a class struggle agenda, the latter research bizarrely offers that gentrification should be understood

rather than as a succession between classes. For him, there has been a class collaboration between tycoons as the capital owner class and the local government elite as the state class (Hudalah et al., 2016). Strange enough, indeed, to see the political elite as a different class from tycoons. As discussed in the previous section, the political elite – whose actions reflect the state's attitude – is clearly in the same class as tycoons or developers, that is, the ruling class. Political elites are collaborative partners who serve the interests of developer capital to exploit former working-class land (Slater, 2017). Moreover, this research also ignores the fact that structurally the state's role is increasingly supportive and triggers the emergence of gentrification due to neoliberal adjustment (Hackworth & Smith, 2001).

In addition, the overall gentrification research in Indonesia rarely mentions the informality of housing and employment conditions of *displaced victims.* However, the informal status of employment and housing is the most pressing of the study of gentrification in many peripheral capitalist countries (Lees et al., 2015). The labor structure in developing countries is dominated by those working in the informal sector. The mainstream view portrays them as successful entrepreneurs with abundant incomes exceeding formal workers. This assumption is far from the facts on the ground; most of them are precisely the most vulnerable workers: because labor laws do not protect them. Lack of protection makes their wages very likely to be below the minimum wage standard (Habibi, 2016). Economic limitations make it difficult for them to find housing. Fortunately, they are helped by informal housing that has prices much cheaper than the traditional housing market. The reason is that the residence is not on land owned by other parties, so the chance of eviction is much greater than in developed countries (Alzamil, 2018).

## CONCLUSION

Thus, gentrification research in Indonesia is roughly "useless" for blue-collar workers threatened with eviction from their homes at any time. Research like this is nothing more than just joining in celebrating the arrival of gentrification because it has no objective and profound implications. In many places, the gentrification resistance movement underlies the strategy of struggle using the results of gentrification research with a Marxist perspective. According to them, the Marxist view of rent gap theory quickly helps them understand why gentrification occurs and provides ideas on how to stop it (Slater, 2017). As a process that has also begun to emerge in various major cities in Indonesia, research with this view is necessary for its existence. We can see that many movements still have not based their resistance on the research results. Such trends make many movements not have a proper resistance strategy. Rather than researching to celebrate gentrification, research with a Marxist perspective is needed to make a real contribution to urban blue-collar workers constantly haunted by the threat of being evicted from their modest homes.

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