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Exploring new frontiers? "Neo-slumming" and gentrification as a tourism resource

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to analyse urban transformation as a tourism resource. Tourism is undeniably a powerful motor for urban transformation but in return, urban transformation can represent a resource for actors related to tourism. More precisely, this article focuses on one major transformation of modern cities: gentrification. The central hypothesis of this article is that gentrification accompanies tourism, but that gentrification itself may also become an object of the tourist gaze. The article focuses on local guides and small touristic entrepreneurs in order to identify the tensions that might arise. The presentation of two guided tours - 'Subculture Brixton Nightlife Tour' and 'Where Brooklyn At?' - will enable us to explore how the gentrification of Brixton (London) and Brooklyn (New York) may be used as a tourism resource by local private entrepreneurs. Results presented here are based on ethnographic methods such as observation as well as content analysis and semi-directive interviews. Mobilizing the historical concept of 'slumming', this article proposes an extended conceptual framework, 'neo-slumming', to analyse evolving tourism practices in modern cities, practices that are considered here as tourism's new frontiers.

Keywords: Tourism, Urban Transformation, Neo-slumming, Gentrification, Subculture, Guides, Brixton, Brooklyn

Introduction: *Urban Transformation as Tourism's New Frontier*

What is more ordinary than a city in transformation? Isn't change the essence of urban centres? Urban transformations, no matter how spectacular, are an integral part of a city's development and are the object of social-science research (Cunha, 2005; Gravari-Barbas and Jacquot, 2007; Veschambre, 2008; Dupuis and Söderström, 2010). Tourism has been shown to be a powerful agent of transformation (Fagnoni, 2004; Fainstein, 1996; Gravari-Barbas and Fagnoni, 2013; Judd and Fainstein, 1999; Novy and Huning, 2009; Stock and Lucas, 2012; Stock, 2001) through the policies and practices to promote touristically objects and sites in urban centres. However, as tourism transforms cities, the process itself is now of interest to tourists and thus becomes a resource for sector businesses (Naef, 2016). Yet studies on the touristification of urban transformation are still quite rare. This analysis aims to fill this gap by looking at the way a process, such as a spectacular, rapid or radical transformation of the urban fabric, can become a touristic resource associated with specific narratives and representations. In this context, the tourist gaze (Urry, 2002) is directed at a resource characterized by its ongoing change. Moreover, tourists also participate in the production of this resource through their own 'performances' (Rakic and Chambers, 2012); they are both consumers and producers (Pappalepore, Maitland, Smith, 2014). The tourist sector, through the practices of tourism actors and the tourists themselves, is thus also shaping these urban transformations.

Urban transformation as a tourism resource has been studied, for instance, in cities such as Medellín (Naef, 2016), which underwent a dramatic transformation of its urban landscape. Naef showed that transformations created by social urbanism operations are an integral part of the city's tourism image and promoted as attractions:

> 'While "transformation" is a major concept in the field of anthropology of tourism, it is usually conceptualized from the standpoint of tourism as an agent of transformation. However, transformation and innovation can also be analysed as resources, creating business opportunities, but also as ways of participating in the construction of the image of Colombia's second city.' (ibid, p. 2)

Escalators, cable cars, subway stations, libraries and other urban structures are promoted as major tourist attractions in this transformed city. The message, based on social innovation and the revitalization of blighted neighbourhoods, is generally very positive, even heroic in tone (Naef, 2016). This can also be seen in the re-branding of Medellín with headlines such as: 'From the most violent to the most innovative city in the world' (MES planning, 2017). The case of Medellín is an example of contrasting

representations that illustrate the growing importance of urban transformations in the touristscapes of certain cities.

Tourism is undeniably a powerful motor for urban transformation but in return, urban transformation can represent a tourism resource for various city players such as public authorities, private businesses, and members of local communities. In this way, diverse players interact within touristified cities, participating in the creation of varied, sometimes conflicting, images of the present and future of urban centres. This contribution focuses on local guides and small touristic entrepreneurs in order to identify the tensions that might arise from this dynamic. It explores the touristic promotion of urban objects, sites and practices by focusing on what can be considered as a major transformation of the material and social tissue of modern cities: Gentrification. The central hypothesis of this article is that gentrification accompanies tourism, but that gentrification itself may also become an object of the tourist gaze. In this perspective, gentrification represents a tourism resource, which is commodified, reified and staged. This leads to the idea that tourism feeds on its own contemplation.

Based on case studies in Brixton, a district in south London, and Brooklyn, a borough of New York, this article presents an observation of two guided tours: the 'Subculture Brixton Nightlife Tour' and the 'Where Brooklyn At?' tour. This analysis draws on cultural history and geography to better understand this specific tourism practice by using the concept of 'slumming', a reference to the visiting of low-income and immigrant neighbourhoods, generally termed 'slums' (Heap, 2008; Koven, 2006; Frenzel, 2016). It also questions the concept of 'slumming' in the light of contemporary touristic practices involving urban transformations and proposes the use of the term 'neo-slumming' as an expanded conceptual framework. Some similarities and differences between 'slumming' and 'neo-slumming' are proposed in the table below:

Fig.1: Slumming / Neo-slumming : Similarities and Differences

	Place	**Theme**	**Practice**	**Site**
Slumming	Deprived neighbourhood	Poverty, Sexuality and Entertainment	Jazz Cockfighting Alcohol Prostitution	Clubs, Bars, Theatres, Cabarets, Speak-easies
Neo-slumming	Transformed neighbourhood	Transformation of neighbourhood	Urban and Street Art, Hip-hop and Electronic Music	Clubs, Bars, Streetscape

Neo-slumming' differs from 'slumming', generally defined as a visit to slums for touristic reasons, in several ways. Some might argue that 'slumming' continues today, for example, in the case of favela visits. Although we don't dispute this idea of contemporary 'slumming', it is important to differentiate it from 'neo-slumming', which we define as a guided visit to a neighbourhood in the process of normalisation, or even gentrification. It is the material and social transformation of the neighbourhood, which makes it a tourist attraction rather than the poverty and/or sexual practices usually sought in the so-called 'slums'. In 'neo-slumming' it is the active process of urban transformation more than the result, which is the object of the tourist gaze.

The similarities of 'slumming' and 'neo-slumming' can be found in the fact that both are tourism practices handled by guides. They act as facilitators to explore sites that are not usually visited by tourists, such as immigrant and segregated neighbourhoods, favelas, townships, etc. While 'slumming' generally implies the spectacle of poverty and sexuality in deprived neighbourhoods, in 'neo-slumming' these two elements seem much less important. Tourists are promised a local and 'authentic' experience based on the transformation of the deprived neighbourhood. This experience seems to be organized around new practices (urban and street art, hip-hop, electronic music) taking place in public venues and spaces.

This article presents some preliminary results, related mainly to case studies of Brixton and Brooklyn, which are part of a larger research project focusing on the links between tourism and urban transformations in different geographical contexts, such as Colombia, the United States and the United Kingdom.[1] Empirical research is mainly based on observation of organized tours as well as semi-directive interviews. In addition, a content analysis is conducted on tourism websites, travel blogs and press articles. The presence of radical urban transformation is the main criteria for the selection of the cases to be studied. As highlighted before, most cities are being transformed but in certain cities this process is more intense, producing a significant amount of images and discourse, some of them linked to the tourism sector. This can be seen in post-crisis cities, often experiencing fast and sometimes radical change, as well as in cultural capitals, known for their dynamism in innovation and experimentation. The cases selected are those where guided touristic tours involving subcultures and urban transformation are present.

Conceptual Framework

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[1] The research proposal (2018-2020) is currently under the supervision of the Department of Geography and Environment, University of Geneva.

The conceptual framework of this article lies in the articulation of two concepts: gentrification and slumming. The idea of gentrification as a tourism resource is first presented in the context of the main literature on the topic. This perspective is then discussed in reference to the historical practice of 'slumming'. It aims to explore to what extent the touristification of gentrification can be considered a new phenomenon.

Gentrification as a Tourism Resource

The social sciences, in particular sociology and geography, have been critical of gentrification and have showed its effects in terms of displacement, segregation and social polarisation (Allen, 1984; Atkinson, 2000; Lees, 2008). In an attempt to define the causes of this process, two main models have emerged: the 'rent gap' and the 'lifestyle choice'. According to defenders of the first explanation, the gentrification of previously low-income city centres is linked to the reinvestment of centres by public authorities and private real-estate interests, producing a new supply of upmarket housing (Smith, 1996). This investment in the reconversion of low-income areas is explained by the gap between the market value and potential value of these types of real estate. Proponents of the second explanation advance the basic premise that this sort of real estate acts in the same way as other types of consumer goods which play an important role in forming personal identity. This search for identity, through the intermediary of a particular lifestyle and the consumption of this lifestyle's exterior symbols, explains the return to city centres by the 'new middle class' (Ley, 1994). In a similar vein, Matthey (2007) explains gentrification by the need for 'fragments of exoticism, namely elements clothed in a character of extraordinary strangeness which allow one to think of oneself, fleetingly, as another (…) the return to these centres of the past is a sort of "permanent vacation" from oneself' (Matthey 2007a, 9).

Although models for causes of gentrification vary, they all agree that it is a 'class transformation' (Hubbard, 2017). In many cases, gentrification is synonymous with the exclusion of underprivileged social classes in favour of the more privileged. This process in its varied forms, including super-gentrification, gay gentrification, touristification and studentification (Butler and Lees, 2006; Gotham, 2005; Lauria and Knopp, 1985; Moore, 2009; Smith and Holt, 2007), is criticised for being a form of 'new urban colonialism' (Atkinson and Bridge, others, 2004). Some recent research explores the gentrification initiated by different types of populations, including the inhabitants themselves (see M. Herzfeld in Gravari-Barbas, Guinand, 2017).

Promoted today as a strategic urban policy (Clerval and Fleury, 2009) and as a global

urban strategy (Smith, 2006, 2002), gentrification practices are related to what Loretta Lees, referencing Peck's work on policy mobility, terms 'fast policies' (Peck, 2011): 'As a fast policy gentrification has become easily recognizable: it is easy to sell, as a creative process it is easily summarized and modelled' (Lees, 2012). Promoted by public authorities as a tool for creativity and urban renaissance, the effects of gentrification in terms of social exclusion are even more troubling as they spread rapidly and on a global scale.

