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State-led gentrification and self-respect

Katy Wells

1. Introduction

Gentrification is likely to be a familiar process to any city-dweller.¹ A once-deprived area sees the entry of more affluent residents – artists first, perhaps, seeking low rents, then professionals with higher incomes. Investment increases, and the area undergoes a physical transformation. The hipster coffee-shop arrives. Rents rise, and the original residents of the area struggle to remain.

This process is, today, a global and highly controversial issue. Closely associated with cities (traditionally with cities such as New York, London, Paris, Toronto and San Francisco), it is the focus of widespread criticism and resistance by those who object to rising housing costs and the displacement of the original residents from their neighbourhoods. Gentrification, however, has both academic and popular defenders, for whom it represents a process of positive change.²

Gentrification processes are popular subject-matter in geography, sociology and urban studies. Normative political theory, however, has been much slower to take up the question of what, if any, justice-based complaint those affected by gentrification might have.³ The aim of the present paper is to contribute to the small existing normative literature with an account of what can be troubling about what the wider literature calls “state-led” gentrification processes, processes in which the state, “actively seeks to promote and support gentrification,” often “in tandem with developers.”⁴ Recent research has pointed to the fact that gentrification processes are being used

¹ Thank you to Emily McTernan, Kieran Oberman, Tom Parr and the audience at the Society for Applied Philosophy Annual Conference 2019 for comments on an earlier version of this paper, as well as to two anonymous reviewers for this journal, for extremely helpful comments on the present version.

² See, for example, “In praise of gentrification,” *The Economist*, 21 June 2018, available at <https://www.economist.com/united-states/2018/06/21/in-praise-of-gentrification>; accessed 24 January 2019. For examples of academic defenders of gentrification see J. Peter Byrne, “Two Cheers for Gentrification,” *Howard Law Journal* 46:3 (2003): 405-432 and Jon Caulfield, “Gentrification and desire,” *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 26:4 (1989): 617-632.

³ This is not to say that scholars in geography, sociology and urban studies have not been critical of gentrification processes. For a highly influential critical work on gentrification, see Neil Smith, *Gentrification and the Revanchist City* (London: Routledge, 1996).

⁴ Mark Davidson and Loretta Lees, “New-build ‘gentrification’ and London’s Riverside Renaissance,” *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 37:7 (2005), 1168. Italics omitted. This makes “state-led gentrification” something of a misnomer, since to “promote and support” is not necessarily to lead. In the following paper, however, I continue to use this term, following the wider literature. Thank you to an anonymous reviewer for raising this point.

by policy-makers in many parts of the world as tools for urban ‘renewal’ or transformation.⁵ However, it is claimed that this is often at the cost of badly off residents of these areas. Here, I argue that where the state “actively seeks to promote and support” gentrification processes that (a) impose non-trivial costs on badly off residents of gentrifying areas, or (b) fail to benefit these residents in certain ways, the state disrespects these residents by expressing a troubling lack of regard for their interests. In doing so, it threatens their self-respect. Having made this argument, I also consider how certain kinds of state investment once gentrification processes have occurred can threaten the self-respect of original residents.

The central existing view of what is troubling about gentrification processes is supplied by the occupancy rights account.⁶ This account tells us that gentrification processes, state supported or not, are troubling insofar as they violate occupancy rights, the rights that individuals have to remain in a specific geographic location. Before setting out my own account, I will briefly discuss the limitations of the occupancy rights analysis.

2. Gentrification and state-led gentrification

The aim of the present paper is to contribute an account of what is troubling about state-led gentrification. To do this, we first need a definition of gentrification. A standard or classical definition of gentrification can be given along the following lines: “the transformation of a working-class or vacant area of the central city into middle-class residential and/ or commercial use.”⁷

The kind of gentrification processes I wish to discuss here, however, are more narrowly defined than this. First, they are processes that occur in urban neighbourhoods that are not merely working class, but which have experienced decline or disinvestment and which are characterised by “physical deterioration” and “concentrations of poverty.”⁸ Some in the geography, sociology and urban studies literature understand gentrification as a process which, by definition, occurs in such areas – thus, it seems, rejecting the standard definition. I will not here take a stance on issues of definition. I will talk broadly about “gentrification processes” and “gentrification,” but mean,

⁵ See, for example, Mark Davidson, “Spoiled Mixture: Where Does State-led ‘Positive’ Gentrification End?”, *Urban Studies* 45:12 (2008): 2385–2405.

⁶ Jakob Huber and Fabio Wolkenstein, “Gentrification and Occupancy Rights,” *Politics, Philosophy & Economics* 17:4 (2018): 378-397. A further major account of the wrong of gentrification in political theory comes from Margaret Kohn, who argues that those in gentrifying areas should be viewed as in possession of involuntary expensive tastes. I do not discuss this view here as it relies on the acceptance of a controversial version of luck egalitarianism according to which people ought to be compensated for their involuntary expensive tastes if they would not be able to reach the same levels of well-being as others without such compensation. See Kohn, *The Death and Life of the Urban Commonwealth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), Ch. 5.

⁷ Loretta Lees, Tom Slater and Elvin Wyley, *Gentrification* (New York: Routledge, 2008), xv.

⁸ Miriam Zuk, Ariel H. Bierbaum, Karen Chapple et al., “Gentrification, Displacement and the Role of Public Investment,” *Journal of Planning Literature* 33:1 (2018), 32.

by those terms, gentrification processes that occur in areas that are badly off in the respects described above. The fact that some gentrification scholars argue that we ought to define gentrification as a process occurring in deprived areas, however, ought to reassure the reader that by focussing on this kind of gentrification, I am not focussing only on a very niche or marginal kind of gentrification.

Gentrification has traditionally been associated with the activities of private individuals, specifically middle-class people who move into a deprived or working-class area and buy and renovate housing in that area. However, more recent research has pointed to the extent of state involvement in present-day gentrification processes and, specifically, to the phenomenon of “state-led” gentrification. “State-led” gentrification here describes cases in which, on one recent definition, local and national government “actively seeks to promote and support gentrification,” often “in tandem with developers.”⁹ State-led gentrification has been widely documented in, amongst other places, the UK, the US, the Netherlands and Spain.¹⁰ This kind of gentrification is often framed as a way of pursuing policies of urban “renewal” aimed at transforming once-deprived areas of cities.¹¹ However, there is concern about the effect such policies have on the original residents of these areas, who are displaced or whose interests are otherwise set back.¹² In what follows, I will offer an account which tells us when such state-led gentrification should be considered troubling.

