

# Super-gentrification in Barnsbury, London: globalization and gentrifying global elites at the neighbourhood level

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In this paper we argue that a process of super-gentrification, similar to that first identified by Lees (2003 *Urban Studies* 40 2487–509) in Brooklyn Heights, New York City, is occurring in the already gentrified, inner London neighbourhood of Barnsbury. A new group of super wealthy professionals working in the City of London is slowly imposing its mark on this inner London housing market in a way that differentiates it and them both from traditional gentrifiers and from the traditional urban upper classes. We suggest that there is a close interaction between work in the newly globalizing industries of the financial services economy, elite forms of education, particularly Oxbridge, and residence in Barnsbury which is very different from other areas of gentrified inner London.

**key words** super-gentrification London globalization global elites neighbourhood fixedness

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## Introduction

As gentrification has become generalised so it has become intensified in its originating neighbourhoods, many of which have now moved into stellar price brackets and now resemble established elite enclaves rather than the ascetic pioneer gentrifier spirit of the 1960s and 1970s. (Atkinson and Bridge 2005, 16)

With some exceptions (Bridge 2003; Butler with Robson 2003; Lees 2003) writers have tended to treat gentrification as an un-socially and un-geographically differentiated category glossing over differences within the middle-class socio-spatial habitus. The term 'gentrification' has broadly assumed the status of a metaphor for the upgrading of the inner city by higher professionals (Hamnett 2003). However, as the opening quotation indicates, this is no longer a sustainable position. Due to the social and geographical scale of metropolitan centres such as London, New York and Paris, gentrification is more diverse there than in smaller or non global/metropolitan cities. Super-gentrification (Lees 2000 2003) is one

example of this diversification. At the other end of the scale, Preteceille (2004 forthcoming) has shown that the majority group in the ongoing gentrification of Paris' core arrondissements is the 'ordinary' middle class. In other words, in understanding gentrification we need to recognize that metropolitan structures have important local articulations in which context, place, locality and scale, all play a crucial role. Whilst globalization has undoubtedly altered the scale at which social structures are organized and experienced (Rofe 2003), its implications for the geographical (re)structuring and sociological stratification of gentrification needs to be understood as a subject for investigation rather than a taken-for-granted assumption.

Ley (2004) discusses some of the limitations of the globalization literature, particularly its economic tendencies and failure to focus on different forms of agency. Globalization, he argues, has not created subjects who transcend spaces. He is also critical of the

separation of the global and the local and the ascription of mobility and universalism to the global and stasis and parochialism to the local (2004, 151)

which he sees as an oversimplification. Like Ley, our aim in this paper is to

open up globe talk by animating certain agents of global capitalism and cosmopolitan ideology, by highlighting their distinctive and bounded territories, and by filling out more fully their distinctive subjectivities. (Ley 2004, 162)

In so doing, we complicate the globalization literature's 'world without borders' by showing the preference for a local and particular neighbourhood by many who might otherwise be cast as global masters of the universe. But where Ley focuses on transnational businessmen and cosmopolitan professionals, we look at a fraction of the latter class who Lees (2000 2003) terms 'super-gentrifiers' or 'financiers'. Our argument is that not all global workers – or more accurately workers in globally connected industries – are restlessly mobile frequent-flying cosmopolitans, for super-gentrifiers are actually very bound occupationally and residentially to highly restricted quarters in the central and inner city. As Ley puts it,

metaphors of domination need to be mingled with metaphors of vulnerability, images of global reach with those of parochialism, a discourse of detachment with one of partisanship. (2004, 157)

The research presented in this paper underscores the continuing significance of spatial and social differentiation in a globalizing society and the unexpected 'fixedness' of so-called global actors (see Prytherch and Marston 2005, 98).

Whilst Ley's (2004) discussion is a useful starting point, particularly in distinguishing between the literatures on globalization and global cities, he relies on general empirics, often from other people's work, in his discussion. We offer a more detailed empirical picture in which we focus on one class fraction within the wider category of cosmopolitan professionals – super-gentrifiers in the mature gentrified neighbourhood of Barnsbury in inner London. We show that super-gentrification has particular causes and effects that are different to those associated with the classic gentrification that has progressively taken over much of inner London over the last 30 or 40 years. We are sensitive throughout our discussion to the similarities and differences between super-gentrification in London and New York, especially between two neighbourhoods with very similar temporal and spatial gentrification profiles – Brooklyn Heights (Lees 2003) and Barnsbury (Butler 2002 2003; Butler and Robson

2003; Carpenter and Lees 1995; Lees 1994a 1994b 1996), and between super-gentrification in Barnsbury and contemporary gentrification in other inner London neighbourhoods (Butler with Robson 2003).

Drawing upon archival and our own research data, we track the gentrification process in Barnsbury from its beginnings in the late 1950s and compare the previous rounds of gentrification with a new wave of (re)gentrification. We identify crudely three generations of gentrification in Barnsbury: first wave or pioneer gentrification, second wave or corporate/professional gentrification; and a third wave of super-gentrification that is on-going. Whilst there has been some outward movement by the original gentrifying households, there is still evidence of the co-existence of the gentrifiers associated with these three generations of gentrification in Barnsbury today.

The paper is structured as follows. First, we discuss why we use the term, and what we mean by, 'super-gentrification' and how it relates to the literatures on globalization and global cities; second, we discuss our data and methods; third, in what is the substantive empirical section of the paper, we discuss both the history of gentrification and the on-going super-gentrification of Barnsbury. Comparing the different waves of gentrification in Barnsbury is important in identifying how super-gentrification is similar and/or different. Finally, we conclude with a discussion on the process of super-gentrification – on how Barnsbury differs from other gentrified neighbourhoods in inner London, on the similarities and differences between super-gentrification in Barnsbury and Brooklyn Heights, and on the continuities and disjunctures between super-gentrification and its more traditional manifestations. We end with further discussion about the relationship between super-gentrification, globalization and global cities, and ask whether super-gentrification might happen in other neighbourhoods and cities.

### Super-gentrification and globalization

We use the term 'super-gentrification' for a number of reasons. It might be argued that, having become so well-established, we are no longer witnessing a process of gentrification in Barnsbury. Rather, it might be argued, what has been going on over the last decade is simply the consolidation of this part of the inner London housing market with prices on an ever upward trend. Barnsbury, on this view, has

simply joined the ranks of elite districts in London such as Chelsea, Hampstead, Blackheath, Fulham and, more recently, Notting Hill. Gentrification implies a transformation in a neighbourhood's social class composition and there is little evidence of continued social displacement in Barnsbury – the stock of suitable housing has long been converted. But we have chosen the term 'super-gentrification' precisely because it describes a further process of gentrification that has been occurring in Barnsbury since the mid-1990s, a process that includes a significant step change in social class composition and evidence of social replacement (rather than displacement) with a significant transformation in community relations.

We use the prefix 'super' to demonstrate that this is a further level of gentrification, which is superimposed on an already gentrified neighbourhood. One that involves a higher financial or economic investment in the neighbourhood than previous waves of gentrification and thus requires a qualitatively different level of economic resource. In other words, one in which the previous 'ordinary' professional middle classes are slowly being replaced; in Brooklyn Heights (see Lees 2003) many are cashing in their properties, selling them to this new breed of super-gentrifier. These new gentrifiers are a qualitatively different group of very high salaried 'masters of the universe' who are able to buy overpriced properties and entertain themselves in the restaurants and expensive shops of Upper Street's (p)leisure zone. Many, if not most, of these gentrifiers not only enjoy large salaries but can also aspire to large, regular and reasonably predictable bonus payments that enable them to afford large down payments and will allow them to pay off mortgages within a few years. Their investment in property in highly valued locations, such as Barnsbury, is driven by super-profits from the global financial world.

In defining super-gentrifiers as a specific group, we follow earlier work by – for example – Ley (1980) on liberal public sector workers and Zukin (1988) on artists, where the cultural aspects of gentrifiers have been bound to specific social groups and where profession is an important determinant of the values, aspirations and residential needs and preferences of the group. This connects to Castells' (1989) argument about the increasing differentiation of labour in the two most dynamic sectors of the economy – 'the information based formal economy' (white university-educated workers) and the 'downgraded labor-based informal economy' (poorly

educated ethnic minorities). Beaverstock *et al.* (2004) argue that the key divide that gentrification authors have long focused on – that between the work rich and work poor – should concern us less than the divide between the super-rich elite and the rest (something that Lees' (2003) work on income changes over time in gentrified Brooklyn Heights suggests but does not explicitly state).