Gentrification literature seeks mainly to describe different phenomena and explain its mechanisms, as well as its causes and effects, from a critical perspective. Our analysis aims to further this reflection by investigating the manner in which gentrification itself can become an object of tourism. Our objective is to explore how gentrification is integrated into tourism policies and practices, thus creating a new frontier for tourism. 'Ordinary' sites and buildings (De Certeau, 1980; Isnart and others, 2012; Maffesoli, 2011) such as suburbs, subway stations and dilapidated buildings are progressively integrated into the tourism sector. The gentrification associated with certain neighbourhoods and sites becomes, in parallel, an object of tourism in itself. This leads to the following questions: who are the players involved in this new frontier of urban tourism? How is a phenomenon like gentrification integrated into their practices and messages? What are the urban objects, sites and practices they promote? What are the tensions that these new tourism practices might trigger?

From Slumming to Neo-slumming

The concepts of 'slumming' and 'neo-slumming' are examined in order to tackle questions regarding the touristification of gentrified sites and neighbourhoods. 'Slumming' refers to the social practice of visiting low-income, immigrant and deprived neighbourhoods, generally termed 'slums'. This practice has its roots in the 19th century and became fashionable in London as well as in other cities, notably New York and Chicago. Since then, some scholars argue that it has evolved into a truly global phenomenon (Frenzel et al., 2012). In its historical form, slumming consisted of visiting specific sites and neighbourhoods, mainly at night, to observe stigmatized social classes and sometimes participate in their (nocturnal) practices. Heap (2008) identifies three main types of motivation associated with slumming: academic research, charity or moral instruction for the poor, and lastly, pleasure seeking. As he shows, the hedonist motivation of these 'pleasure seekers' (ibid, 2008) rapidly replaced the more charitable or moral motivations.

In all these cases, 'going slumming' meant leaving behind one's mostly white, more or

less residential and segregated neighbourhood in order to cross the social and spatial border separating 'respectable people' from their 'inferiors'. These slums were particularly attractive to white men wanting to indulge in 'sporting men' practices, which led to the growth of an illicit economy around the selling of drugs and alcohol, as well as cockfighting, gambling and prostitution. In this context, slumming was mainly about transgression. Visitors went there to experience things which were not 'proper', to transgress social and sexual norms such as male/female or rich/poor in order to revalue their own status as wealthy, powerful white men (ibid, 2008). These cabarets, speakeasies, bars and clubs were lower-class establishments where 'the formation of modern racial and sexual hierarchies could be concurrently visualized and intimately experienced' (ibid, 101). Slumming participated to shape popular ideas about race, social class and sexuality in the US as well as in some European countries.

This paper will focus on slumming-associated messages in the context of the transformation of immigrant neighbourhoods at the start of the 20th century in the United States and in Europe. The concept of slumming will help to understand a circular process of gentrification and touristification which contributes to the transformation of these neighbourhoods. In other words, gentrification enables the touristification of deprived neighbourhoods, and vice-versa, while their transformation becomes a tourism resource.

Historically, Slumming contributed to the social and material transformation of some neighbourhoods in the United States at the start of the 20th century. The case of New York's Greenwich Village is paradigmatic. In the Village, guides, either independent or employed by professional organizations, usually accompanied pleasure seekers. 'Adele Kennedy was one of the most popular slumming guides in Greenwich Village where she conducted curiosity seekers on tours of local tearooms, studios and craft shops during the late 1910s and early 1920s' (Heap 2009, 178). For the guide, these shops and tearooms, early products of gentrification, represented opportunities and guaranteed the success of her tours. Photography played an important role in popularising such tours. Adele Kennedy was photographed by the first female American photojournalist to be published, Jessie Tarbox Beals, for a series of postcards featuring the most popular figures of the Village. These postcards, produced for tourists and pleasure seekers, greatly contributed to the touristification of the Village by promoting its 'bohemian' image.

Fig.2: Postcard, Joan Schromache and Lin inside their shop, Jolin's, Greenwich Village, ca. 1915-1926. @ Jessie Tarbox Beals - Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America.
'Oh! Have you been to Jolin's? To Jolin's near the square? Of all the Greenwich Village shops, it is beyond compare. Tis there you'll find the quaintest store all filled with jolly gifts galore. The latch string hangs outside the door at Jolin's near the square.'

Greenwich Village was not an isolated case. In the same period, the transformation of the New York neighbourhoods of the Bowery and the Tenderloin, as well as the Levee District in Chicago, created new opportunities for independent guides and professional organizations. The nightlife of these neighbourhoods played an important part in their becoming a tourism resource. As Heap stated:

> ...such professional escorts were especially popular for night-time visits to Chinatown, creating opportunities for at least some immigrant and working-class men to position themselves as vital bridges between the world of affluent whites and that of the mysterious Chinese (Heap 2009, 145).

Chuck Connors was undoubtedly the most famous Chinatown guide. 'Dressed in the pearly button-covered attire of a Cockney costermonger, he treated his customers to a series of Chinatown sights,' (ibid. 145) escorting tourists to neighbourhood theatres, clubs, watering holes and opium dens.

The historical perspective offered by these examples shows how slumming contributed to the social and material transformation of some neighbourhoods in the United States at the start of the 20th century. Ghettos and immigrant neighbourhoods, deprived and highly segregated areas, were progressively transformed through a circular process in which gentrification enabled their touristification but at the same time their gentrification somehow became, of itself, the object of the tourist gaze. The entrepreneurs who transformed shops and tearooms into colourful, exotic worlds as well as the guides who organised tours for pleasure seekers were key players in this process.