It will be useful to highlight three further aspects of present-day gentrification processes, for the purposes of the present discussion. First, gentrification is often understood as involving changes to the racial composition of an area and particularly, in places like the US, the influx of white residents into formerly black areas.¹³ Second, gentrification is typically taken to involve physical changes to the area in question. These, most importantly for the argument to follow, include improvements in infrastructure, services and amenities,¹⁴ and changes to the available housing stock (in particular, the loss of social or affordable housing, and its replacement with more

⁹ Mark Davidson and Loretta Lees, “New-build ‘gentrification’ and London’s Riverside Renaissance,” *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 37:7 (2005), 1168. Italics omitted.

¹⁰ Jackson Hackworth and Neil Smith, “The changing state of gentrification,” *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* 92:4 (2001): 464-477; Rowland Atkinson, “The Evidence on the Impact of Gentrification: new lessons for the urban renaissance,” *European Journal of Housing Policy* 4:1 (2004): 107-131; Reinout Kleinhans, “Displaced but still moving upwards in the housing career? Implications of forced residential relocation in the Netherlands,” *Housing Studies* 18:4 (2003): 473-499; Lorenzo Vicario and P. Manuel Martínez Monje, “Another ‘Guggenheim effect’? The generation of a potentially gentrifiable neighbourhood in Bilbao,” *Urban Studies* 40:12 (2003): 2383-2400.

¹¹ Davidson, “Spoiled Mixture”; Rowland Atkinson, “The Evidence on the Impact of Gentrification: New Lessons for the Urban Renaissance,” *European Journal of Housing Policy* 4:1 (2004): 107-131

¹² See, for instance, Atkinson, “The Evidence on the Impact of Gentrification.”

¹³ See Jacob L. Vigdor, Douglas S. Massey and Alice M. Rivlin, “Does Gentrification Harm the Poor? [with Comments],” *Brookings-Wharton Papers on Urban Affairs* (2002), 138.

¹⁴ Zuk, Bierbaum and Chapple.

expensive dwellings).¹⁵ Finally, as well as the state acting to promote and support gentrification, it may also engage in certain kinds of downstream investment into areas once gentrification processes are underway, for instance providing better funding to local services post-gentrification. This downstream state investment is something I will discuss further below.

3. Occupancy Rights

Before setting out my own account, I wish to briefly comment on a prominent existing account of the wrong of gentrification: the occupancy rights account.¹⁶ Since this account is not a rival to my own (we might hold that state-led gentrification can be troubling because it violates occupancy rights, and because it threatens self-respect), I will not engage in a very lengthy discussion of this view. However, I do want to point, as a way of motivating an alternative account, to the limitations of a view that seeks to explain the wrong of gentrification in this way.

The idea of occupancy rights emerges in work diagnosing the wrong of territorial removals, such as the removal of the Navajo Indians from Arizona.¹⁷ These rights are ones that we are taken to possess on the basis that our life-plans are often *located*, that is, rooted in a particular place. If we are moved far away from the place where we currently live, we will typically lose access to central aspects of these life-plans: our economic practices, our social networks, the cultural and religious organisations to which we belong,¹⁸ all of which are “intertwined” with a particular place.¹⁹ In losing access to the central parts of our life-plans, our flourishing, which depends on the success of these life-plans, is seriously endangered.²⁰ Our interest in retaining access to the central aspects of our plans and projects grounds two occupancy rights, as follows: (1) the liberty to reside permanently in a particular space, and/ or to make use of that area for social, cultural, and economic practices and (2) a claim against others not to remove one from the area and not to interfere with one’s use of that space in ways that undermine the shared social practices in which one is engaged.²¹

¹⁵ Huber and Wolkenstein, 380.

¹⁶ A recently published account of the wrong of gentrification argues that gentrification is troubling because it involves domination. I am not able to discuss this paper here, but I take it that the account I go on to defend will appeal to those who are critical or sceptical of the neo-republican approach. See Daniel Putnam, “Gentrification and Domination,” *Journal of Political Philosophy* 2020, Online Early View.

¹⁷ See Anna Stilz “Occupancy Rights and the Wrong of Removal,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 41:4 (2013): 324–356 and *Territorial Occupancy: A Philosophical Exploration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019). The authors of the occupancy rights account of gentrification draw primarily on Stilz, but see also Margaret Moore, *A Political Theory of Territory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

¹⁸ Stilz, “Occupancy Rights and the Wrong of Removal,” 338.

¹⁹ Huber and Wolkenstein, 382.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 383.

²¹ I reproduce these rights verbatim from Huber & Wolkenstein, 383.

Drawing on the occupancy rights framework, Huber and Wolkenstein, who defend the occupancy rights approach to gentrification, defend a right, on the part of city-dwellers, against expulsion. This is a “plan-based” right “to remain in the neighborhood where their social, cultural, and economic practices are located, which goes some way in protecting them from being ‘priced out’ of it.”²² Respect for this right requires city authorities or the state to enact measures such as rent-control, to prevent gentrification-induced displacement from city neighbourhoods. City-dwellers are also to be given enhanced democratic rights over their neighbourhoods, to help protect from the loss of access to social, cultural, and economic practices that comes along with gentrification-induced transformation of the neighbourhood in which these practices are located.²³

One way of reading Huber and Wolkenstein here is as claiming that *all* city dwellers have occupancy rights, including the “plan-based” right, with respect to their neighbourhoods. To do this, however, would be to attribute to them a relatively unpersuasive view, since to ground such rights one would have to claim that all city-dwellers have social, cultural, and economic practices located within their neighbourhoods and would lose access to these if they were displaced from those neighbourhoods. This, however, seems implausible to claim of many city-dwellers, who might work in one part of the city, live in another, and socialise in yet another. Cities, indeed, might precisely seem to make this way of living possible for those with the means and the opportunity. Another, and I think the correct, way of reading them is as claiming that *insofar as* a city-dweller has projects that are tightly located in a particular neighbourhood, and would lose access to these if they were displaced from this neighbourhood, they have a right against expulsion from this neighbourhood. On this kind of view, occupancy rights vary in scope from person to person,²⁴ and only some have neighbourhood-specific rights.