We use the suffix 'gentrification' as a metaphor for social change, here a new, more elite, more globally connected gentry is moving into the neighbourhood. This argument is largely founded around Sassen's (1991) argument about the creation of a new class of financial engineers who have successfully commodified the financial services industries creating new products and great wealth for themselves. Her claim is that this has driven both the creation of a new financial services industry located in key global cities (notably New York, London and – now to a lesser extent – Tokyo) and of a consumption infrastructure which she equates with residential gentrification. Her argument, which has been subjected to much critical evaluation, is that this has led to the emergence of a polarized social structure in such cities. The critics have argued (Buck *et al.* 2002; Hamnett 2003; Preteceille 2004, amongst others) that this claim is based more on assertion than evidence. Whilst they agree that there is growing income inequality in such cities, they deny this is social polarization. The sceptics argue that there is no evidence of declining incomes amongst those in work, although they tend to ignore the growing numbers, particularly in Europe, dependent on state benefits (Burgers 1996; Burgers and Musterd 2002). Others point to growing numbers of intermediate workers in cities like London and Paris, whose growth in real and percentage terms has outstripped that of the prototypical professional managerial gentrifying classes (Preteceille 2004; Butler *et al.* forthcoming). What they argue in common is that the linkages between the forces of globalization and the dynamics of global cities need to be spelled out much more clearly (Buck *et al.* 2002). Preteceille (2004 forthcoming) complains that Neil Smith (1996 2002), like Sassen (1991), has similarly imposed an *a priori* American model of urban gentrification (see also Lees 2000, who compares American and Canadian models) in which the incoming revanchist upper middle classes have laid waste to the inner city, on cities across the globe irrespective of local context. This point is well-made by Clark (2005) in a sharp aside

about Smith demanding to see the (in Clark's view non-existent at the time) 'gentrification frontier' in Malmö, Sweden.

Most recently, Atkinson and Bridge have argued that 'gentrification today must be seen in the context of globalisation' (2005, 7), whilst glossing over the causal links between globalization and gentrification. Like Smith (2002), they link globalization and gentrification by discussing neo-liberal urban policy regimes, the hyper-mobility of global capital and workers, the expansion and increased wealth of the cosmopolitan class, and so on. But they provide little to no empirical or conceptual detail in their discussion. The challenge is made even more difficult by the fact that the globalization literature and the gentrification literature have, to date, paid little attention to each other. It is evident now that this must change and, following Atkinson and Bridge (2005), we begin here to draw together these literatures, but future work needs to build on this.

In so doing, we take issue with a globalization literature that has, we feel, over-emphasized (hyper) mobility, unfixedity, flow, dislocation, transnationalism and cosmopolitanism. For super-gentrifiers, who are part of the new global elite, do not necessarily share these characteristics. The ones that we have studied have formed 'personal micro-networks' (Beaverstock and Boardwell 2000) that centre on residence and leisure space in Barnsbury. Super-gentrifiers work in a 'contact-intensive sub-culture' (Ley 2004, 157) where co-location in the City and face-to-face meetings are very important. For super-gentrifiers this has influenced their choice of residence too – they want quick and easy access to the City and to be able to easily meet up and socialize with their cohort in Barnsbury (on their doorstep) or the West End (10–15 minutes away). Bourdieu (2005) shows that there is a social class gradient in the preparedness to travel long distances to work and that it is the ability to match the propensities and capabilities of the habitus that defines the senior professionals in their housing choices, which nearly always means living near to work and with similar socio-economic fractions. This need to socialize and live with their own cohort is probably a function of the fact that

They worry a great deal about the threat of being out of touch, about not keeping up with news, about not keeping up with peers. (Gad 1991, 207, quoted in Ley 2004, 157)

Like Beaverstock *et al.* (2004), we draw a distinction between a genuinely transnational faction of the

global elite (the super-rich), globally mobile managers and those professionals who maintain the global finance machine from their fixed bases in Manhattan, the City of London and a very restricted list of B grade cities. These differences within elite groups can be spatially represented, as we argue later, by geo-demographic software such as Mosaic or Acorn. Super-gentrifiers are different from both the traditional banking and stockbroking elites that live in areas such as Chelsea, St John's Wood and more recently Notting Hill and the super wealthy international bourgeoisie living in Mayfair, Park Lane and much of Kensington. They can also be distinguished from the global managers restlessly roaming the world that have been identified by Rofe (2003), who sees one of the major consequences of globalization as having been the erosion of space as a significant determinant of social relations. As spatial barriers become increasingly permeable, notions of community likewise become increasingly fluid. Rofe quotes Waters (1995), who argues that globalization means that territory will disappear as an organizing principle for social and cultural life. We dispute that this is necessarily the case and argue that space does not always get eroded by globalization. In Barnsbury it is being (re)produced as a by-product of globalization. Super-gentrifiers are not Rofe's transnational elite; indeed Rofe (2003, 2512) himself argues that not all gentrifiers are members of the transnational elite. We agree with Rofe that recognizing the

spatially fragmented and socially fragmenting nature of globalization is vital if balanced critiques of globalization's impacts and the emergence of global elite communities are to be achieved. (2003, 2517)

By focusing our research lens on the neighbourhood of Barnsbury, we directly address the fact that, as Atkinson and Bridge argue, 'the literature on globalization has not been geared towards the level of the neighbourhood' (2005, 7). There is little to no detailed empirical research that 'fixes' globalization at the local/neighbourhood level – most work focuses on global nodes or networks or undertakes ethnographies within the space of global flows. Following Beaverstock *et al.* (2004), we argue that tracing the 'micro-networks' and activity spaces of the super-rich is pivotal to any understanding of globalization. Second, we look at an elite group of gentrifiers who have chosen not to colonize a formerly working-class neighbourhood, but to re-colonize an existing gentrified neighbourhood. These

super-gentrifiers actively connect global capital flows to the neighbourhood level not through their personally mobile lifestyle but through their connections with the City of London's globally connected industries which have come to rely, to an extent, on face to face contacts not just in the Square Mile but also in the neighbourhood. In contrast to Rofo's (2003) argument that, in order to maintain a distinctive identity, the gentrifying class as an emergent elite projects its identity from the scale of the local onto the global, we demonstrate the opposite: elite super-gentrifiers are projecting a global identity onto the local. Our point is that this global identity is, to some extent, rooted in what might be seen as rather place bound and traditional industries which have nevertheless managed to make themselves indispensable to the new accumulation regimes which are centred in cities such as London and New York. Rather than the erosion of space by globalization, here we see the reconstitution of (elite) space at the neighbourhood level.

## Data and method

The longitudinal nature of the primary empirical data to be found in this paper is unusual in the gentrification literature. We have drawn on a portfolio of first hand research undertaken in Barnsbury over the past 15 years – this includes Lees' PhD research undertaken in the early 1990s,<sup>1</sup> Butler's ESRC<sup>2</sup> funded research undertaken in the late 1990s/early 2000s – part of a wider study of the gentrification of inner London around the turn of the century (see Butler with Robson 2003) and some additional research undertaken in 2005. In this paper we have utilized a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods – analysis of census data and other socio-economic data, in-depth interviews, a household survey, and archival research of documentation on first, second and third generation gentrification. Finding qualitative evidence about super-gentrification in Barnsbury has been relatively straightforward – from survey and the associated interview data; quantitative evidence has been more difficult to collect. The research on super-gentrification in New York City, undertaken by Lees (2003), was able to use small scale US census tract data on family income to show how Brooklyn Heights had super-gentrified between 1990 and 2000; similar small area data on income is not available from the UK census (see Bramley and Lancaster 1998). As Beaverstock *et al.* (2004) point

out, there is a lack of data available for locating the super-rich. Official government statistics provide inadequate, or as is the case in the UK non-existent, data on income. Neither does the UK census provide information on house prices. In its place, we use house price data from the Land Registry and survey data we have gathered on residents' incomes and on how they funded the purchase of their property and in many cases remodelled it.

We also use the geo-demographic software programme Mosaic to look at the types of gentrifiers living in Barnsbury today. Geo-demographic software is a relatively recent development which aims to identify groups of people with their postcode (Burrows and Gane forthcoming). The classifications which have been developed are essentially ones based around consumption characteristics and are aimed at those running marketing campaigns. Mosaic is one of the best known and accessible via postcodes. The Mosaic classification is more detailed than other programmes such as Acorn, and an analysis of the 73 respondents in Butler's household survey demonstrates striking similarities to the Mosaic description of Barnsbury's postcodes.