For guides, gentrification, or at least its most visible aspect (the transformation of public spaces and venues) became a touristic resource. After the first wave of charity-motivated slummers, 'pleasure seekers' quickly became the target audience of these tours. These pleasure seekers, as noted by Koven (2006) and Heap (2008), are attracted by the transgression of social frontiers but want to do so in a secure, commoditised environment. Neighbourhoods in the process of transformation offer a convenient medium and provide favourable conditions for slumming. Although Cohen notes the tourist's desire to cross social and territorial boundaries to escape his familiar world, he also states that 'not even the modern man is ready to immerse in a totally alien world' (Cohen 1972, 166). Thus, gentrification as a tourism resource does not seem to be a new phenomenon; it draws upon older practices like slumming.

Slumming doesn't refer only to the past. Certain authors (Frenzel et al. 2012) label contemporary practices such as visits to *favelas,* townships or shanty towns as 'slumming'. This conceptualisation seems reductive. First, designating places as slums is problematic. Favelas, townships and other deprived marginal urban areas — commonly referred to as 'slums' — are highly contrasted places. Moreover, the historical conception of slumming refers not only to a place but also to various practices involving the blurring of boundaries between social classes. Although parallels can clearly be drawn, the motivation of the visitors and the activities offered by tourism companies back then were completely different from those of today. As Heap pointed out, 'slumming today rarely combines sexualized spectacles with explorations of poverty' (Heap 2009, 285). This article will therefore use 'neo-slumming' as an extended framework for understanding the new features of slumming in contemporary cities. In other words, the term 'neo-slumming' is proposed as a way of defining a practice which, although based on the original 'slumming', has evolved significantly.

The Case of Brixton, London

In a context of major socio-economic crisis, London's Brixton area, in south London, is taking on increasing importance in the tourism of urban transformations. Undeveloped until the beginning of the 19th century, it gradually became a middle-class suburb (Butler and Robson, 2001). The construction of the Brixton and South Stockwell railway in 1862 contributed to the area's development by ensuring a rail connection to London. Springing up next to the new railway, Brixton Market quickly became one of the city's most popular markets. In 1880, one of Brixton's streets, Electric Avenue, became the first market street to be lit by electricity, adding to the neighbourhood's cachet. Commerce flourished, and at its height in the 1920s, Brixton was the shopping capital of south London.

Brixton's economic boom was cut short by the air raids of World War II, precipitating the area into a severe social and real-estate crisis. Soon after the war, successive waves of immigration, mostly from the West Indies, completely transformed its social fabric. The post-war influx of immigrants (Windrush Generation) to replace war losses became the symbol of a modern, multiracial, multicultural society which was typically British (Phillips and Phillips, 1998). However, life there was not easy. Starting in the 1980's the area, like the rest of the UK, faced major social and economic problems: high unemployment, crime, inadequate housing, and few amenities. During this period, Brixton was the site of several riots during which residents, mainly African-Caribbeans, clashed with the Metropolitan Police.

These events in Brixton's fairly recent history are in sharp contrast with the image promoted by the London Tourist Board (LTB). Since the 2000's, the LTB has tried to encourage travellers to sample the delights of Brixton, as part of an attempt to boost the capital's flagging tourism industry[2]. In a brochure published in 2003, 'Go Further in London', the LTB highlights Brixton as an area of particular interest. The brochure was translated and distributed in tourist offices in France, Germany and Italy. More recently, according to a site promoting London tourism, Brixton has gone from a 'no-go zone' to 'one of London's most popular go-to areas'. Entitled 'Five brilliant reasons to visit Brixton', it states: 'It's the birthplace of David Bowie, home of one of London's best-loved music venues and the location of Britain's first cultural centre dedicated to black heritage. Welcome to Brixton, an eclectic and mildly chaotic south London area and possibly the only place in the capital where you'll find a church with a tapas bar in its crypt.' (Visitlondon.com, 2017)

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[2] http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/727819/Visitors-urged-to-discover-Brixton.html, retrieved July 23, 2017. The number of overseas visitors to London is expected to fall by nearly 20% this year to 9.5 million, largely due to a slump in the number of Americans crossing the Atlantic due to fear of terrorist attacks.

In 2013, Brixton and its transformation won the Academy of Urbanism's Great Neighbourhood Award. It praised the strong partnerships between the African-Caribbean communities, the public authorities and the private sector. However, it saw gentrification as a possible threat to the concepts of resilience and regeneration:

> Hopefully, this will not be negatively affected by gentrification in some parts of the centre, but it is a highly resilient area and has shown how it can manage its own issues. (…) It shows how a place can be regenerated by strong economic investment, physical change and collective community support. It could be inspirational to other similar areas in London and elsewhere. (Academyofurbanism.org.uk, 2017)

Brixton was lauded for its resilience and presented as a model of urban regeneration, with projects focusing on the area's industrial, social and communitarian history.