On this reading, Huber and Wolkenstein must ground the anti-gentrification measures they want by arguing that those whose plight we are normally concerned with when it comes to gentrification, that is, the badly off, typically would lose access to their social, cultural and economic practices if they were removed from their neighbourhoods. Huber and Wolkenstein argue that this is the case: badly-off city-dwellers tend to have practices, particularly social and cultural practices, that are locally-based. This may be because they lack the financial means to travel widely and because in the context of poverty and disadvantage, local community is often thought to gain greater importance, in part because it functions as a support network.²⁵ In contrast, the

²² Ibid, 384.

²³ Ibid., pp. 390-92.

²⁴ Margaret Moore notes that this is a feature of Stilz’s account of occupancy rights, and also notes that this is an unusual feature of a rights-based account. See her “Occupancy rights: life planners and the Navajos,” *Critical Review of Social and Political Philosophy* 23(6): 757–764.

²⁵ Huber and Wolkenstein, 385.

wealthier individual, Huber and Wolkenstein argue, may be more resilient in the face of displacement from their neighbourhood, because their resources mean that displacement does not cut them off from their life-plans.²⁶ These individuals are, therefore, less likely to be able to make claims on the state on the basis of displacement, even if this results (as it sometimes does) from being priced out of their area.²⁷

If we accept that the account is of this structure (which, based on Huber and Wolkenstein's text, I think we should) then this account issues in the following conclusion: if gentrification-induced displacement (or transformation) does not result in a badly-off individual losing access to his social, economic and cultural practices, then it follows that this individual – like the wealthy person who is displaced – has little complaint about such processes.²⁸ For Huber and Wolkenstein, then, one's rootedness in one's locality is the primary basis for complaint about gentrification processes. In creating this kind of account, they (as they state) are responding to a large public discourse around gentrification that sees gentrification as troubling because it destroys communities, and because it displaces people from locations with which their identities are, in various ways, tied up. However, this is only one way of thinking about gentrification, and other voices from gentrifying communities (some of which I will discuss later on in the paper) indicate that this is not the only important basis for complaint. In the rest of the paper, I will offer an account that allows that even for those with little attachment to or rootedness in their local area – even the socially isolated or withdrawn individual, say, or the individual who lives in a bad neighbourhood because it is all they can afford, who commutes far (as many badly-off people do) to work and whose family live in another party of the city – may nevertheless have a complaint about gentrification processes.

4. Self-respect

Much has been written on the importance of self-respect. Rawls, famously, refers to it as “perhaps the most important primary good”; without it, he argues, we cannot hope to advance our plans and projects.²⁹ The parties in the original position must, therefore, ensure that the conditions for individual self-respect (the “social bases” of self-respect) are in place.³⁰

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ This individual may still be protected by general anti-gentrification policies, if these are justified by the majority's situation, but my concern here is about their basis, as an individual, for complaint.

²⁹ John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, rev. ed. (Harvard University Press, 1999), 386.

³⁰ Joshua Cohen, “Democratic Equality,” *Ethics* 99: 4 (1989): 727-751

It is common in the literature on self-respect to draw a distinction between “recognition” or “standing” self-respect, on the one hand, and “evaluative” self-respect on the other.³¹ The latter idea of self-respect, which has to do with the extent to which an individual meets the standards she has set for herself, will not concern us here. When an individual possesses the former type of self-respect – recognition or standing self-respect – she has a proper sense of (a) her own worth and status; (b) the kind of treatment she is entitled to, and the kind of responsibilities she has, on this basis. The word “proper,” here, is important. To have recognition self-respect in the sense meant here, an individual’s understanding of her own worth and status must be correct, as must her understanding of the kinds treatment to which she is entitled, and the kinds of responsibilities she bears. An important aspect of self-respect is that an individual understands her worth and status as equal to that of all other persons.³² In the context of this paper, our interest will be in the individual’s sense of her own worth and status as equal to others in the political community, and the treatment from the state and from others in this community (and responsibilities towards them) that is taken to follow from this.

One significant aspect of an individual’s proper sense of her own worth and status relative to others is her proper sense of her own agency. This is understood here in Rawlsian terms as her sense that she is someone capable of forming and carrying out a conception of the good, or plan of life, and that she is entitled to certain kinds of treatment by others on the basis of this capacity.³³ Identifying this aspect of the individual’s self-respect helps us to understand one reason why recognition self-respect is so important, because (correctly) understanding oneself as in possession of a particular capacity (in this case, the capacity to form and pursue a plan of life) enables one to exercise that capacity with confidence.³⁴ This, however, is not the only value of recognition self-respect. As others have pointed out, possessing a proper sense of one’s own worth in relation to others enables an individual to engage in personal relationships with others on equal terms, and helps protect her from certain kinds of interpersonal subordination.³⁵ Thus, self-respect helps the individual exercise her associative freedoms with confidence. In addition, some argue (although this argument may not be of much interest to political liberals) that it is intrinsically valuable for

³¹ This distinction originates in Stephen L. Darwall, “Two Kinds of Respect,” *Ethics* 88:1 (1977): 36-49. See also Robin S. Dillon, “How to Lose Your Self-Respect,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 29:2 (1992), esp. pp. 133-134.

³² Dillon, “How to Lose Your Self-Respect,” 133.

³³ Here, and in my arguments below, I draw on Krishnamurthy’s discussion of Rawls and self-respect. Meena Krishnamurthy, “Completing Rawls’s arguments for equal political liberty and its fair value: the argument from self-respect,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 43:2 (2013): 179-205. Non-Rawlsian accounts of recognition self-respect also emphasise the importance of an individual’s proper sense of their own agency. See, for example, Dillon, “How to Lose Your Self-Respect.”

³⁴ Christian Schemmel, “Real self-respect and its social bases,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 49:5 (2019), 635.

³⁵ Thomas E. Hill, Jr., “Servility and Self-Respect,” *The Monist* 57:1 (1973): 87-104

individuals to have recognition self-respect, since to have recognition self-respect is to correctly value that which is, in fact, valuable – for instance, human agency.³⁶

5. State support for gentrification

The arguments that follow are divided into two parts. In this section, I will argue that where the state actively “seeks to promote and support” gentrification processes that either (a) impose non-trivial costs on badly off residents of gentrifying areas, or (b) fail to benefit these residents in certain ways, then the state disrespects these residents by expressing a troubling disregard for their interests, and threatens their self-respect. In the next, I offer an argument which links what I have called down-stream state investment into gentrifying areas to a threat to the self-respect of original residents.

