

POVERTY IN THREE CITIES: A COMPARATIVE DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE INTERPRETATION OF THE TERM “GENTRIFICATION” IN PUBLIC CONVERSATIONS TRANSMITTED BY MEDIA IN ENGLISH, PORTUGUESE AND RUSSIAN

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Abstract: This paper presents the findings of a comparative discourse analysis of the linguistic representation of the phenomenon of ‘gentrification’ in three cities: London, São Paulo and Moscow. Gentrification is generally understood (see Chris Hamnett, 2003) as the social and spatial transition to a post-industrial economy, usually associated with displacement of lower income groups from the gentrified area. The study observes how discussions of the topic are linguistically shaped in different languages over the same period (pre-Covid, 2015-2018). The material was selected from open sources, following hashtags and keywords in three languages, limiting the material to the genre of public conversation transmitted by the media about the phenomenon under study. The study compares the circulation of the term ‘gentrification’ in selected discourses and shows a conceptual discrepancy between them. This is exemplified through the use of synonyms, substitution for the term, description and interpretation of the notion. This analysis covers the representation of the concepts of ‘community’, ‘collectiveness’ and, in contrast, ‘ghettoization’ for London, São Paulo and Moscow. The different ‘winners’ and ‘victims’ of gentrification for the three cities studied are revealed. The results show that gentrification is openly discussed in London, where changes are considered positive, whereas the Russian discourse on gentrification questions the validity of the term and the process itself in Russian cities. Brazilian urbanists agree that similar processes to gentrification are taking place in São Paulo, emphasizing the role of the Brazilian state and the so-called hidden unofficial powers within informal territories.

Keywords: comparative studies; comparative discourse analysis; gentrification in Moscow; gentrification in São Paulo; gentrification in London.

Introduction

The term gentrification has been in use since the 1960s (introduced by Glass R. 1964) and is mainly related to the process of urban transformation associated with the displacement (or replacement) of lower income classes, substituting them with the new type of 'gentries'. It has, for that very reason, become a controversial topic in public discussions as well as in scholarly and policy circles. Reflecting on the question of growing poverty in big cities, segregation between the world of 'poor' and 'rich', I found it interesting to observe how discourses are created around this phenomenon in different languages, and how the term is interpreted and understood. This paper aims to analyse discourses developed around gentrification in three cities: London, São Paulo and Moscow. Hence three languages will be involved: English, Brazilian Portuguese and Russian.

Gentrification is usually based on (or caused by) changes of the housing stock and tenure in the area, price rise, changes in occupational class structure, in people's income and life style. The process nowadays affects working class in the cities and, often, ethnic minorities. Classical examples of gentrification are related to English-speaking cities in Europe and North America, plus the popular example of the Marais district in Paris. Recently more and more publications on the topic come from the non-English-speaking countries and cities (He 2019; Bernt 2022; Lopez-Morales, Shin, Lees 2016). These publications have given rise to the discussion on whether the term is overused and should be limited to local Western experiences or whether we are facing a global process of urban changes, similar to gentrification?

English speakers understand 'gentry' as the class below landed aristocracy but above yeoman farmers and peasants. For them a reference might be books by Jane Austen. Nowadays the word 'gentry', when speaking about gentrification, would be related to the growing middle class and upper middle class. Russian and Portuguese speakers, on the contrary, learn the word 'gentrification' from the area of urban studies first, and need explanations to understand the meaning both for the word 'gentry' and for that of 'gentrification'. The term sounds foreign to them. In both languages speakers are trying to find analogies – *revitalização* (revitalisation), *renovação* (renovation), in Portuguese, or *благоустройство* (beautification, landscaping, improvement), *развитие* (development), in Russian. Neither Portuguese nor Russian have a direct translation for 'gentrification'. Disregarding the fact that some similar processes have been happening in Moscow, São Paulo and other Russian and Brazilian cities, the word 'gentrification' is new for Portuguese and Russian speakers and is used mostly by professionals.