Touring Brixton nightlife

Neighbourhood transformation is the theme of the *Subculture Brixton Nightlife Tour*, a four-hour guided tour costing the equivalent of 15 euros per person. The tour begins at 6:00 p.m. near a Tube station. The meeting point is beneath a huge mural of David Bowie, Brixton's pop icon, who died a few months prior to our visit. The guide, in his 30s, introduces himself. He is an entrepreneur and graffiti artist born and raised in Brixton who after working in tourism in other parts of the country, decided to develop tours for the neighbourhoods of Brixton and Shoreditch, capitals of London nightlife. His tours are now listed on international sites like FreeToursByFoot or GetYourGuide. He claims to be the only one in the neighbourhood to offer tours of Brixton's social and cultural life. The visits focus on urban art (graffiti), bars, clubs and the covered market, which he presents as a neighbourhood landmark. There is no set programme. The tour is customized to fit the interests of the visitors.

Groups taking the Subculture Brixton Nightlife Tour are small, generally from two to eight participants, to facilitate personal contact. According to the guide, they are mostly composed of relatively young urban tourists. He insists on the fact that his tour is not like others, especially the pub crawls (tours aimed at visiting a maximum number of bars to consume a maximum of alcohol). He associates such tours with mass tourism, which he distances himself from. 'My tour is nothing like the pub crawls. I've no interest in groups of post-pubescent tourists who only want cheap booze' (personal communication, July 2017). He adds that he's more interested in people 'who are on the same wavelength. Small groups allow more exchange and are more personal.' He also affirms that his

tours are discreet. He has no interest in forming contractual relationships with the various sites and businesses he visits on his tours. The guide offers groups the chance to explore places he calls 'out of the way and out of the ordinary'.

Fig 3: Map of the Subculture Brixton Nightlife Tour, 2017 (Source: Elaborated by the authors)

The first site visited is the London Beer Lab, housed in an archway beneath the railway. Over a beer, the guide explains that the area around the microbrewery is home to a largely immigrant, low-income population. In reference to nightlife, he outlines his view of the gentrification of Brixton and criticizes its 'Shoreditchification'. This term (attributed to Alex Proud, a Camden cabaret magnate), describes how 'crack houses get turned into gluten-free vegan microbreweries and knife crime is replaced with sneering at people who shop in Urban Outfitters. In other words: the hipsters take over.' [3] 'Shoreditchification' refers to the replacement of historical and popular activities with clubs and other attractive and trendy places, which is a common feature of gentrification.

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[3] http://www.telegraph.co.uk/men/thinking-man/10571976/In-defence-of-the-Shoreditchification-of-London.html

Leaving the microbrewery, the tour heads for a less-frequented area: a run-down concrete lot surrounded by a chain-link fence. In its centre is a rusty barbecue for the inhabitants of the dilapidated houses nearby. There are also several small shops catering to a primarily local clientele.

Fig.4: Run-down community area, Brixton, personal photo, July 2017.

Built under a highway overpass, this site is presented as an example of a local meeting place that is doomed to extinction. As a comparison, he speaks of a brick building built as an annex to the famous Bon Marché department store. Bon Marché Brixton opened in 1877, several years after the original Paris store. After its definitive closure in 1975, the building was abandoned for many years. Finally, instead of what the guide claims was to have been a neighbourhood social centre, a huge commercial and business centre, The Department Store, was developed there in 2017. Today it is the headquarters of the Squire and Partners architecture firm, internationally renowned for luxury residential and business developments. The Department Store's website says it 'revives a local Brixton landmark to create a series of collaborative workspaces

supported by an evolving hub of creative, retail and community uses.' (thedepartmentstore.com, 2017) This vision is criticised by our guide, as well as by a local newspaper, *BrixtonBuzz,* which assumes that the social nature of the project 'will only extend to their staff and not to members of the public.'[4]

The first pub presented on the tour is the Duke of Edinburgh and its vast beer garden, right by the railway. After a train goes by, the guide presents it nostalgically as a fundamental element of the neighbourhood's patrimony. For him the trains are indelibly tied to his background as a graffiti artist. He talks about how he ran after the trains with friends in order to photograph graffiti 'pieces' they or other artists had created. This stopped in the 1990s when trains were privatised. Today, CCTV cameras, highly visible police patrols, security staff and other anti-graffiti technologies are used in order to deal with this issue.

Outside the Brixton Market on Electric Avenue, a street presented as symbolic because it was one of the sites of the riots, the guide reminds us of the song 'Electric Avenue' by Eddy Grant. To him, the Brixton Riots were not only a time of social and political crisis, but also of intense cultural innovation in music and street art which still continues today. The guide points out a young couple sitting on their balcony in an apartment overlooking the avenue. Calling them the face of Brixton's gentrification, he adds that he himself wouldn't like to live on Electric Avenue. He finds it too noisy, especially now with all the recently opened bars and clubs. He points out a rooftop bearing a sculpture of foxes about to eat some giant cherries. 'Foxes and Cherries' was created in 2010 by artist Lucy Casson who explained, 'For me the foxes that live among us represented the cheeky side of Brixton as they dive in and out of sight.' (Brixtonpound.org, 2017) Thanks to neighbourhood renewal, foxes now have a place in Brixton's artistic patrimony.

The tour moves on to clubbing and ends at Pop Brixton, described by our guide as a symbol of the 'Shoreditchification' of the neighbourhood. According to its website, Pop Brixton '*is a temporary project that has turned disused land into creative space for local, and independent businesses.*'[5] Its stacks of cargo containers create a post-industrial atmosphere. Each independently-run container has been transformed into a bar, café or vintage clothing boutique. That particular day, the site was hosting a Bastille Day party (the tour took place on July 14th, 'Bastille Day', the common name given to the national day in France) targeting mainly a French clientele. The guide dismisses them as

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[4] http://www.brixtonbuzz.com/2017/06/squire-and-partners-talk-vibrancy-and-show-off-the-shiny-dome-of-their-new-brixton-department-store-home/

[5] https://www.popbrixton.org

'*TimeOut* readers' (in reference to an arts and entertainment guide in London) and explains that Pop Brixton isn't frequented by locals.