## The case of Barnsbury, Islington, North London

### *The history of gentrification in Barnsbury*

Barnsbury is a residential neighbourhood in the north London borough of Islington, located approximately two miles from the City of London (see Figure 1). Barnsbury was built around 1820 as an upper middle-class suburb on hilltop fields stretching northwards; the housing is composed of terraces and detached villas. Post World War II suburbanization fuelled the abandonment of Barnsbury by the middle classes, but where Americans fled from race, from people of colour, the residents of Barnsbury fled from the working classes:

A combination of class fear and railway engineering turned a vast stretch of residential London into a no-man's land ... Camden Town, Holloway, Islington, were abandoned to the hopelessly entrenched working class. It's only in the last decade or so that a new middle class, trendy and pioneer, have replaced these buffer areas, between the nobs and the mob of N1 and NW1. (Raban 1974)

As in the United States, the suburbanization of London was facilitated by the state. Abercrombie's *Greater London Plan* (1944), which became the blueprint

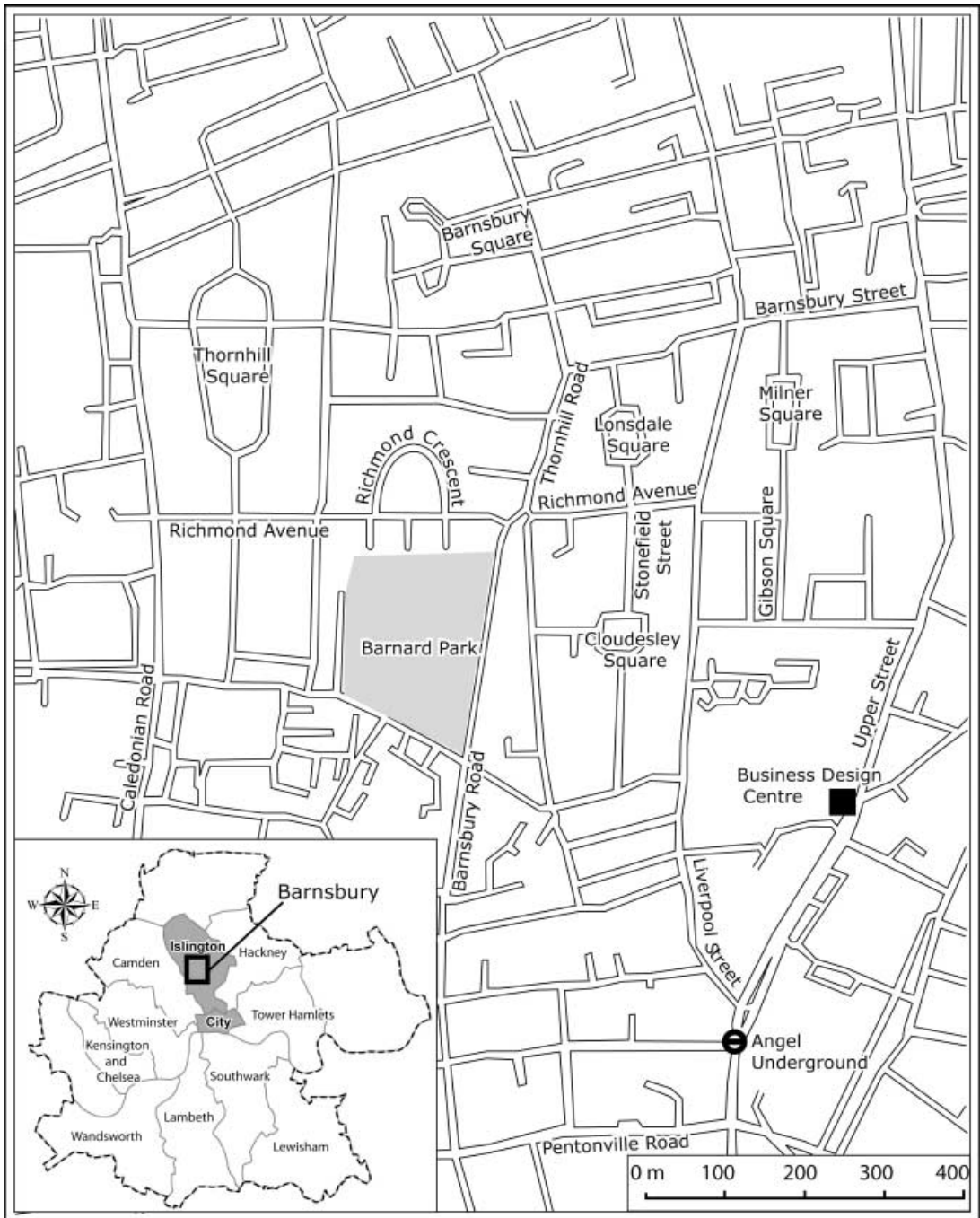


Figure 1 Barnsbury

for the post-war reconstruction of London, institutionalized the valorization of the suburbs and the devalorization of the inner city. This was further entrenched by the 1952 *New Town Development Act* which exported 30 000 Londoners to expanded towns such as Bury St Edmunds. The properties they left behind rapidly went into multi-occupation. In post-war London the demand for housing was greater than the available supply, but the pressure caused by demand varied across London and Barnsbury became one of the city's areas of greatest housing stress. In 1961, 62 per cent of Barnsbury's households lived in shared accommodation in comparison to only 30 per cent in the County of London (London Borough of Islington 1966, 6). In a 1968 pilot survey in Matilda Street, Barnsbury, out of 160 households interviewed: 127 had no access to a bath, 138 shared a toilet, 15 had no kitchen sink and 25 were living in overcrowded conditions (London Borough of Islington 1969, 13).

Gentrifiers first began moving into Barnsbury in the late 1950s. In the 1960s there was a shift from urban redevelopment to urban renewal which meant that the improvement of inner city areas became the job of the private market, i.e. owner occupiers and landlords (Williams 1978, 31). This shift can be associated with the beginnings of gentrification in Barnsbury. The first main influx occurred between 1961 and 1975. The first generation of gentrifiers were the left leaning liberals that Ley (1996) identifies. They were architects, planners, university lecturers, comprehensive school teachers, social workers, medical technicians and so on; they were also overwhelmingly Labour (party) voting (Bugler 1968). As one pioneer gentrifier put it:

I like the place because there's such a lack of the products of English public schools. My man, and all that. People aren't affected here as they are in Chelsea, Hampstead or South Kensington. (Anthony Froshang, graphic designer, in Carson 1965)

It was the value gap<sup>3</sup> and its attendant tenurial transformation that was the main initiator of gentrification in Barnsbury (see Lees 1994a, on the uneven temporal and spatial operation of the value gap in Barnsbury). The value gap became important in Barnsbury in the late 1950s and especially the 1960s; landlords were getting a decreasing return on their rented property whilst developers were realizing capital gains by buying up rented property, evicting the tenants and selling it in a vacant state. The middle classes were a captive market and

building societies were releasing more funds to inner city property (Pitt 1977, 9). The turning point for Barnsbury came with the 1957 Rent Act which decontrolled unfurnished tenancies during a time of increasing home ownership. As a result, Barnsbury suffered many cases of 'winkling', where tenants were forced to leave as a consequence of bribery and harassment by unscrupulous landlords. The 1969 Housing Act demonstrated a new commitment from government to rehabilitation instead of just renewal. The Act provided local authorities with the power to allocate discretionary improvement grants; as the grants had to be met pound for pound by the improver, they automatically favoured the more well-off improver or developer (Hamnett 1973, 252-3) and aided the gentrification process in Barnsbury. In 1971, 56 per cent of all Islington's improvement grants went to the wards of Barnsbury and St Peters (Power 1972, 3). The rapid tenurial transformation that ensued in Barnsbury is quite striking (see Table 1).<sup>4</sup>

Williams (1978, 23-4) argues that building societies only began to take an interest in lending on inner city properties in Islington after 1972, by which time increasing numbers of middle-class professionals had bought properties in the area.