In making the arguments of this paper, I am accepting what is sometimes called the “dependency thesis” about self-respect, the idea that the individual’s self-respect is in important ways dependent on the kind of treatment that she receives from others.³⁷ What it means to secure the general social conditions that support self-respect (self-respect’s “social bases,” in Rawlsian terms) is therefore to ensure that individuals are treated in the appropriate way. This “dependency thesis,” or specific versions of it, have recently been criticised, but I set aside discussion of these criticisms until later in the paper.³⁸ It should be said, however, that for those readers who are strongly convinced at this stage of the paper that these criticisms have bite, or who reject the claims made above significance of individual self-respect, as it is characterised here, the arguments made in the present section of the paper can run another way. This is that in actively pursuing gentrification processes the state disrespects the original residents of gentrifying areas. For the state to disrespect these residents, in the sense of expressing a view that is inconsistent with the self-respecting person’s proper view of their own worth and status, is in itself deeply troubling. In my view, understanding things only in terms of disrespect offers us a diminished analysis that neglects the importance of individual self-respect; nevertheless, this part of the argument will go through without reference to self-respect.

Why, then, might state support for gentrification processes be thought to disrespect the original residents of gentrifying areas, and threaten their recognition self-respect? Here, I offer two different lines of argument for this conclusion.

(1) The first argument claims that state-led gentrification disrespects the original residents of gentrifying areas, and threatens their self-respect, where it imposes certain non-trivial costs on

³⁶ Dillon, “How to lose your self-respect.”

³⁷ Colin Bird, “Self-Respect and the Respect of Others,” *European Journal of Philosophy* 18:1 (2010): 17–40.

³⁸ Bird, “Self-Respect”; Schemmel, “Real self-respect.”

those residents. To begin the argument, then, I want to highlight three kinds of costs or burden to original residents which are commonly associated with gentrification processes in the existing literature on gentrification, which are not merely trivial. The first cost or burden is displacement. The displacement of the original residents of gentrifying areas is one of the most commonly noted negative consequences of gentrification processes. It is predictable that those who are displaced by gentrification processes will suffer certain costs in the course of displacement. These include the upheaval associated with moving to a different part of the city, or out of the city altogether, the costs associated with settling into a new area, the loss (perhaps) of some of their social network. The costs may, in certain cases, be much more significant than this. Gentrification is associated with an increase in homelessness, as some of those who are displaced as a result of rising housing costs fail to find alternative accommodation. If we view individuals as having a basic right to housing then the costs of gentrification for some include the subversion of one of their basic rights. For the displaced who are not rendered homeless, but who simply find housing in a different area of the city, there are still costs which will typically have some negative impact on the individual's ability to carry out their plans and projects, since this is the effect that upheaval tends to have, requiring us, at the very least, to bear the financial costs associated with upheaval (reducing the resources we have available for our plans and projects) and to focus on negotiating the upheaval, and re-establishing our lives in a new place, rather than carrying out our plans and projects.³⁹

Note, here that claiming that we are concerned about gentrification on the basis that it has some (non-trivial) negative impact on or in a non-trivial way sets back the individual's ability to pursue their life-plans is different from claiming (as proponents of the occupancy rights account do) that we are concerned about gentrification insofar as it undermines access to elements of the individual's life-plans, such as their economic practices. This is, first, because our life-plans may be set back in other ways than by losing access to the central elements defenders of the occupancy rights account discuss.⁴⁰ Second, defenders of the occupancy rights account are primarily concerned with the individual's access to these elements being *undermined*,⁴¹ rather than with less significant harms.

A concern might be raised here that the question of whether gentrification displaces the original residents of gentrifying areas is not settled in the empirical literature on gentrification.

³⁹ For an argument that displacement from one's home involves harm to our cognitive functioning, see Cara Nine, "The Wrong of Displacement: The Home as Extended Mind," *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 26:2 (2018): 240-257. My argument here does not rely on the success of this kind of argument.

⁴⁰ Nine makes this point in "The Wrong of Displacement."

⁴¹ See, for instance, Huber and Wolkenstein, 386.

Rather surprisingly, given the persistent connection between gentrification and displacement in public discourse, some studies cast doubt on whether there is a significant relationship between gentrification and displacement, at least in certain locations.⁴² One response to this concern is to point out that my argument here only claims that *where* state-supported gentrification sets back the interests of the badly off, it disrespects these individuals. What is being offered are the tools with which we can judge whether state support for gentrification is troubling. However, there are also reasons not to be too quick to accept the conclusions of those who rule out the connection between gentrification and displacement. One plausible explanation for why some existing studies fail to find a relationship between relationship and displacement is that the time frame of such studies is not long enough to capture the relevant displacement.⁴³ Original residents will typically attempt to remain in a gentrifying area to take advantage of the benefits of doing so, in spite of the rising costs. Eventually, however, these costs will become too great, prompting a move.⁴⁴

The second cost or burden associated with gentrification relates to the residents just mentioned who try to remain in gentrifying areas in order to take advantage of the benefits of doing so. Let us call these *precarious residents* because such residents absorb the higher costs of remaining in the area in a way that will be unsustainable in the long-term, because of their income levels.⁴⁵ For those who remain in a particular area in a precarious way, the costs are slightly different to those borne by the displaced. These comprise, in the main, the cost to the individual's ability to carry out their plans and projects of insecurity. If the precarious individual's mental energy is focussed, to some extent, on her precarity, rather than her plans and projects, and because she has little sense of how long she may remain in a particular area (this is different from knowing that one will not be in a particular area for very long), this restricts her ability to plan.

The final cost or burden is associated with those original residents who remain in gentrifying areas without their situation in terms of income being improved. These are the aforementioned precarious residents, but also some of those who may remain more securely, for instance some social housing tenants in the UK. For these individuals, the cost or burden in question is the loss of appropriate services.⁴⁶ As areas come to house wealthier populations, the

⁴² The most prominent work questioning the relationship between displacement and gentrification is Lance Freeman and Frank Braconi, "Gentrification and Displacement New York City in the 1990s." *Journal of the American Planning Association* 70:1 (2004): 39–52.

⁴³ Zuk, Bierbaum and Chapple, 37.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Some residents of gentrifying areas are rendered precarious for other reasons, for instance because (in the UK) their social housing is scheduled for demolition, and they have not yet been rehoused. See Jessica Brown, "I only plan for now': the people whose estates are being torn down around them," *The Guardian*, 21 November 2019, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2019/nov/21/i-only-plan-for-now-the-people-whose-estates-are-being-torn-down-around-them>; accessed 9th December 2019.

