

**‘Self-renovating neighbourhoods’ – an alternative to gentrification?
PhD supervised by Professor Loretta Lees at University of Leicester**

Since Ruth Glass coined the term in 1964, a large body of work has described and debated the causes, process and effects of gentrification, building understanding about population change in poorer neighbourhoods.

The question for my research is whether it is possible to develop a model that bypasses the false choice of ongoing disinvestment and decay *versus* gentrification and displacement, focusing instead on community power-building and collective ownership to generate an ambitious alternative.

This research will consider historic and contemporary case studies to deepen understanding of the waves and trajectory of gentrification. It will explore whether and how approaches led by indigenous residents and first-wave gentrifiers could resist the sterilisation through surging property values which is the hallmark of the second wave.

My original contribution will be to further develop and empirically test ideas about *self-renovating neighbourhoods* (Steele, 2012), initially hypothesised as characterised by:

1. focus on self-defined, fine-grain local areas
2. initiated and driven by local residents and small businesses
3. self-interest as a motivator in collective action
4. three grassroots virtues of thrift, impatience, sociability
5. neighbourhood seen and acts as an enterprise, individuals as entrepreneurs and contributors rather than recipients/consumers/beneficiaries
6. explicit protection of diversity to avoid displacement of lower-income or otherwise vulnerable residents and businesses.

The research will focus on three detailed case study areas – the White Rock area of Hastings, the Granby area of Liverpool, and the Stokes Croft area of Bristol. In each case local people have formed community land trusts or other community-based organisations to achieve neighbourhood improvement without losing the existing affordability and community spirit.

I will use a combination of participant observation, structured interviews, a baseline survey of populations and rent levels revisited regularly to understand trajectories.

FOR STOKES CROFT, BRISTOL

Case study ethics

I will aim to tell a truthful and honest story.

I will never intentionally do anything that would negatively effect the neighbourhood or the people involved.

Where there is material directly of concern I will always check it with the case study protagonists and ensure it is presented in context and sympathetically.

Wherever possible/desired I will ensure anonymity for individuals, though not to groups/areas.

Time commitment

I need to talk to key members of the Carriageworks Action Group and the People's Republic of Stokes Croft three or four times a year, probably for half a day each time.

I will need a few contacts from the group but for the rest of the research I'll be around but not a burden. I will need to talk to some of the funders, planners, housing associations, and other relevant partners. I will maintain confidentiality between all sources.

What will Carriageworks Action Group and People's Republic of Stokes Croft get in return?

The research will recognise the hard work of members of the CAG and PRSC and their experiences and challenges in achieving the change they want to see and protecting the assets of the neighbourhood.

Where appropriate, I will advocate on behalf of the neighbourhood and seek ways to reach a wider audience and build further credibility with potential funders and investors.

I hope that the research will be valuable in itself. I am also happy to write a short case study or other material for use by CAG and/or PRSC in eg press releases, funding bids etc.

The local groups are very good at telling the story but I may be able to help to 'beef up' the narrative in particular areas by placing it in the context of the academic literature on gentrification and self-renovation.