The change in the area has been phenomenal. I was the first gentrified house in the street, I was too naïve to realise just how dangerous it was then (there was a brothel opposite, everything was tumble down and ruined). Gradually people came in and turned these wrecks into very nice houses, though we have lost some characters (not all of whom I miss). (Mrs Stanley, 75)<sup>5</sup>

As more and more middle-class people moved into Barnsbury, property prices rose year on year – the average sales price of all houses in Barnsbury

**Table 1 Tenurial transformation in Barnsbury, 1961–2001**

Tenure (%)	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001
Owner occupier	7.0	14.7	19.0	28.9	34.0
Council	15.0	18.7	56.0	48.7	47.8
Furnished rent	14.0	16.8	7.1	7.7	16.6
Unfurnished rent	61.0	48.4	6.8	3.0	

Source: UK Census, 10% sample

Note: In 2001 the unfurnished category was not enumerated and the council sector contained 21.2% renting directly from the council and the remainder from other registered social landlords. There were also significant boundary changes between 1971–81 and 1991–2001

rising from £1200 in 1955 to £208 125 in 1991 (Lees 1994b, Table 5.10, 174); then – mirroring discussions of recession elsewhere (see Hackworth and Smith 2001) – dropped to £185 500 in 1992. The late 1980s/early 1990s recession constricted the flow of capital into Barnsbury but, from 1993/4 onwards, the pace of gentrification resumed as we discuss in the next section.

Throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s, a second wave of gentrification occurred throughout Barnsbury. This second wave of gentrification was enframed by wider changes taking place in the City of London (Fainstein *et al.* 1992). The City of London's function as a banking and finance centre became more pronounced with the de-regulation of the Stock Exchange in 1986 and the full internationalization of securities dealing. A new wave of 'City types' began to move into Barnsbury. This second generation of gentrifiers were, in some respects, a transitional group between the first and third generation gentrifiers. They were a wealthier group of professionals than the pioneer gentrifiers and were overwhelmingly represented in Social Class 1 (Higher Managerial and Professional). Table 2 shows that in Barnsbury Social Class 1 increased by 2.5 percentage points between 1981 and 1991 – taking into account changes in the enumeration of the economically inactive, this was a real growth of some 14 per cent. By 1991, Social Class 1 in Barnsbury was nearly twice that in Islington as a whole. All other social class groups in Barnsbury actually decreased over the same time period. The 'City types' who were beginning to move in during this period were drawn from the upper professional strata, as Sassen noted:

**Table 2 Social class change in Barnsbury and Islington, 1981–1991**

Social class	Barnsbury		Islington	
	1981	1991	1981	1991
1. Professionals	6.9	9.4	4.6	5.7
2. Managerial and technical	26.0	20.0	19.3	19.1
3NM. Skilled non-manual	13.3	7.7	13.3	8.5
3M. Skilled manual	24.3	14.1	29.6	12.8
4. Partly skilled	17.9	4.4	20.7	9.0
5. Unskilled	7.9	4.9	8.8	4.6
Others	3.7	6.5	3.7	5.9
Economically inactive		33.0		34.3

Source: UK Census, 10% sample

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The most central areas of London have undergone a transformation that broadly parallels Manhattan's ... We see a parallel increase in the stratum of what Brint (1988) has described as upper professionals, a group largely employed in corporate services, including finance. The sharp growth in the concentration of the mostly young, new high-income professionals and managers employed in central London represents a significant change from a decade ago. (1991, 265)

As gentrification in Barnsbury matured, corporate participation increased. This was especially evident in the commercial gentrification of Upper Street. In the late 1980s, Upper Street was still rather 'down at heel' but, by the late 1990s, it had become an upscale consumption playground for the rich living in its adjacent streets and squares. Islington Borough Council (in partnership with London Underground in the case of the redevelopment of Angel tube station) subsidized the redevelopment of Upper Street and, as its reputation grew, it attracted increasingly more expensive shops and restaurants. The redevelopment of the old Agricultural Hall on Upper Street into what is now the Business Design Centre symbolized this corporate investment in Barnsbury (see Plate 1).



**Plate 1 The Business Design Centre**

During this second wave of gentrification, there was a slowdown between 1987 and 1992. This was the result of a number of factors – the 1987 Stock Market crash, the fact that the then Chancellor Nigel Lawson increased interest rates to control inflation thus forcing mortgage rates up, and the announcement that multiple mortgage tax relief was to be abolished. Also, interestingly, the redevelopment of Docklands was a factor:

I think that the main change for Islington as a whole was when Docklands started up, we probably lost a little bit of business to Docklands because Docklands was pricing itself at the top end of the market, and Barnsbury for Islington is the top end of the market. I'm sure Barnsbury suffered. But really Docklands has gone flat now, you know it doesn't affect us at all, in fact there may even be a shift back from Docklands to Islington. They're both well placed for the City so we weren't really after the same sort of people. (Interview with real estate agent, 1992, in Lees 1994b)

In the next section we see the 'sort of people' that Barnsbury was to attract, the super-gentrifiers that came with a third wave of gentrification that began in the mid-1990s and is on-going today.

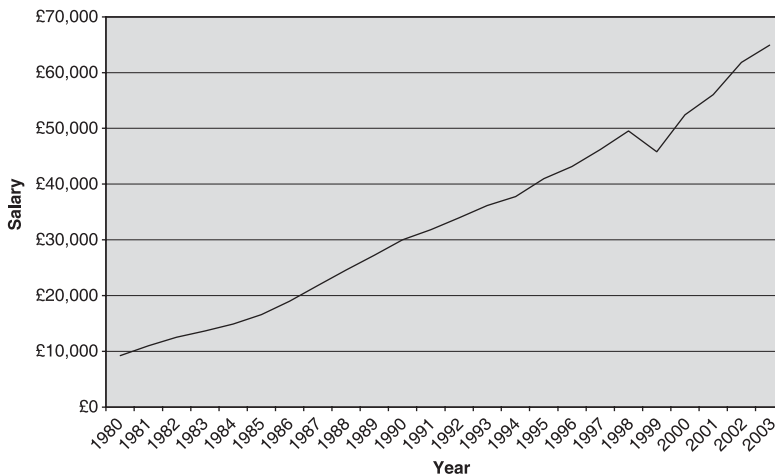
In 1993, the Blairs, having moved to another part of Islington in 1986 from their original house in Hackney's London Fields, arrived in Barnsbury. This was towards the end of this second phase of gentrification and coincided with the tail end of the negative housing equity recession of the late 1980s/early 1990s. By the time they sold their Richmond Crescent house in 1997, it had nearly doubled in price (to around £700 000) and has probably doubled again since then. When the Blairs moved in, it was still possible for successful professionals to buy a family property in Barnsbury. By the time they sold, it was really only those working at the top end of the legal professions and the financial services industries and the otherwise wealthy who could buy such houses.

### *Super-gentrification in Barnsbury*

In the mid-1990s a new process of post-recession gentrification emerged. This super-gentrification in Barnsbury is connected, we argue, to post-deregulation developments in the City of London and to the increase in London's global city functions. Deregulation of the Stock Exchange in 1986 brought about a big expansion in City employment, but deregulation had another effect that was perhaps more significant for super-gentrification. In the 1990s, because deregulation had been insufficient to

invigorate the rather conservative British finance houses, these firms were taken over, largely by foreign, mainly US-based financial mega-players – this led to large numbers of very high salaries and to the increased internationalization of the workers in these firms, which now make up about a third of City employment (Buck *et al.* 2002, 112). By 1997 there were 479 foreign banks in London, by the late 1990s the number had increased again to 550 (Hamnett 2003, 38). The 1990s marked a boom period for job growth in merchant banking, investment banking, and equity sales and research. Between 1995 and 2001 international banking increased by 43 per cent, international securities trading by 167 per cent, derivatives by 78 per cent, corporate finance by 36 per cent, and professional services by 41 per cent (Lombard Street Research Limited 2003, 47). Other global activities were important too, law and accountancy in particular, both heavily concentrated in the City and Westminster, saw a rapid growth in their international business. City employment in financial services grew annually by 1.1 per cent between 1971 and 2001, but the 1990s were the most dynamic period, when annual increases were 2.6 per cent, compared to below 1.5 per cent in the 1970s and 1980s (Lombard Street Research Ltd 2003, 17). From the mid-1990s earnings grew sharply (see Figure 2) in response to the internationalization of salaries (which meant paying City workers salaries akin to their equivalents in New York) and a 'bonus culture' which spread to the City from the US (Hamnett 2003, 84–5). From 1968 until 1980, the average earnings of a male non-manual worker in the City exceeded the national average by 20–30 per cent. The differential rose to 40 per cent by the middle of the 1980s and to over 60 per cent by 1990. During most of the 1990s, it continued to increase, reaching almost 90 per cent by 1998 (Lombard Street Research Ltd 2003, 19).