Fig.5: Pop Brixton, personal photo, July 2017.

The guide points out what he claims is the only container run by a member of the local community. Next to the container, a communal fridge was installed several months ago, to provide food for local people in need. But according to the guide, the project doesn't work because the target population feels stigmatized and under scrutiny by the surrounding cosmopolitan clientele.

The Subculture Brixton Nightlife Tour focuses on Brixton Market and various neighbourhood sites, as well as night spots like Brixton Village, Brixton Beach and Pop Brixton. Brixton's streetscape is also a key element in the experience. Although the general public is familiar with most of the places visited, the tour has nothing to do with mass tourism. The guide insists on this repeatedly as he talks about why his tours are different and how his future projects will contrast with typical tourism offers. He is contemplating training unemployed youngsters from Brixton as guides. This, he says, would be a way to empower locals and make them proud of Brixton. Training and hiring unemployed youngsters as guides would be a way of using gentrification as a resource for the local community; it would also represent a strategy of keeping a distance from mass tourism offers.

The Case of Brooklyn, New York

Brooklyn is one of the five boroughs of New York City; it is connected to Manhattan island by the famous Brooklyn Bridge. Named Breuckelen by Dutch colonists in the 17th century, then Brooklyn by the British in the next century, it became home to one of the largest African-American communities after World War II (Newfield, 1988). Considered one of the birthplaces of hip-hop culture, Brooklyn is now a favourite site of the artistic and creative community. The first waves of gentrification started in the 2000's with dramatic house price increases, producing an acute shortage of affordable housing. According to Lees (2003), the area is currently experiencing a 'third-wave' of gentrification called 'super-gentrification'. This process is characterized by the intense investment and conspicuous consumption of a new generation of super-rich, so-called 'financifiers', fed by fortunes from the global finance and corporate service industries. Brooklyn has evolved into a thriving hub of postmodern art and design and of entrepreneurship and high technology startup firms.

This is not a 'Sex and the City Tour'

Hush Tours[6] has been offering tours in Harlem, the Bronx and Brooklyn for more than fifteen years, claiming to have catered to more than one million clients since they started. They present the history of these three districts, with hip-hop subculture as a common theme. For the purpose of this article we will present 'Where's Brooklyn At?', a tour focusing specifically on Brooklyn. The tour recounts the stories related to some of the area's main African-American personalities, mostly famous rappers like Jay Z, Ol' Dirty Bastard or Notorious B.I.G., but also others, such as Spike Lee or Mike Tyson. Their website advertises an experience that will allow visitors and inhabitants to see areas of the city they have never seen before:

> 'Great for both tourists and native New Yorkers, our private tours will take you on a journey like nothing you've experienced before. Witness the birth and evolution of hip hop culture in style with New York's most unique and engaging experience. […] During this Brooklyn hip-hop tour experience, we'll take you to areas of Brooklyn you've never seen before, with a narrated history and insane stories from our celebrity hosts.[7]

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[6] https://www.hushtours.com
[7] https://www.hushtours.com/tour/vip-group-tour/

The two guides who lead and entertain the 35 tourists in the limousine bus are actual artists of the Brooklyn scene, 'hip hop legends that helped make it all happen' as their website puts it. One of them is presented as Johnny Famous, and the bus journey starts with a projection of an old video-clip where he shares the microphone with Jay Z, one of the most famous rappers in Brooklyn and internationally. Hip-hop clip-videos are projected on the bus television screen throughout the tour, and the second guide, who calls himself 'Razor', often improvises some music for the audience.

The tour starts with a visit to some of the borough's emblematic sites – the Brooklyn Bridge and the Barclays Centre (the main multisport center that is also well-known for music shows) – and other sites more oriented toward hip-hop subculture: Jay Z's former house and several murals of hip-hop artists. One of the last stops is at 'Marcy Projects', featured in Jay-Z's song 'Where I'm from', in which the public housing complex is described as a run-down and dangerous area, and a centre for drug deals: 'Cough up a lung, where I'm from, Marcy son, Ain't nothing nice […] I'm up the block, round the corner, and down the street. From where the Pimps, Prostitutes, and the Drug Lords meet.'[8]