⁴⁶ Rowland Atkinson, "The hidden costs of gentrification: Displacement in central London," *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment* 15 (2000): 307–326.

services catering to the original, less well off, population may disappear. By ‘services’ here is meant both appropriate (in this case affordable) shops and amenities (such as pubs and bars), and public services, for instance libraries and leisure centres, and support services. The loss of these things will, again, affect the individual’s ability to carry out their plans and projects within their means, as will (of course) the loss of support services.

Where the residents of gentrifying areas suffer these costs or burdens as a consequence of state promotion of or support for gentrification, why should we view them as disrespected by the state? Let me begin by re-iterating that the original residents under discussion are disadvantaged individuals. This means that these individuals already have very limited resources, and fewer resources than others in the political community, to devote to their plans and projects. If the state viewed the agency interests of all citizens as of equal importance, we might think that it would be concerned to act in ways that promoted, rather than set back, the interests of those who were already disadvantaged with respect to their interest in forming and pursuing a conception of the good.⁴⁷ Where, however, it instead actively pursues a process which sets back the interests of these individuals, it conveys or expresses to them a troubling lack of respect for their interests, and particularly for their interest in forming and pursuing a conception of the good.⁴⁸ Since our recognition of our capacity for agency is (as argued above) part of recognizing our own worth, a state which expresses a view that the agency of some is not important, fails to properly recognise the worth of those citizens. The state thus expresses disrespect for the original residents of gentrifying areas, and this expression of disrespect constitutes a threat to these individuals’ self-respect.

In addition, gentrification processes often benefit wealthier citizens, who move into gentrifying areas in order to access cheaper housing, and in order to be able to enjoy the dynamic environment, services and so on to be found in ‘up and coming’ areas. Insofar as the state actively pursues a process that results in the interests of the already badly off being set back *and* the interests of the better off being enhanced, and further, encourages a process in which it is the displacement of the worst off that may *allow for* the wealthier to have their interests enhanced (since as original residents leave wealthier residents may move in), the state conveys or expresses a view about the relative importance of its citizens’ plans and projects, namely that it is the plans and projects of

⁴⁷ Again, here I am drawing on Krishnamurthy’s discussion of self-respect and agency. Krishnamurthy, “Completing Rawls’s arguments.”

⁴⁸ Here my account echoes an observation made by Spencer and Powell that gentrification involves “a double insult—a “one-two” knock-out” where (on their account) the double insult is to non-white urban dwellers, with the first insult understood as white flight, which caused certain neighbourhoods to become ‘isolated and undervalued’ and the second gentrification. See John A. Powell and Marguerite Spencer, “Giving Them the Old One-two: Gentrification and the K.O. of Impoverished Urban Dwellers of Color,” *Howard Law Journal* 46:433 (2002), 437.

wealthier citizens that are to be considered of greater importance. Again, since our recognition of our capacity for agency is (as argued above) part of recognizing our own worth, a state which expresses the view that the agency of some citizens is less important than the agency of others fails to express a view of citizens as having equal status or worth. The state thus expresses disrespect for the original residents of gentrifying areas, and this expression of disrespect constitutes a threat to these individuals' self-respect.

In recent work Elizabeth Brake offers arguments that also connect concerns about gentrification to the setting-back of the life-plans of the badly off.⁴⁹ She, too, points to the upheaval and disruption that gentrification-induced displacement engenders. Brake's account differs from the one just offered, however, in at least two respects. First, her focus is not on state-led gentrification. Second, she argues that liberal egalitarians ought to be concerned about these effects on the basis that they conflict with commitment to an equality of opportunity principle rather than because (as I have argued) where the state supports policies that have these effects, it threatens self-respect. The discussion of gentrification in terms of self-respect helps to underscore the damaging nature of state support for gentrification, in threatening citizens' sense of worth and status.⁵⁰

Let me respond to several concerns that might be raised about the argument I have just set out.⁵¹ First, it might be argued that the state disrespects citizens, in the context of gentrification, even when it does not actively pursue, or explicitly support, gentrification processes. Indeed, we may argue that if the state fails to intervene in gentrification processes that set back the interests of those who are already disadvantaged, then it disrespects these individuals, by expressing a lack of concern for their agency. The claim, then, is that the argument from self-respect has much broader implications than I acknowledge.

It is certainly true that the state can disrespect its citizens in other ways than by actively promoting and supporting gentrification. One way is that it allows them to become, and remain, badly off in certain respects in the first place. Another way, just highlighted, is that it fails to intervene in gentrification processes that set back their interests. Nevertheless, I want to maintain here that there is something additionally disrespectful about state-led gentrification, that explains why we should be particularly troubled by this phenomenon. Here, the state *actively signs up in*

⁴⁹ See Brake, "Rebuilding after Disaster: Inequality and the Political Importance of Place," *Social Theory and Practice* 45:2 (2019), 189.

⁵⁰ In making these claims, what I argue here is closer to important recent work on racial profiling, which holds that profiling is wrong because it causes black and AMEMSA individuals to have a reasonable sense of inferior political status, in a context in which their interests are already disregarded. See Adam Omar Hosein, "Racial Profiling and a Reasonable Sense of Inferior Political Status," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 26:3 (2018): e-1-e20.

⁵¹ I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for raising these concerns.

support of a process that sets back its own citizens' interests, interests for which it has already shown a troubling disregard. In doing so, it expresses a particularly profound, we might even say insulting, lack of regard or respect for those citizens and their interests. Thus, state-led gentrification poses an additional, and particularly serious, threat to citizens' self-respect.

A second concern relates to the reasons for which a state might actively pursue gentrification policies. It might be objected that the argument I have set out above works best in cases in which the state can be clearly understood as pursuing the "renewal" or "improvement" of cities at the expense of badly-off residents of those cities. However, states sometimes explicitly justify the pursuit of gentrification on the grounds that this will benefit the disadvantaged city dweller. In the UK in the 1990s and 2000s, for instance, policy-makers justified the pursuit of gentrification on the grounds that "social mixing," the introduction of better off residents into previously badly-off areas, would benefit the original residents of those areas.⁵²

It is important to note that the argument of the present section implies that where the state pursues gentrification policies and these policies do not set back the interests of those who are badly off, then the state does not, in pursuing these policies, disrespect the badly-off original residents of gentrifying areas. In the context of the UK policies just mentioned, however, the situation is more complicated: some of the badly-off residents found that their interests were set back (since some were displaced), whilst others may have found their situation improved.⁵³ In this case, it seems that we can still argue that the state disrespects or insults those badly-off residents who are, for instance, displaced, on the grounds that the state has actively pursued a process that has resulted in their interests being set back.