Third wave gentrification in Barnsbury was of a different type and magnitude to the previous waves. As Hackworth (2001, 879) notes, in its third wave the process of gentrification began to change both quantitatively and qualitatively. Whereas elsewhere in inner London, according to Butler (Butler with Robson 2003), even in Conservative voting Battersea, parents sent their children to the local primary school, in Barnsbury a majority had withdrawn their children from the local, well-performing primary schools by the age of seven to prepare them for entry into the private sector.



**Figure 2 Average salaries in the City of London 1980–2003**

Source: Lombard Street Research Ltd (2003, 51). Average annual earnings of full-time, male, non-manual worker in the City. Data derived from New Earnings Survey

The previous generation of gentrifiers now see a new, much wealthier, type of gentrifier moving in, with themselves becoming squeezed between the new 'have lots' and the existing 'have nots'. We note some of the accounts given by different generations of gentrifiers in Barnsbury from interviews undertaken in 2000 by Butler (Butler with Robson 2003). These interviews form the foreground for a more rigorous subsequent analysis of the surveyed population later on in this section. What is interesting about these interviews is how the different accounts can be broadly related to their age and when they arrived in Barnsbury. These short excerpts provide some important nuances to the subsequent analysis of the survey data. This juxtaposition of views comes across clearly in the following three accounts by Mr White (aged 63) a first-generation gentrifier, Helen (aged 44) a second-generation arrivee, and Martin (aged 30) who represents the recent super-gentrifying cohort:

The most striking thing about the area recently has been the dramatic increase in house prices. The people now coming in are very different from those who could afford it when we came – gentrification is not new, but it is now much more wealthy people coming in. (Mr White, 63)

More and more colonization by the upwardly mobile, even in the three years that I've been here ... There's been

a big increase in foreign accents around, more upwardly mobile foreigners, and this is accelerating. This is the globalization of the workforce and Islington has changed, being so central, because of this. (Martin, 30)

The new super-gentrifiers are talked about in very similar ways to those displaced by an earlier generation of gentrification:

In the last two years the red Porsches have arrived, new people have been coming in. They want to change things straight away regardless of what's already there. Very arrogant. Not friendly or community minded – they put nothing into the fabric of the community, only money into the commercial infrastructure rather than their personalities or talents. They are making a new economy, but are absent from the community. (Helen, 44)

This, of course, is precisely how the pioneer gentrifiers 40 years previously appeared to Islington's working classes.

These interview quotes from Barnsbury gentrifiers are almost identical to the comments made by Brooklyn Heights residents (see Lees 2003). In particular, gentrifiers from a previous round comment on the new gentrifiers' lack of commitment to the area and community, their aggressive emphasis on monetary values, and the sense that new tensions have emerged. As in Brooklyn Heights, it has had implications for the consumption infrastructure (notably Upper Street – see Figure 1), which has

**Table 3 Social class change in Barnsbury and Islington, 1991–2001 (% SEG 1–15)**

SEG		Barnsbury			Islington		
		91	01	ppc	91	01	ppc
1.1	Employers large orgs	0	0.6	0.6	0	0.6	0.6
1.2	Managers large orgs	4.7	9.9	5.2	4.5	9.1	4.6
2.1	Employers small orgs	1.7	2.4	-0.7	1.8	2.4	-0.6
2.1	Managers small orgs	9.7	5.2	-4.5	8.7	5.0	-3.7
3	Professionals – self employed	2.9	3.4	0.5	1.7	2.7	1.0
4	Professionals – employed	8.7	10.5	1.8	6.3	9.5	3.2
5.1	Intermediate non manual	16.3	25.4	9.1	16.8	25.6	8.8
5.2	Intermediate supervisory	0.6	3.8	3.2	0.6	4.0	3.4
1–5		44.6	61.2	16.6	40.4	58.9	18.5
6–15		56.2	38.8	17.4	59.6	41.3	18.3

Source: 1991 and 2001 Census data (but see note below). We are grateful to Mark Ramsden for undertaking the work to make the two census years compatible both in geography and social class terms

Note: We compare 1991 and 2001 using a common geography based around post code sectors and having recoded the 2001 data in terms of SEG. There are some problems with the category of 1.1 for 1991 because it was based on a 10% sample which reduced numbers to a level where they were recoded for purposes of maintaining confidentiality

become even more exclusive, as a third-generation gentrifier explains:

It's now very vibrant, with a great 'street' life – a choice of restaurants, bars, theatres etc. . . . recent gentrification is a result of changes in the City. It's more attractive now for young singles, lots more businesses attracted to the area, which has benefited wider populations and the whole area is much smarter. (Isobel, 49)

And more polarized:

Shops are either really expensive, for example the trendy bakeries and chi chi delicatessens, or very poor quality, as in the Cally. There is not much in between, and this is an imbalance. (Diana, 52)

The 2001 Census (see Table 3 and Figure 3) shows that, between 1991 and 2001, managers in large organizations (SEG 1.2) in Barnsbury grew by 1243 heads of households, from 242 to 1485 and in the case of employed professionals (SEG 4) by 1160 heads of household from 420 to 1580. At the same time, we should note the large and continued expansion of SEG 5.1 (the middle ranks in the social scale) suggesting that the super-gentrification thesis is one of relative rather than absolute transformation and that we are witnessing, as is suggested in some of the survey responses, a tripartite class division between super wealthy professionals and managers, middle-class professionals, and the working class/economically inactive. The latter are largely confined to the social housing sector in Barnsbury. At the scale of the

neighbourhood then Barnsbury largely supports Fainstein's (1999) argument that Sassen's (1991) social polarization thesis of 'a disappearing middle' does not seem to hold up, except in the sense that the shares of all income quintiles are declining relative to the top. The growing inequality that is occurring is the result of the very large increases in individual earnings and household income at the top.

Fifty-two per cent of survey respondents in Barnsbury were in the higher managerial professions, with a further 32 per cent in lower managerial professions. An analysis of the respondents' (or their partners') occupations showed that, amongst the more recent residents, the newer professions of investment bankers and City lawyers predominated; whilst journalists, civil servants and medical professionals were found amongst the second generation as well as the first, which also had more routine and lower paid professionals, including those in welfare and academia. This group of respondents is therefore somewhat exceptional – compared to the population as a whole, but also to the other middle-class gentrifiers interviewed by Butler across London as a whole (Butler with Robson 2003). Respondents in Barnsbury, unlike those elsewhere and those who have lived in Barnsbury for more than 10 years, have focused on the key professions which have benefited from the expansion of the City of London – banking, financial services and law. Their reference points are an

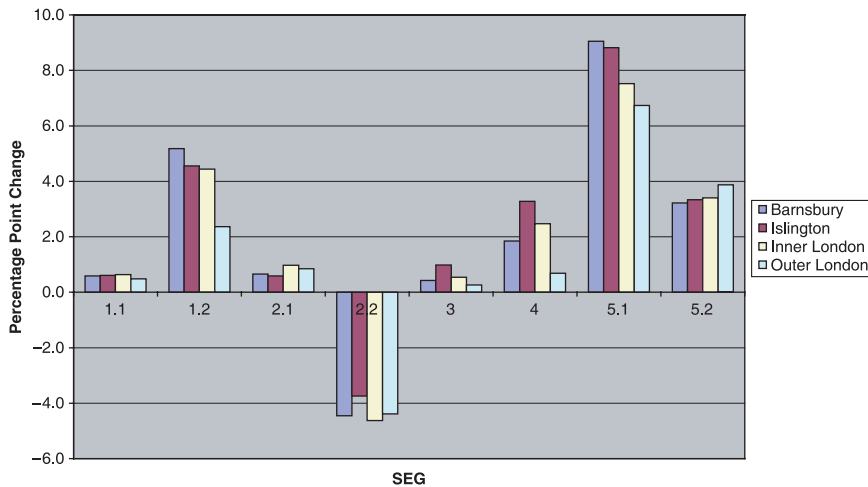


Figure 3 Social change in Barnsbury, Islington, Inner and Outer London, 1991–2001

Source: Census data used in Table 3

increasingly globalized economy in which lawyers and investment bankers can expect salaries in excess of £250 000 on becoming partners in one of the major law firms or 'taking silk' in many of the barristers' chambers or on reaching a director level in one of the banks.

