Central neighborhoods revitalization and tourist bubble: from gentrification to touristification of daily life in Montreal

Written paper / verbal presentation

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Urban stakeholders, in a context of neoliberal international competition, seek to attract economic activities, tourists and new wealthy residents (Evans, 2009; Kavaratzis, 2007). One of the favorite actions, in order to capture unwarranted earnings (Harvey, 1989), is the construction of a “hard” brand image through the alteration of symbolic and physical attributes of a place in order to create a unique experience (Zukin, 1995). By doing so in residential environments, they create spectacular, clean and safe spaces framed by leisure, authenticity and consumerism social discourses in what can be associated with tourist bubbles (Judd and Feinstein, 2001). We argue that this contributes to the commodification of space and people (Britton, 1990; Edensor, 2001), where tourism
intermingles with dwelling (to dwell), giving blurred boundaries between daily life and a/the tourism experience what we call **touristification** of daily life.

In the city of Montreal, neighborhoods’ revitalization leads, not only to gentrification but also to **touristification** of daily life. In these neighborhoods, space is staged, secured and standardized to provide an experience, a landscape, a way of life, thereby producing a space (Lefebvre, 1974) that conforms to the needs of capital (Harvey, 2001). The transformation of space excludes marginalized populations, poor residents and their private market affordable housing. Traditional private rental market is shrinking and is replaced by a new one. Housing is now a capital investment for small and big investors who target middle and upper middle classes contributing to the speculative bubble. This paper argues that urban planning practices should challenge physical and symbolic exclusion. Using examples based on observations and interviews with stakeholders and residents from three neighborhoods in Montreal, it will illustrate how urban planning leads to a chain reaction from City’s revitalization plan, to private real estate development, to gentrification, and finally to **touristification** of daily life. The authors will discuss how urban planning practice should go beyond these neoliberal approaches.

- **Author(s) Biography (200 words each):**

  **Hélène Bélanger** is professor in urban studies and urban planning at Université du Québec à Montréal since 2006. Her research focus on different dimensions of the mutual relationship between residential environments and people. She works on different housing issues such as gentrification, social mix, affordable housing and the meaning of home but also on different questions about uses and appropriations of public spaces in cities. In her main-funded research project, she investigates the impacts of revitalization projects on space appropriation and gentrification and the preservation of local cultures in Montreal, Mexico and Rotterdam. She is also the principal investigator of a new funded research team, the Collectif de Recherche et d’ACtion sur l’habitat, a collective of researchers, community partners, activists and students with the goal of developing research on urban issues with a critical perspective. Bélanger has published scientific articles, book chapters and research reports (for community partners) as well has presented scientific papers in international conferences and presented her work in different community groups with whom she collaborates and to the general public. Bélanger is one of the coordinators Residential Environments and People working group part of the European Network for Housing Research.

  **Dominic Lapointe** is professor of tourism and tourism development at the department of urban and tourism studies at Université du Québec à Montréal. He holds a Ph.D. in regional development from Université du Québec à Rimouski. Responsible of the Groupe de recherche et d’intervention tourisme territoire et société, he works on the production
of tourism space and its role in the expansion of capitalism. His recent research focus on climate change, social innovations and indigenous tourism in peripheral areas, all of them using a critical geography perspective. Dominic Lapointe has published scientific articles, book chapters and research reports as well as presented scientific papers in international conferences and presented his work in different peripheral communities with whom he collaborates. He is also the actual director of the undergraduate programs in tourism and hospitality management at UQAM.

Alexis Guillemard is a PhD Student in urban studies at Université du Québec à Montréal. He studies the relationship between tourism, conversions of former industrial territories, and gentrification. These issues were addressed in his master degree essay, where he compared two neighborhoods of Montréal: Griffintown and the Shops Angus. One of the findings was the touristification of everyday life. His PhD thesis is interested in the adaptation of tourism to climate change, his other research field. Guillemard seeks to understand the representations of climate change for tourism stakeholders in the context of regional cities, and how these representations affect the local adaptation to climate change. He hopes to complete this work in September 2020.