However, this response may not seem entirely satisfactory. What if the state had simply not anticipated that gentrification processes would have this effect? Asking this question reveals the extent to which the argument just set out relies on the idea that it is relatively predictable that these processes will negatively affect the badly off, unless there are various kinds of intervention put in place to prevent this (such as, for example, rent control). I am claiming that where the state can plausibly be expected to know in advance that gentrification processes will set back the interests of disadvantaged original residents, and actively pursues these policies anyway, it disrespects these residents. In the context of recent and present-day gentrification, it is reasonable to assume that the state does know in advance what the likely outcomes of gentrification will be,

⁵² Loretta Lees, "Gentrification and Social Mixing: Towards an Inclusive Urban Renaissance?" *Urban Studies* 45:12 (2008), esp. pp. 2452-2453.

⁵³ *Ibid.* Although Lees notes that the evidence that 'social mixing' does benefit the badly off in the ways claimed by defenders of the policies in question is not that clear.

since gentrification and its effects on the already disadvantaged are widely discussed in the public sphere.

Finally, the concern might be raised that we can imagine circumstances in which the state might be viewed as justified in pursuing a policy that predictably sets back the interests of the disadvantaged, given the importance of the goal in question, and the relationship that setting back the interests of the disadvantage has to the achievement of that goal (perhaps, it is a consequence that cannot be avoided). In this case, it might be argued, state action is not disrespectful. For the purposes of the present paper, however, I need not comment on such cases. It is difficult to see gentrification as such a policy. Even if the renewal or improvement of cities is an important goal that the state should seek to pursue, it is one that (as I will discuss further in section 7) can be pursued in a way that is consistent with protecting the interests of the disadvantaged.

(2) The second argument claims that state-led gentrification disrespects the original residents of gentrifying areas, and threatens their self-respect, where the state fails to ensure that original residents benefit in certain ways from gentrification. For the purposes of this argument, and the argument relating to downstream state investment into gentrifying areas set out below, it will be necessary to introduce the idea of basic goods and their significance.

Certain goods are of fundamental importance to individuals. Call these “basic goods.” One such good is housing: if individuals are to form, revise and pursue their conception of the good, then access to decent housing is of great importance. Other such goods are what I will call “environmental” goods: goods that relate to the individual’s direct physical environment. It is important that an individual live in a neighbourhood or area that is decent, has safe, clean streets, and has reasonable services and amenities available, or, to put things another way, it is important that an individual live in a neighbourhood or area that is not dangerous or in disrepair, that is not lacking in basic amenities, and that does not suffer from what in the US is referred to as ‘blight’. The importance of individuals being provided with a decent environment can be related to the individual’s ability to carry out her life-plans. For instance, it is clearly important for an individual’s life-plans that she is physically secure she is, and that she is *aware* that she is physically secure. But it is also important for an individual’s life-plans that there be a reasonable quality of transport and amenities in her environment; that it is not too difficult to buy food and other essentials, to access leisure facilities, to move around, and so on.

Areas in which gentrification occurs are, on the definition adopted in this paper, areas which have experienced “decline or disinvestment” and which are characterised by “physical deterioration” – areas, we can conclude, therefore, in which residents are not provided with many

of the relevant basic goods. A recent article on gentrification in Pittsburgh, Atlanta in the US, for example, points to the extent to which the area had, prior to gentrification beginning, suffered from high levels of crime, vacant and poor-quality homes, and disinvestment.⁵⁴ When gentrification occurs, there is an increase in investment into the area. In the case of state-led gentrification, this is, in part, state investment. But part of the aim of state-led gentrification is that state investment should trigger or accelerate gentrification processes that involve other kinds of investment, typically private individual investment, in the form of individuals improving the housing which they have purchased, and commercial investment, in the form of new businesses moving into the area, and new, more expensive housing and commercial developments being built. This increase in investment results in the relevant basic goods becoming available: gentrification is associated with better housing, infrastructure, services and amenities coming to a particular area.⁵⁵

Whether the original residents benefit from these improvements in the area, in terms of gaining access to basic goods of a decent quality, depends on two things. Firstly, that they are not displaced from the area in question. As previously noted, recent research has raised concerns that the ‘renewal’ or transformation pursued by policy-makers comes at the cost of the badly off residents of gentrifying areas, who (the concern is) end up being displaced from those areas when the cost of housing rises beyond what they can afford. Secondly, that the improved basic goods which come to the area are those which these individuals are in fact able to access. I am particularly thinking, here, of housing. Critics of gentrification point to the fact that the new housing that is built in gentrifying areas is often far out of the price range of the original residents of the gentrifying area. Elephant and Castle in London, for instance, has historically been a badly off area of the city, but is now rapidly gentrifying. An “affordable” one-bedroom apartment in one of the new housing developments to be built in the area will cost £595,000.⁵⁶

My claim here is that where the state actively seeks to promote or support gentrification, but does not put in place, or only puts in place very half-hearted measures to ensure that the original residents of gentrifying areas can gain access to the basic goods with which the area comes to be furnished, this disrespects the original residents. Here, the state shows a troubling disregard for their access to the relevant basic goods. For an example of a half-hearted measure, we might

⁵⁴ James Lartey, “Nowhere for people to go: who will survive the gentrification of Atlanta?” *The Guardian*, 23 October 2018, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2018/oct/23/nowhere-for-people-to-go-who-will-survive-the-gentrification-of-atlanta>; accessed 7th December 2018.

⁵⁵ Note, however, that this does not mean that there is not a loss of some services, as discussed in the previous section.

⁵⁶ Antonia Cundy, “Elephant and Castle shifts from social housing to ‘build to rent’,” *Financial Times*, March 15 2019, available at <https://www.ft.com/content/ec2744d6-44b5-11e9-b168-96a37d002cd3>; accessed 14th December 2020.

use the kind of constraints that have in recent history been placed on London housing developers to ensure that some minimum proportion of the housing that they build should be affordable. Under the definition of “affordable” rental housing held by David Cameron’s government, this meant that the housing should cost no more to rent than 80% of the average local market rent – not, we might think, a cap that is likely to benefit poorer original residents of an area, if rents rise dramatically as a consequence of gentrification processes.