Turning to house price data over the last five years, Figure 4 indicates the rate of growth for terraced houses in the study area, Islington and Greater London. The rate of increase in Barnsbury (123%) is marginally less than that for Islington (130%) and Greater London (129%) over the same period; the rate of increase for flats and maisonettes is only 73 per cent compared to 103 per cent for Greater London over the same period. This suggests a consolidation of Barnsbury as an area in which single-family houses (which are the most expensive) as opposed to flats are being re-geographical. The important point, however, is the absolute increase in prices: whereas in 1999 houses in the study area were selling for an average price of £308 102, by 2005 this had risen to £685 708 – such prices can now only be afforded by those with very large salaries and particularly City-type bonuses. The most rapid rise in prices occurred between 1991 and 2001, when houses in the study area increased by 65 per cent compared to 44 per cent in the rest of Islington and 46 per cent in Greater London. In Islington and Greater London the number of sales was roughly similar in 2001

and 2005, but about one third lower in 1999; in Barnsbury, however, the number of transactions in 2001 was roughly double that at the same period in 1999 or 2005. This suggests that, during the early years of the twenty-first century, whilst there was a slowdown in the City and stock prices, there was nevertheless a major, sustained and atypical property boom in Barnsbury. The rate of increase has slowed since, but nevertheless absolute prices and the frenetic activity between 1999 and 2001 indicate that this was a process of super-geographical in which salaried professionals in traditional areas of employment would not have been able to participate even if they had previous property assets to upgrade. Academics, doctors, journalists and civil servants are simply unable to afford to operate in a housing market where the average price for a house is £680 000. Even a household income of £150 000 a year would make it difficult for those without considerable assets to purchase such a property and maintain a lifestyle that probably would include paying private school fees as well as living in a high consumption neighbourhood.

In 2000, a quarter of survey respondents had a household income in excess of £150 000 a year and a further 18 per cent reported it being between £100 000 and £150 000. This was considerably higher than the other areas studied, including the wealthy area of Battersea.<sup>6</sup> Interestingly, only in one household did *both* partners report an income

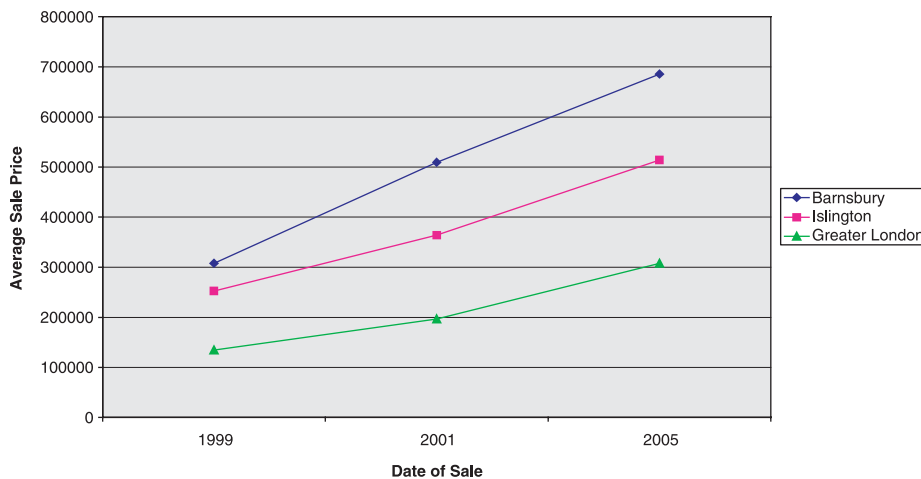


Figure 4 House price increases 1999–2005

Source: Land Registry

Table 4 Household income in Barnsbury

	0–5 years %	5–10 years %	10–20 years %	More than 20 years %
Under £50k	12	11	61	71
£50–100k	38	21	11	29
£100–150k	23	26	11	0
More than £150k	27	42	17	0
	100 (n = 26)	100 (n = 19)	100 (n = 18)	100 (n = 7)

Source: 2000 survey

Table 5 Share ownership in Barnsbury by length of residence

Share ownership	0–5 years %	5–10 years %	10–20 years %	More than 20 years %
Yes	72	67	63	57
No	28	33	37	43
Total	100 (n = 18)	100 (n = 18)	100 (n = 16)	100 (n = 7)

Source: 2000 survey

in excess of £100 000 supporting the view that, for most households, one partner’s (for which read male) salary was enough for the other to give up work at some stage when young children were demanding attention not compatible with the long hours of work in the City.

The data presented in Tables 4 and 5 suggest that the more recent residents tend to have higher

incomes and are more likely to invest in stocks and shares. The data give no indication of the extent of their wealth, but do indicate quite clearly possession of wealth and the potential to accumulate more over a work life projected over the next 25 years. The higher incomes of more recent residents is to some extent simply a function of the rise in house prices in that higher incomes are required to

**Table 6 Price of property (excluding flats) £000s when purchased**

<i>Length of residence</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>SD</i>
Up to 5 years	338.7	19	152.0
5–10 years	276.0	15	81.9
10–20 years	150.6	15	120.3
More than 20 years	17.9	9	13.6

Source: 2000 survey

**Table 7 House price value in 2000**

<i>Length of residence</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>SD</i>
Up to 5 years	533.9	18	288.7
5–10 years	603.4	16	212.7
10–20 years	576.3	15	328.7
More than 20 years	600.0	8	413.2
Total	573.9	57	294.4

Source: 2000 survey

service the larger mortgages, but it is also indicative of the level of income now needed to buy a house in Barnsbury and therefore of the social nature of its gentrification. Tables 6, 7 and 8 largely support this picture of high incomes, but also of considerable asset accumulation by those living in the area which are also largely in line with the published data on house prices presented in Figure 4.

Of the nine households with a negligible mortgage (less than £10 000), five had lived in the area more than 20 years. The mean mortgage was £88 370 for those living in houses (i.e. excluding flats and maisonettes); those who bought their houses in the 1990s were relatively more highly geared whilst, perhaps not surprisingly, those who had lived in the same house for more than 10 years had a small outstanding mortgage debt. A combination of high salaries, large bonuses and rising house prices have meant that the debt to asset ratio is relatively low for most respondents in Barnsbury.

Overall, these figures suggest that respondents had considerable housing equity in a market in which property prices have nearly doubled since the research was undertaken in early 2000. We asked how the difference between the purchase price and mortgage was managed and whilst three-quarters had financed this from the sale of previous property, the rest had funded this from 'savings,' most of which were accumulated from work – no respondents

**Table 8 Amount of mortgage**

<i>Length of residence</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>SD</i>
Up to 5 years	134.7	18	96.2
5–10 years	108.4	14	79.9
10–20 years	55.5	14	46.9
More than 20 years	6.6	8	7.9
Total	88.4	54	84.9

Source: 2000 survey

reported having inherited money at the time they were funding their property purchase. In addition, approximately half of those owning houses (as opposed to flats) had undertaken improvements, the mean cost of which was £64 000, but this included some relatively trivial amounts – less than £10 000; whilst 20 per cent of respondents had spent over £100 000 on their houses. Almost all had funded these repairs and improvements from their current income or savings. We suggest these data support our general contention that the gentrification process in Barnsbury in the 1990s has only been possible because of the super charged nature of the City of London labour market in the last 10 years, which has resulted in salaries and bonuses that enable at least some of its professional workers to buy a single family dwelling that had a base price of approximately £600 000 in 2000.

Census and official house price data suggest that there is a process of upgrading occurring in Barnsbury, but this is only indicative of change. Given the inability to discriminate at the top end of the income and wealth scale, we have attempted to triangulate these findings by reference to data from Mosaic. In the survey research that Butler undertook in Barnsbury in 2000, respondents' postcodes were coded with Mosaic classifications. Two-thirds of respondents were in Group A 'Symbols of Success' and in two subgroups 'Global Connections' (51%) and 'Cultural Leadership' (16%); the remainder (30%) were almost all in Group E 'Urban Intelligence' – which is normally associated with areas of inner London gentrification. These types are mainly London based; over 90 per cent in the case of Global Connections and Counter Cultural Mix, and around two-thirds for Cultural Leadership and New Urban Colonists. Thus, whilst the Global Connections category only constitutes 0.72 per cent of all UK households, it represented half of our respondents in Barnsbury. Both groups represent key notions of

economic and cultural leadership in the new economy, with its emphasis not just on formal economic processes, such as are now mediated through the City of London, but also as leading cultural intermediaries working through the top ends of journalism and the new digital media.

Barnsbury and the borough of Islington are not traditionally seen as upper class areas or the ones normally described as the habitat of London’s investment bankers and media moguls. These tend to be the more traditional areas such as St John’s Wood, Hampstead, Chelsea and more recently Notting Hill. Barnsbury is different from these typically upper class areas; almost none of the buildings in which respondents live are the mid-rise apartment block with a guarded entry common to these elite areas. They are, for the most part, single-family dwellings and mainly, but not exclusively, terraced houses. Moreover, whilst it is distinctive from the traditional upper class areas, Mosaic marks Barnsbury off from other gentrified areas of inner London too. Table 9<sup>7</sup> gives the Mosaic classifications for all the gentrified areas in inner London studied by Butler.

