

# **Understanding Revitalization, Diversity, and Gentrification**

**in New England Cities and Beyond**



**PRESENTED BY THE  
CENTER FOR URBAN AND GLOBAL STUDIES  
TRINITY COLLEGE**

**March 6, 2020**

## **Abstract**

The last decade has seen a resurgence in inner-city employment and land values as well as the continued rise of majority-minority cities throughout the US. Together, these trends place two oft cited goals of urban governance, urban revitalization and diversity, in direct tension. In many large, growing US cities, gentrification has exacerbated a crisis of affordable housing and contributed to new forms of racial and class segregation. At the same time, smaller US cities in the Northeast are often spaces of increasing diversity but continue to struggle with decline. Understanding the intersection of diversity and revitalization in urban neighborhoods and developing strategies for mitigating the most pernicious effects of gentrification while promoting incumbent upgrading is therefore of great importance to post-industrial cities throughout New England and beyond.

This conference connects community leaders, scholars, planners, and local officials to develop a greater understanding of the ways that diversity, revitalization and gentrification are conceptualized, studied, and play out on the ground. Together, we hope to explore the manifestation of these issues in Hartford, other New England cities, and a handful of international cases as a way of discussing the challenges and possibilities of urban revitalization and diversity.

## **Schedule**

Location: Terrace Rooms ABC, Mather Hall, Trinity College

### **8:00 am | Breakfast**

### **9:00 am | Session 1**

“Diversity” and “revitalization” are often seen as bywords for gentrification. This initial session explores how to define these terms in ways that produce greater analytical clarity and without foreclosing potential avenues for incumbent upgrading and asks the following questions:

- How do we define diversity, revitalization and gentrification?
- How do these definitions vary across stakeholder groups?
- How do the various definitions of these terms shape implementation of policies and responses to resident concerns?

## **10:30 am | Session 2**

Processes of neighborhood change have been widely studied in the United States and beyond. However, epistemological and methodological differences often result in a lack of clarity about the component parts of processes of neighborhood change and their relationship to consequences such as displacement and social exclusion. This session seeks to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of various methodological approaches to studying neighborhood change and centers on the following questions:

- What are the best methods for understanding processes of neighborhood change and their relationship to diversity and revitalization?
- What aspects of the process do each of these methods bring into focus and what aspects do they obscure?
- How do these methods need to change based on contextual constraints?

## **12:00 | Lunch and Keynote**

## **1:30 pm | Session 3**

Gentrification was initially understood as a process of middle-class resettlement through the renovation of devalorized, working-class housing stock in deindustrializing cities in the US and the UK, but has since come to apply to a wide range of redevelopment processes across state contexts. This session examines how the processes of revitalization and gentrification relate to diversity across contexts with particular attention to the following differences:

- How does the relationship between revitalization and neighborhood diversity vary across cities experiencing growth or decline?
- How do differing geographic contexts impact this relationship? For example, how does the experience of post-industrial cities in New England differ from cities in the Sunbelt?
- How does the relationship between diversity and gentrification change outside of the US and the Global North?
- How do local political dynamics impact this relationship?
- How has greater municipal capacity related to patterns of revitalization or continued decline?

## **3:00 pm | Session 4**

This session aims to bring academics, policy-makers and private sector actors together to debate and discuss these difficult questions of how urban revitalization efforts intersect with gentrification and diversity in cities, from Hartford, around the region and the world.