It might be argued here that the state has already, by failing to provide the original residents of gentrifying areas with basic goods, showed disrespect to these individuals, and therefore threatened their self-respect. It is not clear why a state’s actively promoting and supporting gentrification processes without making any serious attempt to ensure that original individuals benefit from these processes should be considered as an additional threat to their self-respect. However, on closer inspection, there is a distinct or additional threat to self-respect here. The state acts to bring about a process of positive change in a particular area, and then shows itself to be uninterested in ensuring that those in the area most in need, those whom it has already neglected, benefit from this change. This is, surely, an additional blow to the self-respect of the already badly off.

6. Self-respect and down-stream state investment

I now turn to offer a final argument linking the state, gentrification and self-respect.

Let me start with two quotations. One is from a resident of Pittsburgh, responding to the fact that certain changes to his local area (including new laminated bus timetables, and decorations in the main street) came only after gentrification processes were underway. “It hurts, to be quite honest,” he says. “It’s disappointing to see economic potential only thought to be real when other people come in, and not recognised for the culture that is already here.”⁵⁷ The other is from filmmaker Spike Lee, describing the gentrification of Brooklyn, New York:

“So, why did it take this great influx of white people to get the schools better? Why’s there more police protection in Bed Stuy and Harlem now? Why’s the garbage getting picked up more regularly? We been here!”⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Lartey, “Nowhere for people to go.”

⁵⁸ Chris Michael and Ellie Violet Bramley, “Spike Lee’s gentrification rant – transcript: ‘Fort Greene park is like the Westminster dog show,’” *The Guardian*, 26 February 2014, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2014/feb/26/spike-lee-gentrification-rant-transcript>; accessed 31 May 2019.

What I will say about gentrification and self-respect in what follows is to a significant extent an elaboration and explanation of these two statements.

The majority of this paper has concerned state-led gentrification. Here, I consider a slightly different phenomenon: state investment into an area after gentrification processes are already underway. This, I take it, is what Lee and Cheers are referring to: improvements in various public services in the area that occur once gentrification processes are underway. That these kinds of changes occur is reflected, for example, in work on gentrification from Freeman, in which residents of gentrifying areas of New York describe significant improvements in policing services in the area, after gentrification processes have begun.⁵⁹

Gentrifying areas are those which, pre-gentrification, have been badly off, and are therefore likely to have lacked certain basic environmental goods: clean, safe streets, buildings in decent repair, and so on. These are environmental goods that I have, above, associated with the protection of individuals' interest in carrying out their plans and projects. When state investment in an area to provide these goods only begins once gentrification processes are underway, that is, once people other than the original residents start living in the area in question, it would be reasonable for original residents to take it from these events that they (and perhaps more generally, people of their class, or race) are not viewed by the state as deserving of the relevant basic goods. This is a threat to their self-respect, since it implies that their interest in forming and carrying out their life-plans is not being weighed equally with the interests of others.

However, an immediate response to this argument might be the following. Wouldn't the original residents of gentrifying areas have been aware, prior to gentrification processes beginning, that whilst they lacked the relevant goods, others in the society in which they live were provided with them? There are plenty of ways in which they could have obtained this information, not least by travelling to wealthier areas. In what sense does downstream state investment further threaten or undermine the self-respect of original residents?

It does so, I think, by making clear that the differential provision is a type of unjust treatment. Part of this is eliminating alternative reasons for the differential treatment. Where gentrification processes result in better services in that area, it makes very clear to original residents that these better services could, in fact, have been provided in their area – but were not provided whilst it was only the original residents living there. (So, the differential provision cannot be explained away on the basis of better provision being unachievable). When gentrification occurs, original residents witness the same (for instance, local government) bodies that have failed to

⁵⁹ Lance Freeman, *There Goes the 'Hood: Views of Gentrification from the Ground Up* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006).

provide them with the relevant services, such as adequate policing, provide those services to others. So, the differential provision is not down to different service providers. Part of this, however, is that when services get better as a result of gentrification, original residents do not simply observe differences between provision in different areas, but witness a causal process by which the presence of other kinds of people results in better provision of certain services in their own area.⁶⁰ This, I think, makes the injustice very clear.

7. The upshot of the arguments

What are the implications of the arguments set out above for state action with respect to gentrification? One important thing we will want to know is whether an implication of any of the arguments set out here is that states should not pursue policies of state-led gentrification.

The first argument, to recall, is that where the state encourages gentrification processes that imposes non-trivial costs on badly off residents of gentrifying areas, the state poses a particularly serious threat to their self-respect. A central implication of this argument, then, is that the state can only act in support of gentrification processes in badly-off areas if it is prepared to ensure that the interests of original residents are not set back by these processes. The state should seek to ensure that original residents are not displaced, rendered precarious, or experience a loss of service provision. Alternatively, the state ought to provide compensation for any non-trivial costs experienced by original residents.

The second argument is that where the state actively pursues gentrification processes that fail to benefit the original residents in certain ways, then the state again seriously threatens these residents' self-respect. The upshot of this argument is that the state can only act in support of gentrification processes if it is willing to act (in ways that are not half-hearted) to ensure that original residents of gentrifying areas are advantaged by these processes, in terms of their access to basic goods.

The upshot of the final argument is more complicated. This argument held that downstream investment by the state into gentrifying areas threatens self-respect, because it makes salient injustices in the society in question, with respect to the distribution of basic goods. It is difficult to tease out the implications of this argument when it comes to the question of whether the state should permit or encourage gentrification processes. On the one hand, we think that the state ought not to act in ways that threaten its citizens self-respect. On the other, if the way in which gentrification processes threaten self-respect is by making salient existing injustices, there is

⁶⁰ It might be argued that better goods come to gentrifying areas because new-comers are more persistent in demanding them. This, however, is an idea often robustly rejected by original residents, who claim that their own demands have been "ignored". See, e.g. Lartey, "Nowhere for people to go."

something strange about saying that the state should not permit or encourage such processes. It seems that we are saying that the state should be motivated by a concern to hide the injustices in society.⁶¹ The way out of this difficulty is to conclude that what we should take away from this argument is that the state should seek to ensure that all individuals have the relevant basic goods, and are therefore treated (in this sense) with respect. By failing to provide these, the state makes original residents vulnerable to the threat to self-respect posed by gentrification processes.

