



**THE BATTLE
FOR THE
HIGH STREET**

Retail Gentrification, Class and Disgust

PHIL HUBBARD



The Battle for the High Street

Phil Hubbard

The Battle for the High Street

Retail Gentrification, Class and Disgust

palgrave
macmillan

Phil Hubbard
King's College London
Department of Geography
London, UK

ISBN 978-1-137-52152-1 ISBN 978-1-137-52153-8 (eBook)
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-52153-8

Library of Congress Control Number: 2016947442

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s) 2017

The author(s) has/have asserted their right(s) to be identified as the author(s) of this work in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are solely and exclusively licensed by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.

The publisher, the authors and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, express or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made.

Cover image © Mark Wiener / Alamy Stock Photo

Printed on acid-free paper

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by Springer Nature
The registered company is Macmillan Publishers Ltd.

The registered company address is: The Campus, 4 Crinan Street, London, N1 9XW, United Kingdom

Acknowledgements

This book is one that has been intimately shaped by my personal circumstances, and in particular, returning to the county of my birth some quarter of a century after leaving. In that time, much had changed in the local towns and villages, including in some cases a rapid gentrification that had changed these places beyond recognition. Reflecting on some of these changes, and discussing these with my work colleagues, spurred me to write this book, which in many ways is my attempt to show how the sociological preoccupation with class (and the language of class) remains relevant to urban theory, notwithstanding the popularity of alternative ways of reading the urban landscape. In this sense, I am particularly thankful to those colleagues at the University of Kent who indulged me over the last five years as I have suggested ways in which the reconfiguration of Whitstable and Margate (and some of the other places that feature prominently in this book) illustrate wider transitions in the nature of post-industrial culture. Here, I should particularly mention Anne Bottomley, David Garbin, Ben Hickman, Dawn Lyon, Vince Miller, David Nettleingham, and Tim Strangleman, as well as acknowledging the support of the School of Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research, which provided a stimulating inter-disciplinary environment. I have also benefitted from discussions with graduate students, especially Jon Ward, whose work on artistic labour in seaside towns significantly informed the writing of Chap. 9, and Deanna Dadusc, whose research on

urban social movements and squatting has challenged me to think about questions of resistance in an era when gentrification often seems the ‘only game in town’. Beyond Kent, I owe a debt of thanks to those who looked at this book in part or whole and suggested changes (inevitably, not all of which I was able to accommodate): these include Nick Clarke, Louise Crewe, Suzanne Hall, Brian Hracz, Mark Jayne, Loretta Lees, and Neil Wrigley. I am also grateful to the Departments of Geography at Malmo, Birmingham and the LSE where I presented versions of these chapters, as well as the different public audiences I have presented this research to in Margate. This said, some of the arguments in this book have had a much longer gestation and have benefitted from varied intellectual inputs from colleagues and friends over two decades. For example, some of the material on disadvantaged consumers presented here is informed by the work I conducted with colleagues at Coventry University in the 1990s, and here I should particularly mention Nigel Berkeley, Phil Dunham and Peter Williams. Likewise, material on nightlife and the 24-hour city was presented and discussed with numerous colleagues at Loughborough University with a Nuffield-funded project on cinema-going helping focus my thinking on the move ‘out of town’ as discussed in Chap. 3. The arguments presented in Chap. 6 are in part derived from a study undertaken with Rachela Colosi supported by Economic and Social Research Council grant ES/J002755/1 ‘Sexualisation, nuisance and safety: sexual entertainment venues and the management of risk’. Here, thanks are owing to Rachela Colosi and the Research Associate on that project, Billie Lister. Finally, I owe a massive debt of gratitude to Eleanor for her close and critical reading of the manuscript, as well as her constant support during the twelve months it took to complete it.

Contents

Acknowledgements	v
1 Introduction: Gentrification and Retail Change	1
2 The ‘Death’ of the High Street	15
3 Going Out of Town	45
4 Reviving the High Street	67
5 24-Hour Party People	89
6 Sexing It Up	119
7 Place Your Bets	147
8 Fast Food, Slow Food	169

viii Contents

9 Bohemia on the High Street 199

10 Conclusion: Vital and Viable? 227

Index 247

List of Figures

Fig. 2.1	A familiar sight on the British High Street (photo: author)	16
Fig. 2.2	Boutiquing, Whitstable, Kent (photo: author)	29
Fig. 2.3	An unhealthy High Street? (photo: author)	37
Fig. 3.1	Keeping up appearances at the mall: Gunwharf Quays Designer Shopping Outlet, Portsmouth (photo: author)	54
Fig. 3.2	The modern agora: Stratford Westfield Shopping Centre (photo: Sirje S. Flickr, used under a CC-BY license)	61
Fig. 4.1	Window display, former Primark store, Margate, 2015 (photo: author)	72
Fig. 4.2	Gentrified consumption, Margate Old Town (photo: author)	80
Fig. 5.1	A soulless drinking pit? ‘The White Lion of Mortimer’ Wetherspoons, Mitcham, London (photo: Chris Marchant, Flickr, used under a CCBY license)	99
Fig. 5.2	The Overdraft micropub, in an old bank building, Shirley, Southampton (photo: author)	111
Fig. 6.1	Sex on the High Street—Ann Summers shop, Southampton (photo: author)	126
Fig. 6.2	A touch of class? Poster outside now-defunct Gentleman’s Club G7, Loughborough 2013 (photo: author)	136
Fig. 7.1	A betting shop ‘cluster’ in Salisbury (photo: author)	159
Fig. 7.2	A typical British betting shop interior (photo: author)	165

x **List of Figures**

Fig. 8.1	A fast food landscape, Highfields, Southampton (photo: author)	174
Fig. 8.2	Produce at Whitstable farmer's market (photo: Katie Blythe, used with permission)	186
Fig. 9.1	Gentrifying Hoxton: Banksy's (2007) stencil mural 'Sweeping it under the carpet' (photo: Matt Brown, Flickr, used under a CCBY license)	207
Fig. 9.2	Ironic consumption in Deptford: The Job Centre bar (photo: Matt Brown, Creative Commons CC BY)	209
Fig. 9.3	Affordable art and Banksy reproductions in the window of the 'Pop-up Margate' shop (photo: author)	219
Fig. 10.1	The onset of gentrification, London, 2014 (photo: Sara Kelly, Flickr, used under a CCBY license)	235
Fig. 10.2	Disordered but diverse? Priceless DIY store, Margate (photo: author)	241