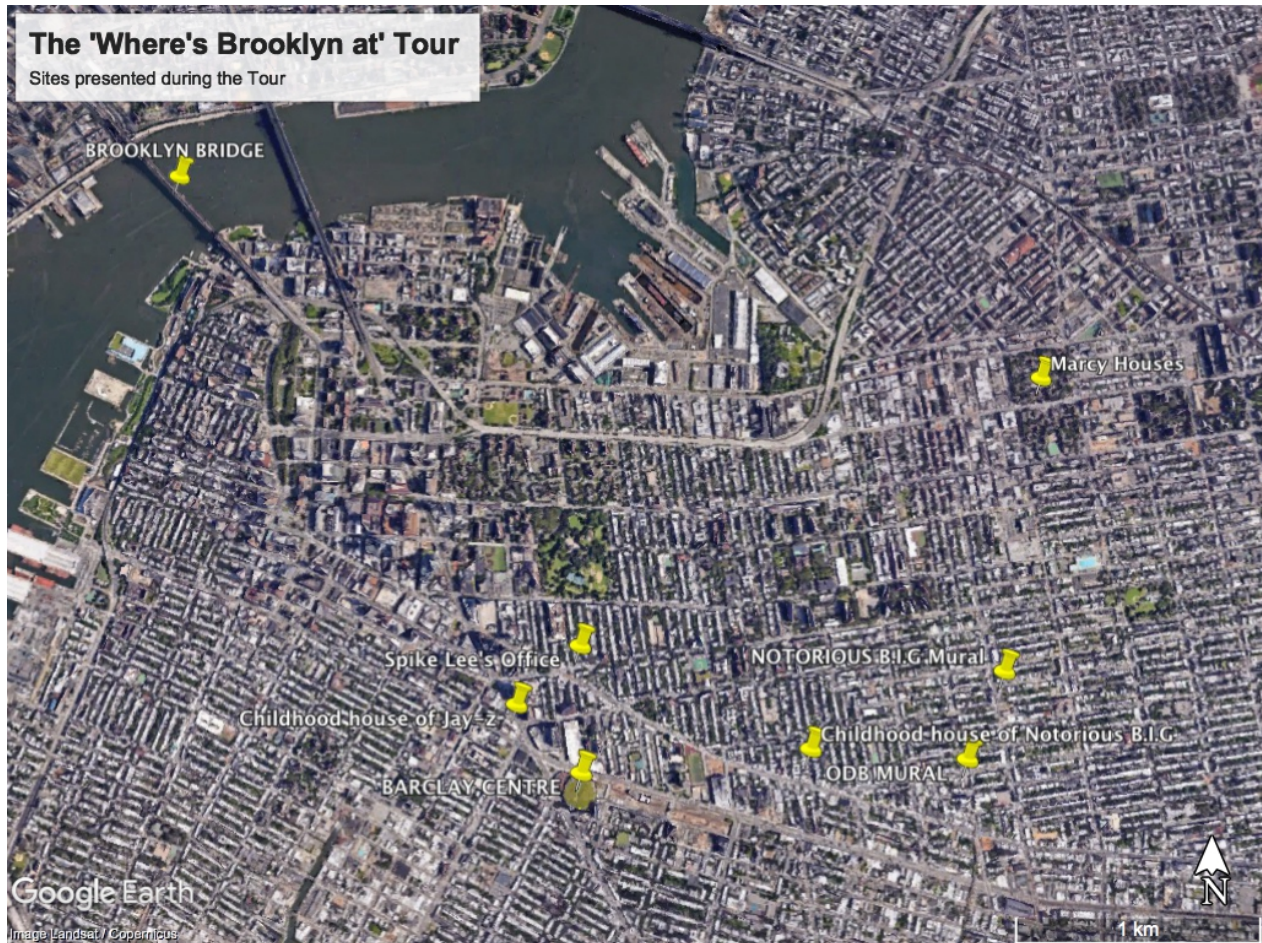---

[8] Jay Z, 'Where I'm from', 1997

Fig 6: Map of the 'Where's Brooklyn at', 2017 (Source: Elaborated by the authors)

The tour goes through five different neighbourhoods of Brooklyn. Four of them are situated in the north-west, between Brooklyn Bridge and Prospect Park: Prospect Heights; Clinton Hill; Fort Green; Boerum Hill. Due to gentrification, these neighbourhoods are among the richest and the most expensive in Brooklyn. They are quite well served by public transportation (metro) and host lots of cultural institutions and expensive restaurants. They seem far from the "hood" advertised by the tour operator. Other sites presented during the tours are situated in the more central neighborhood of Bedford–Stuyvesant (Bed-Stuy). Known for its brownstone rowhouses, built during the 19th century mostly by European immigrants, Bed-Stuy contained one of the nation's first free 'Negro communities' in the first half of the nineteenth century and has remained a cultural centre for Brooklyn's African-American population. The neighbourhood began to experience gentrification in the beginning of the 2000's. As With the influx of new residents came the attendant effect: the displacement of poorer residents. In other cases, newcomers have rehabilitated and occupied formerly vacant and abandoned

properties. Airbnb is nowadays promoting the neighbourhood as one of the 'most trendy places in Brooklyn despite its bad reputation'[9].

Advertising for the tour focuses heavily on the uniqueness of the product that Hush Tours offer, emphasizing its 'immersive' dimension and the supposed 'expertise' that the tourists will gain: 'Tired of the same old dry group activities? Hush will help you think outside of the box when planning your next event.'[10] Moreover, the main guide of the tour repeatedly stresses that this is a tour unlike all the others, it is 'not a Sex and the City tour' (personal communication, December 2017). At the start of the visit, when participants are about to get back in the bus after a quick hop-out to take pictures of the Barclay Centre, he adds: 'We are not a corny sit-down tour. This is just the introduction. Now we are going to take you in the hood' (personal communication, December 2017). However, tourists spend most of the tour sitting inside the bus, and while the stops are frequent, they never stay outside more than 5 minutes. (It is important to note that these observations were made in December and it was extremely cold.)