8. Schemmel and the conviction of one's equal worth

I now turn to discuss an important recent argument on the topic of self-respect from Christian Schemmel, which might be thought to constitute a challenge to the claims made here that state-led gentrification can threaten self-respect.

Schemmel's central claim is that liberals have reason to value "robust" self-respect.⁶² To have robust self-respect is to have the ability to maintain one's self-respect in the face of adversity. Having this kind of self-respect is valuable, because it enables us to "remain convinced of [our] equal moral standing, and to affirm it, when others disregard it."⁶³ It is more valuable than the kind of self-respect which (as Schemmel sees it) liberals normally defend, a kind of self-respect which is more sensitive to our treatment by others.⁶⁴

If we possess robust self-respect, according to Schemmel, it is not appropriate that our self-respect is undermined by certain kinds of disrespectful treatment. It is only appropriate for us to lose self-respect when "one cannot be reasonably expected to maintain it, because conditions are just too unfavourable."⁶⁵ Schemmel does not offer a full account of when individuals cannot be reasonably expected to maintain self-respect, however, he suggests that this will often be when "powerful others enjoy *dominance* in the space of reasons on which victims can draw their self-conception."⁶⁶ In a society in which all are convinced that women ought to be subordinate to men (to give a simple example) it is appropriate for women to lack self-respect. However, in a society in which some individuals are disrespected, but in which those individuals have the resources to

⁶¹ This is why Rawls's claim that the self-respect of the worst-off in a just Rawlsian society is protected because they will be part of "non-comparing" groups is thought to be so troubling. On this see Jeanne S. Zaino, "Self-Respect and Rawlsian Justice," *The Journal of Politics* 60:3 (1998): 737-53.

⁶² Schemmel, "Real self-respect."

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 637.

⁶⁴ A yet more radical view of the relationship between self-respect and disrespectful treatment is discussed by Colin Bird. On this view, a proper understanding of our humanity – one which does not involve inflated views about our "worth" – frees our sense of self-respect "from anxiety about the acceptance of others," breaking the link between self-respect and others' treatment of us almost entirely. Bird, "Self-Respect," 34. However, as Schemmel points out, if breaking the link between self-respect and others' treatment requires accepting this view of individual worth, liberal political philosophers will not be on board – and for good reasons. For more on this see Schemmel, 640-1.

⁶⁵ Schemmel, 638.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 639.

shore up their self-respect, loss of self-respect is not appropriate. So, Schemmel argues that in a society in which the political liberties of some are worth less because the rich have greater influence over the political sphere, but in which there is plenty of opportunity to protest this system, and in which there are people protesting it, it is not appropriate for those whose liberties have lesser worth to lose self-respect (although it is appropriate for them to feel disrespected).⁶⁷ This example brings out an important claim of Schemmel's: that it will often not be appropriate to lose self-respect in the face of injustice if "effective" opportunities for protest, solidarity and support, and resistance are available.⁶⁸ Having said this, however, Schemmel also argues that developing robust self-respect requires a particular kind of education and upbringing, one with a "special focus on cultivating resilience."⁶⁹ In societies in which this is not in place, then, it becomes less clear when it is appropriate and when it is not appropriate for individuals to lose self-respect.

Schemmel's line of argument might be thought to challenge my arguments about gentrification and self-respect. Gentrification processes, it might be argued, normally take place in a context in which there are the relevant opportunities for protest, solidarity and support, and resistance. There are, globally, many anti-gentrification movements, and there is considerable criticism of gentrification in the public sphere. In such a context, it might be argued, citizens have the right kind of opportunities to shore up their self-respect in the face of the threats gentrification processes pose to that self-respect.

There are a number of responses that can be made here, none of which take issue with Schemmel's main claims, but which rather reject the idea that they constitute a challenge to the arguments set out above. First, we can note that even though the state is only one 'voice' in discussions around gentrification, it is a particularly powerful one.⁷⁰ Thus, if the state disrespects citizens – as I have argued it can do in the context of state-led gentrification – this is a serious challenge to their self-respect.

Second, we can reiterate that Schemmel's claims about when it is appropriate and when it is not appropriate to lose self-respect hold on the assumption that individuals have been raised and educated with a "special focus on cultivating resilience." Since this assumption doesn't hold in the non-ideal context of the present day, we can't draw the conclusion that it would not be appropriate for the original residents of gentrifying areas to lose self-respect in response to gentrification processes.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 638.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 639.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 630.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 639.

Third, we might point out that in many contemporary societies, those who are badly off are already vulnerable with respect to self-respect, because of dominant narratives that stigmatize them and link poverty with morally undesirable qualities, such as laziness. In this context, therefore, we might think that original residents “cannot be reasonably expected to maintain”⁷¹ their self-respect in the face of further disrespectful treatment, especially when that disrespectful treatment is being carried out by the state.

Finally, we might question whether original residents really have “effective” opportunities to protest, to form solidaristic movements, and so on. Schemmel’s understanding of “effective” opportunities is demanding, requiring, amongst other things, that individuals have the economic means to take advantage of their rights of speech and association. This seems right: if I do not have the material basis to take advantage of these rights, then such rights will not enable me to shore up my self-respect in the face of injustice. Original residents, who lack the relevant economic resources, cannot be understood as having the relevant “effective” opportunities. It might also be added that, insofar as gentrification processes disperse communities, they further undermine original residents’ opportunities for solidaristic and protest movements.⁷²

9. Conclusion

Whilst there is significant existing work on state-led gentrification from the social sciences, such work does not offer a well-developed normative framework with which to evaluate this controversial phenomenon. The aim of the present paper has been to supply such a framework. I have argued that where the state “actively seeks to promote and support” gentrification processes that either (a) impose non-trivial costs on badly off residents of gentrifying areas, or (b) fail to benefit these residents in certain ways, the state threatens their self-respect. I have also argued that certain kinds of downstream state investment in gentrifying areas can threaten the self-respect of original residents. In making these arguments, the paper also serves to expand the small, but growing, literature on gentrification in normative political philosophy.

The arguments above do not rule out active state support for gentrification processes. However, they do rule out active state support for gentrification processes where the interests of the badly off are not protected (or promoted) in the ways specified.

⁷¹ Ibid., 638.

⁷² Tommie Shelby, for instance, argues that for black US citizens predominantly black neighbourhoods can be viewed as a potentially “important source of political empowerment.” See “Integration, Inequality, and Imperatives of Justice: A Review Essay,” *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 42:3 (2014), 271.