Barnsbury is not the same as other gentrified areas, despite the fact that many model themselves on Barnsbury as the archetypal gentrified area of inner London. The demographic description of Global Connections is also tantalizing in the way it points to similarities but also differences to our observed behaviour of Barnsbury residents:

This Type contains many very wealthy people who, for one reason or another, want to live as close as possible to the centre of a global city. Many of them are wealthy foreigners who find it convenient to have a London pied-à-terre, others are managers with international corporations on temporary assignment to the United Kingdom. Some are very wealthy British people who enjoy proximity to the variety of restaurants and

entertainment opportunities available in London’s West End. Some are people involved in the cultural agenda of the nation, whose working lifestyles make a central London residence a necessity. An increasing proportion of the population are older divorcees who have exchanged expensive suburban houses for smaller central London flats. ... They work locally in commercial rather than public sector occupations, and in service industries, particularly in banking and in commerce, rather than in manufacturing. Many directors of large companies live in these areas which provide convenient access to corporate headquarters, but there is also a significant number of people who are self-employed. (Source: Mosaic demonstration CD)

Barnsbury therefore differs from the mainstream of inner London gentrification which research evidence suggests is made up largely of the group described by Mosaic as ‘Urban Intelligence’ (Group E). Yet it does not share the same kind of longstanding relation to wealth and commerce that appears to typify the ‘Symbols of Success’ (Group A) classification, and it draws from a younger rather than older population who are ‘making it’ as opposed to ‘having it made’ or ‘having made it’. Residential space continues to be a key arena in which people define their social position and identity (cr. Savage *et al.* 2005, 207).

Our argument then is that the super-gentrification of Barnsbury distinguishes it from existing areas of extreme wealth and areas of ongoing gentrification by the fact that these are not the global *entrepreneurs* such as are described in the Mosaic typology of Global Connections but are very globally *connected*, mainly through their employment in the increasingly internationalized financial and legal professions in the City of London. Many of these connections stem from a shared university education at Oxbridge (rather than the elite public schools of the more traditional West London elite):

**Table 9 Mosaic classifications for respondents**

Location	Barnsbury	Battersea	Brixton	Docklands	London Fields	Telegraph Hill
A01 Global Connections	36			2		
A02 Cultural Leadership	11	11				
D27 Settled Minorities					7	10
E28 Counter Cultural Mix	7		42		39	27
E29 City Adventurers	2	9	5	61		10
E30 New Urban Colonists	11	49	28	5	19	26
Others	2				6	
Total	69	69	75	68	71	73
Survey totals	73	75	75	70	72	75

**Table 10 Higher education institution**

University	Respondent		Partner	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Oxbridge	23	32.4	21	46.7
London	7	9.9	2	4.4
Redbrick	26	36.6	12	26.7
Plateglass	5	7.0	2	4.4
Polytechnic	2	2.8	1	2.2
Other	8	11.3	7	15.6
Total	71	100.0	45	100.0

Source: 2000 survey

I'm always bumping into people I was at university with, who are now living in the area. This is common here, my husband and another friend have had the same experience ... the area is absolutely full of barristers and solicitors, who are less likely to be prepared to commute, and who I think are much less concerned about address than bankers, they just want convenience. (Christine, 38)

As Table 10 shows, with two exceptions, all respondents were university graduates (as were their partners) and one-third had been to the elite universities of Oxford or Cambridge (Oxbridge); of those living with a partner, nearly half of those partners had also been to Oxbridge.<sup>8</sup> Despite some interesting nuances of gender, what is striking is the way in which Oxbridge dominates and it is this we suggest that ties in occupations in the City to residence in Barnsbury. These trends match McDowell's (1997) finding that the leading investment banks focus their graduate recruitment efforts on Oxbridge, London, Bristol and Durham. This form of elite recruitment might, of course, be thought to represent a degree of meritocratic virtue by the 'new city' – the graduates of Oxbridge and selected 'redbrick' universities representing the brightest and best output from the UK higher education system. However, an examination of respondents' backgrounds in terms of their fathers' occupations and their type of schooling shows that two-thirds came from higher professional and managerial backgrounds and that 40 per cent of respondents went to a fee-paying school – eight times the national average – and a similar proportion went to a selective form of secondary school. Eighty per cent were brought up in homes in which their parents owned their house. As Massey (1993) argues, those social groups most empowered by globalization are often pre-existing elite groups.

## Conclusions

The process of super-gentrification that is on-going in Barnsbury is a relatively recent and incomplete phenomenon. Whilst much of London has now become middle class and much of inner London is largely gentrified, Barnsbury is clearly in transition, and currently being re-gentrified. Barnsbury is different to the other gentrified inner London neighbourhoods studied by Butler (see Butler with Robson 2003) and these differences, we suggest, are becoming greater – similarities Barnsbury shares with the super-gentrifying neighbourhood of Brooklyn Heights, in New York City (see Lees 2003). Three generations of gentrification have become sedimented in Barnsbury, although the layers have not yet become entirely settled; however, the most recent layer – laid down by super-gentrification – is creating divisions within the Barnsbury and Islington middle classes, whom it is increasingly difficult to see as a single undifferentiated class fraction. Super-gentrifiers, like the super-rich, have the potential to amass personal wealth due to globalization but, are for the most part, relatively young and much of this accumulation is currently going into consumption – notably housing, domestic help and private education. As they progress in their jobs and their children go through their education, they will be able to divert increasing proportions of their incomes into discretionary wealth. It will be interesting to see how this plays out socially, spatially and economically as this generation of super-gentrifiers age.

The empirical research on super-gentrification detailed here marks a break from conventional views found in the globalization, global city, global elite and gentrification literatures. First, the super-gentrification of Barnsbury shows that fixity/fixedness and globalization *can* go hand in hand, and that there is a need to counterbalance arguments that have gone too far down the 'unfixity' route (cf. Lees 2002, on rematerializing urban geography). Super-gentrifiers as a class fraction are the product of the globalization of financial and related services which has been responsible for the emergence of a new 'global pay grade', but this is not the same as arguing that they are necessarily themselves globally mobile in the manner suggested by Rofe (2003) and others. The research reported here suggests that they are in fact largely the product of Britain's elite education system and are closely tied to a highly restricted area of London from which they venture relatively rarely. These are not the globally mobile

business-class executives who restlessly quarter the globe, they are globally connected but occupationally localized. To this extent, it matters that they share a common education (notably at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge), work in a few large firms of solicitors ('the big six'), Inns of Court or investment banks and live in Barnsbury. Barnsbury, in this sense, has become a case study for how 'place matters' (Massey 1984).

Second, Rofe (2003) and Atkinson and Bridge (2005) identify a transnational set of elite gentrifiers that has been created by the expansion of financial services in certain global cities and the real estate investment that exploits these changes in the labour market. We agree that such a set of elite gentrifiers has been born, but we would argue that within this group are different types – and that super-gentrifiers are a particularly distinctive type (on different *types* of gentrifiers see Butler and Robson 2003b; Bridge 2003). The transnational set of elite gentrifiers that Rofe (2003) and Atkinson and Bridge (2005) identify are cosmopolitans who show a willingness to surf the flows of the global economy – seeking out and living in new places, often in new build and 'edgy' apartments (see Davidson and Lees 2005). As such, they reject a suburban-orientated identity, a sense of history and tradition and a traditional architecture; they are really the grown up version of the pioneer gentrifier – the new class that David Ley (1996) discusses. The super-gentrifier is a different species, s/he has more conservative values, is focused on social reproduction and is less interested in socio-cultural diversity than s/he might once have been – for example, Barnsbury super-gentrifiers do not send their children to state primary or secondary schools, their investment in space (the neighbourhood) is economic as well as cultural (see Butler 2003). Their economic values can be seen in the purported complaints to the makers of the Monopoly board game requesting that the Angel in Barnsbury be taken out of its low rent category and moved near the top end of the board (*The Independent* 2000)! Super-gentrifiers are not a leisure class freed from the need for employment as are the super-rich that Beaverstock *et al.* (2004) discuss. The super-rich they study are not recognizable by their occupation but by their conspicuous consumption patterns. By contrast super-gentrifiers are defined first and foremost by their occupation and education and only secondarily by their consumption of already gentrified property in Barnsbury.

