

# UNDERSTANDING REVITALIZATION, DIVERSITY, AND GENTRIFICATION

## WORKSHOP RECAP

In New England Cities and Beyond

On Friday March 6, 2020 CUGS hosted a scholarly workshop centered on the topic Understanding Revitalization, Diversity, and Gentrification in New England Cities and Beyond. Inspired by a project brought to us by Stan Marcuss '63, the workshop brought together scholars from Trinity, New York University, Clark University, Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU), and Providence College.



Trinity President Joanne Berger-Sweeney gave the welcome address. Berger-Sweeney emphasized Trinity's long-standing relationship with Hartford through partnership with the Southside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance (SINA), work with the Capital Region Development Authority, where Berger-Sweeney is on the board, and investment in the Learning Corridor.

**SESSION ONE** centered on the importance of having clarity on the concepts that were fundamental to the discussions at hand. After an introduction from Myers, Marcuss began the panel presenting his working definition of the three fundamental terms. Mark Davidson, Associate Professor of Geography at Clark University, probed the moral issue. Citing the well-known piece, *Is Gentrification a Dirty Word* by the New York Times, Davidson argued that there are four crucial points of emphasis needed to define gentrification: reinvestment of capital, social upgrading (the increase of middle class people in an area), landscape change and displacement.



# WORKSHOP WR ECAP

**SESSION TWO** was a discussion of methods for studying the phenomena. Sousan Arafeh, Associate Professor of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at SCSU, discussed using grounded theory and rethinking the term revitalization.

When discussing revitalization, Arafeh said, the question of what type of vitality is sought after is important to ask, because working poor neighborhoods are already very vital. Deborah Martin, Professor of Geography at Clark University, added examples from Minnesota, where land trusts play a key role in stabilizing neighborhoods, while Garth Myers, Director of CUGS, discussed the necessity of place-based methods.

David Lukens, Visiting Assistant Professor at CUGS, talked about his research on gentrification in Seoul, South Korea, where an important part of his methodology was talking to women in the neighborhood to use their knowledge of where the people in their networks moved to when they moved out of the neighborhood.



“ This workshop allowed us to sit around the same table as experienced academics and practitioners that have been working on revitalization, gentrification, and diversity. Practitioners generate real-world questions, but they are normally focused on their most immediate context. Academics offer methods and tools, but they do not normally look for implementable solutions in a demanding timeframe. Only this mindset combined, that it is not easy to find, can allow us to move forward and produce social change. ”

-Victòria Alsina Burgués  
Industry Assistant Professor, NYU



During **SESSION THREE** on case studies, Abby Williamson, Charles A. Dana Research Associate Professor of Political Science and Public Policy and Law, at Trinity discussed immigration as an urban development strategy.

Her research reveals that local governments, regardless of political party affiliation of local leaders, tend to welcome new immigrants as an economic development strategy.

Victòria Alsina Burgués, Industry Assistant Professor and Academic Director at the NYU Center for Urban Science and Progress, discussed the case of Barcelona, where tourism and short-term rentals are a major problem. She focused on the 22@Barcelona innovation district, where they created a public-private partnership to develop a new neighborhood from a deindustrialized area of the city. Jim Murphy, Professor of Geography at Clark University, also added a perspective on urbanization in East Africa to the discussion.

The day wrapped up with a session taking the discussion from academic study to policymaking. Megan Brown, Director of the Liberal Arts Action Lab at Trinity, Jonathan Cabral, Manager of Planning, Development, & Evaluation at the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority, Sean Fitzpatrick, Professor of the Practice in Public Policy at Trinity, and Stefanie Chambers, Professor of Political Science at Trinity, helped to bring the discussion of the principles in practice into focus.

# WORKSHOP RECAP

During lunch, **HARTFORD MAYOR LUKE BRONIN** stopped by to discuss Hartford's take on the topic. He discussed finding the balance of investment in the cities and opportunities for people living in the city, with a focus on the way Hartford has been segregated historically and the ways the city can heal those wounds.

“ Understanding how diversity, gentrification and urban revitalization relate to each other presents exceedingly difficult challenges. Yet nothing could be more vital to dealing with today's urban issues than a disciplined and informed analysis of what these terms actually mean and how their impact is to be measured. The workshop provided an extraordinary opportunity for scholars, practitioners and interested citizens to explore these issues and how they might use what they heard to take the subject from academic abstraction to actual policy-making. ”

-Stan Marcuss '63