'Gentrification' is not mentioned during the tour, but the territory it covers encourages reflections on the phenomenon. Historical footage of Brooklyn's urban landscape contrasts with some of the renovated buildings visited, while stories of gangsters, pimps and hustlers from the nineties jar with the main narratives associated with the revitalization of the borough. 'The king of New York', one of the murals presented during the visit, features Notorious B.I.G, a major hip-hop artist of Brooklyn. At the time of the visit, this two-storey high fresco was the subject of heated debate on its potential destruction: the landlord of the building wanted to erase the mural and it was only after intense pressure from different groups and actors – from the Brooklyn Nets Basketball team to the mayor's office – that he decided to preserve this art work (Walker: 2017). Nevertheless, despite the highly publicized battle, there is not a single word about the story behind this mural in the narrative of the Hush tour guides.

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[9] https://fr.airbnb.ch/locations/new-york/bedford-stuyvesant

[10]

Fig.7: Notorious B.I.G. mural in Brooklyn, personal photo, December 2017.

Distinction and Gentrification in Tourism Discourses

As stated initially, when a process like urban transformation is the focus of the tourist gaze, the elements featured are those undergoing change. The necessity for visitors to be in the right place at the right time becomes part of a dynamic of distinction in which a tour guide stresses that his clients differ from other tourists – for example those participating in different forms of urban tourism such as 'pub crawls', 'sex and the city tours' or 'night tours', and whom he derides as 'travel idiots' (Urbain, 1993). In both cases, Brooklyn and Brixton, the emphasis is on the fact that tourists, and even locals, are offered a unique experience, off the beaten track, in areas sometimes portrayed as 'the hood'. However, while Brooklyn and Brixton are both characterized by a significant phenomenon of gentrification, their tourist actors have different narratives on the subject. The discourses of the 'Subculture Brixton Nightlife Tour' guide is clearly critical of the changes that his neighbourhood is undergoing. The tour presents sites and their history,

while giving a critical insider's perspective on the recent transformations of the neighbourhood. His criticisms often reflect a longing for a 'golden era', when homes were accessible for all and art was booming. On the other hand, Hush Tours guides rarely question the transformation of their borough. They systematically glorify rich and famous artists like Jay Z, pointing out how they contributed to the revitalization of an area that was associated with violence and drugs less than three decades ago. Their tour ends in a trendy healthy juice bar newly opened by two former hip-hop artists of the city.

Although both tours presented in this contribution can be considered as grass roots initiatives, their development is quite different. The 'Brixton Subculture Tour' is recent (less than five years), cheap (15 Euros) and carried out by a small privately-owned tour operation. It's a confidential tour with little advertising and almost no media coverage. The 'Where's Brooklyn at?' tour is offered by a larger and longer-established tour operator proposing seven other tours in Brooklyn, Harlem and The Bronx. It's more expensive (around 50 Euros); guides are locals and mostly hip-hop artists. Hush Tours is regularly featured in the media, including NBC News, the Travel Channel, The New York Times, and The Huffington Post.

The impacts of these practices - confidential or advertised – on the local community is still an open question. Ideas such as training and hiring unemployed locals (Brixton) have been voiced but to our knowledge this has not happened yet. This paper focuses on the guide's presentations and discourses about gentrification as a resource, indicating differing levels of criticism. It opens up a new research perspective, such as the links of these guides with inhabitants, the integration of local actors and more broadly the impacts and benefits of neo-slumming for the local community. This leads us to question the lasting value of such a resource, since gentrification does not benefit everyone equally and is constantly changing. How much does this resource benefit both private tour operators and the local gentrified community? The answer lies in identifying who are the true beneficiaries and for how long.

Conclusion: Tensions and Re-appropriations in the Gentrified City

The aim of this article is to contribute to recent developments in urban transformation studies. It has focused on gentrification tourism and showed that this major transformation of an urban area's material and social condition has become, in itself, a focus of tourism. This analysis, has demonstrated that using urban transformation as a tourism resource is not a new phenomenon. Its roots can be traced to the historical practice of slumming. The concept of 'neo-slumming' has been proposed in order to

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better understand the evolution of the practice in contemporary cities. It is stated here that neo-slumming is more concerned with exploring the cultural and artistic renewal of a neighbourhood than with its poverty and permissive sexual codes.

Although tensions and ambiguities related to the dynamics of the touristic re-appropriation of a gentrified city exist, neo-slumming is a practice which allows gentrification to be used as a tourism resource. It is even a resource for guides who criticisze gentrification. In addition to revenue, these tours give guides and other actors a platform to air their views as locals about the effects of gentrification. They can also explain how their tours differ from mass tourism and for instance present social projects associated with their activities. However, although they may criticize gentrification, these 'subculture tours', by using it as a resource, may also be participating in further gentrification. There is another interesting paradox: these subculture tours in fact contribute to rendering more mainstream the very elements they hold up as being alternative, and part of a subculture. For instance, in the 'Brixton Subculture Tour', most of the sites visited, are new sites bearing the Brixton 'label' (Brixton Beach, Pop Brixton, Brixton Market, etc.), and are products of this phenomenon.

The study of both 'Subculture Brixton Nightlife Tour' and the 'Where Brooklyn At?' tours show that urban transformation can be directly or indirectly integrated into tourism narratives. In this context, the different stages of gentrification can become an important resource for some tourism actors. They represent a true 'new frontier' in a process leading to new offers in contemporary tourism.

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