Bourdieu (2005, 185–9), in his discussion of housing in France, has argued that the French *petit-bourgeoisie* were unable to match their aspirations to their capabilities in realizing the dispositions of their chosen habitus. This also applies to many gentrifiers in London, but not to Islington's super-gentrifiers who are, in effect, buying out the gentrification infrastructure of a previous and more humble first and second generation of gentrifiers, and purchasing the image at least of a socially capital-rich gentrified environment which many of the earlier gentrifiers created with their social involvements (Butler and Robson 2003b). Their forms of consumption are less obvious than those of pioneer gentrifiers (on earlier forms of consumption in Barnsbury see Carpenter and Lees 1995; Lees 1996) because they are so 'normal': restaurant meals, nannies, private education and second homes. However, the lives of the super-gentrifiers are at least as foreign to the other middle classes who continue to live in Islington as were those of the new middle class (teachers, academics, journalists, architects etc.) who settled there in the late 1960s to the working-class residents. Amongst the more recent incomers, many are women, who often share their partners' elite education but have recently given up work themselves to manage the household and their children's education and development, which is in sharp contrast with almost every other area of gentrification in inner London where Butler with Robson (2003) found that both partners in two adult households were fully involved in paid employment; the partial exception to this was Battersea where many people – mainly again men – worked in the City but more as financial technicians than professionals. This distinctive gender division of labour in which the female partners, who are highly educated and have often had high-flying careers in similar jobs to their husbands, tend not to work, harks back, at least superficially, to the traditional suburban 'stay at home mom'. The gender roles are quite different to those of first and second wave gentrifiers, where women working in paid full-time employment was an important part of their identity (Rose 1989; Bondi 1991 1999). They are also very different to the egalitarian gender relations that Bondi and Christie (2000) found to be closely associated with the lifestyle and consumption choices available to higher income and highly mobile women. Super-gentrification entails quite different processes of gender constitution.

Third, it seems that a regressive sense of space is emerging from the progressive sense of space associated with first and second wave gentrification (cf. Massey 1991, on global sense of place). Where first and second generation gentrifiers actively sought a socially mixed neighbourhood in which they would become socially involved, super-gentrifiers like the *idea* of social involvement but not social mixing. At the heart of this tension lies the wish of super-gentrifiers to articulate that they are essentially meritocrats who got there by hard work and diligence, who continue to value and sustain the cachet of social involvement in the local community left by previous generations of gentrifiers. A 'sense of belonging' to the neighbourhood is important even if it is entirely belied by their behaviour in sending their children to selective private schools, eating in signature restaurants etc. Having themselves realized the benefits of an elite education, it would be unthinkable to deny it to their children in Islington – the worst-performing education authority in the country. Despite often working as functionaries of global neo-liberalism in which the legal contract replaces the social contract, some (but not all) hold a general belief in the values of New Labour and communitarianism. As they see it, it is the failure to deliver on this which forces them to live their lives apart from their less fortunate neighbours. It is, they reason, their pressured lives and the low quality of public services which forces them apart from earlier gentrifiers and 'genuine locals'. We argue then that they represent an emerging class fraction at the top of the professional middle classes whose distinctiveness lies not only in their occupational status and stellar incomes but in their housing and consumption practices which, to an extent, can only be realized within a highly bounded socio-spatial milieu of 'people like themselves'.

Bauman (2000) argues that super-rich consumption occurs in spaces that for the most part exclude those who might disturb the ambience of affluent, leisured consumption – this may explain why super-gentrifiers have sought out neighbourhoods that have already passed into a state of mature gentrification; they are safer, more homogenous and they don't especially want contact with the 'ordinary' dwellers of cities (Butler 2003). They are not urban cowboys so much as urban ranchers ranging across an extensive social, cultural and consumption infrastructure – a frontier that has been tamed by the previous stages of gentrification. However, super-gentrifiers equally do not

want to live in the more fortified and gated (cf. Flusty 2001) urban elite enclaves of Chelsea or in the suburbs, they prefer the more subtle spaces of cosmopolitan consumption, spaces made available due to first and second wave gentrification. They prefer a sanitized form of difference and diversity. They are a contradictory class fraction – one looking in two directions – towards the traditional urban upper classes and towards traditional gentrifiers.

It is no coincidence that super-gentrification has been found in New York and London, in what Beaverstock *et al.* (2004) call the 'NY-LON' nexus', given they are the acknowledged centres of the global financial system and key sites of consumption. Indeed, the similarities between super-gentrification in Brooklyn Heights and Barnsbury are numerous. What attracts super-gentrifiers to both neighbourhoods is the same – location with quick and easy access to Wall Street and the City of London respectively, the valuing of a socially rich neighbourhood that is so because it has already reached a stage of mature gentrification, and the availability of good sized single-family houses that can be renovated to provide up to date living space, and a local consumption infrastructure. Here we see the importance of local context with respect to super-gentrification; the process is unlikely to happen in neighbourhoods without these characteristics. The super-gentrifiers themselves are similarly educated at the elite universities in the UK (Oxbridge, etc.) and the US (Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Columbia, etc.) and employed in similar professions. Even the contradictions are the same – seeking out a distinctive neighbourhood/community in which they have almost no involvement largely because of the pressures they are experiencing in their work lives.

Urban researchers can no longer discuss contemporary gentrification without also discussing globalization and connecting this to local-scale neighbourhood change. The distinctive nature of super-gentrification in Barnsbury is to be found in the interaction between home and work that has been mediated by the City of London labour market and the Islington housing market. Whilst the in-movement of further numbers of well-heeled folk is bound to happen in already gentrified neighbourhoods elsewhere, no doubt with similar dis/replacement effects for the existing middle class, the nature and consequences of this will depend in large part on the changes that take place in the global economy, and how London continues to be positioned in that, as well as on the context of the

specific neighbourhood itself. We can probably no longer take the settled nature of London's housing market for granted, which implies that gentrification will remain a dynamic rather than mature phenomenon. This contradicts those stage models that assume an end point to the gentrification process at a stage of maturity (cf. Lees 2003, 2491). We suggest there can be further gentrification beyond maturity and would argue that the nature of the gentrification process in maturing global cities needs to be more clearly and critically addressed:

Only by taking structural forces and cultural and social practices seriously can one understand how the new connections that bind people and places together are materialized and made meaningful. (Prytherch and Marston 2005, 98)

## Notes

- 1 This research was funded by DENI, see Lees (1994b).
- 2 This research was carried out as part of the ESRC Cities Programme (Competitiveness, Cohesion and Governance) grant number L13025101. Tim Butler wishes to acknowledge the contribution of Dr Garry Robson who worked on the project over its lifetime between 1998 and 2001.
- 3 The value gap is the relationship between a building's tenanted investment value and its vacant possession value, the former being a measure of the rented building's annual rental income, the latter a measure of the property's future sale price when it is converted into owner-occupation – the landlord sells off the building when the gap has widened sufficiently – see Hamnett and Randolph (1984 1986).
- 4 Barnsbury, in common with most of gentrified inner London, remained dominated by social housing as indicated in Table 1. In 2001, the social housing sector still comprised 47.8 per cent of the population – 21.2 per cent renting from the Council and the remainder from other social landlords. Butler with Robson (2003) describe how these housing estates remain quite discrete and hidden away from the mainly owner occupied streets of terraced housing. As Tables 2 and 3 show, there has been a dramatic increase in the proportion of residents in professional and managerial jobs – the 3 percentage point increase 1981–91 is in fact a 14 per cent real increase when we take account of the way in which the economically inactive are counted in 1991. Table 3 indicates that there has also been a dramatic increase in the intermediate social groups 1991–2000 (the old SEG 5.1 and new NS\_Sec 3). The economically inactive population, largely living in social housing, has also remained large. The decline has been amongst the manual working-class groups which whilst still numerically large saw a drop of approximately 17 percentage

points in its share of the population of Barnsbury and slightly more for Islington as a whole. We are grateful to a referee for reminding us of the need to stress how gentrification, even in a prototypical area such as Barnsbury, needs to be seen in a relative perspective.

- 5 Names have been changed and the figures refer to the respondent's age at the time of the interview.
- 6 With the benefit of hindsight, the maximum category of £150 000 was set too low.
- 7 Four hundred and forty interviews were completed, but for various reasons – such as interviews being conducted at a workplace and home postcode not being recorded, the numbers are less for the Mosaic data.
- 8 This is probably explained by the fact that in Barnsbury respondents were more likely to be female and their partners were male – there were very few cohabiting same sex partners that were referred to as such.

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