The academic literature in English dedicated to gentrification is very extensive (see Hamnett 2003; Roman-Velazquez 2014 or Lees, Slatter and Wylie 2010 for summaries), as is the number of public discussions about it. On the one hand, gentrification can be seen as a danger to ethnic minorities, vulnerable groups, and a reason for their forced displacement. On the other hand, it can be considered as an attempt to boost the area's reputation and potential, aiming at social progress for vulnerable groups. There are also discussions on whether gentrification is the result of preplanned governmental policy or an answer to

the demands of the society. One can easily notice different attitudes to the phenomenon even on a theoretical level. According to Bernt (2022: 9), the term ‘gentrification’ in urban studies nowadays is more controversial than ever before. English-speaking specialists in the area have already been actively and openly discussing gentrification for decades, they have different approaches to the phenomenon, and they are more often questioned by English-speaking societies about it. As a result, for my analysis, it has been easier to find material in English (rather than in Portuguese and Russian) and about European or North American cities. The challenge of this paper is to observe from the linguistic point of view the discourses created around gentrification, in societies other than English-speaking, comparing them to the traditional English ones. This type of study of the circulation of the term ‘gentrification’ in a non-familiar environment could “function as an eye-opener and allow factors and connections that are hidden elsewhere to be revealed” (Bernt 2022: 9). Methodologically the study is inspired by the comparative discourse and cross-cultural discourse analyses (von Münchow 2012) developed by the Cediscor¹ research group at the University Paris 3 Sorbonne Nouvelle and represents the developments of the research group Diálogo² from the University of São Paulo.

Considering all of the above, I chose the following strategy. First of all, my goal was to limit the search of the material to similar speech genre and period of time (2015-2019, pre-Covid, as in the future my idea is to compare the changes of the discourse during the Covid period). I was looking for discussions in English, Portuguese and Russian which would satisfy the following criteria: 1) dedicated to gentrification (the topic of discussion was gentrification and not general urbanisation or development of cities); 2) participation of several people, including academics – professional urbanists. The topic studied usually generates discussions not only in academic circles, but also among social activists, governmental authorities, businesses and local politicians; the material was thus selected to represent all these points of view and in three languages; 3) all the participants of the discussions spoke their native languages (English, Brazilian Portuguese or Russian); 4) they were speaking about gentrification mainly with regard to their own countries and cities under analysis – London (when speaking in English), São Paulo (for the material in Portuguese) and Moscow (for Russian). The search for material was done with the help of hashtags and key words; in English: *gentrification*, *urbanism*, *urban planning*, *redevelopment*, *urban regeneration*, *renewal*, or *urban transformation*. In Russian: *джентрификация*, *реновация*, *городская реконструкция*, *благоустройство*, *урбанизм*, *градостроительство*, *планирование городов*. In Portuguese: *revitalização urbana*, *renovação urbana*, *transformação urbana*, *gentrificação*. Following these hashtags and key words I formed a list of specialists who studied gentrification, and found events dedicated to the topic in 2015-2019. Applying the abovementioned criteria to the selected material the corpus was chosen:

1. In English: Is London gentrification causing creative migration? | Panel Discussion | Zealous X Talks

¹ <http://syled.univ-paris3.fr/cediscor.html>.

² <https://dialogo.fflch.usp.br>.

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kaP_hCut408), January 2016, featured – Author, Storyteller & Woman Empowerment Lillian Ogbogoh, Co-Director UCL Urban Lab at University College London Dr Andrew Harris, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, London Borough of Hackney Cllr Guy Nicholson, and Co-Founder of Arts & Society Annie Menter. The discussion took place during the creative festival *Zealous* (<https://zealous.co/x/>).

2. In Portuguese: Debate – Gentrification vs Informal work | 8^a Mostra Ecofalante ³
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i7YlWEjHt3g>), which took place in June 2019 and featured: Architect and National Coordinator of the Commission for Urban Policy and Social Housing of the Supreme Council Fernando Túlio, Professor Luciana Itikawa, Professor and Researcher Bruno de Conti, Sociologist and Social Activist Larissa Lacerda. The discussion took place after the showing of the movie *Istanbul Echoes* (2019).
3. In Russian: Local Government Foundation Discussion Club – Does Moscow need gentrification?⁴ (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x-ACyH9Lf6A>), October 2018 featured Social Activist Piotr Shkumatov, Professor, Sociologist and Urbanist Pavel Stiepanov, Political Scientist and Head of Institute of Globalisation and Social Movements Boris Kagarlitski, Head of the regional branch of the All-Russian People’s Front in Moscow Aleksandr Veledeev and several municipal councilors. The discussion was a reaction to the article “*Capitalism does not suggest that retired people can live in the city centre*”⁵ by Elena Korotkova published just before the discussion, on October 18, 2018 (<https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3772709>).

The discussion in English was more a routine discussion about the topic, related to the problems of migration of a so-called ‘creative class’⁶ while both in Portuguese and in Russian the discussions were a reaction to other announcements: the movie and the article. The comparative discourse analysis of the material led me to the following observations.

1. The interpretation and usage of the term ‘gentrification’

One of the first particularities that came to my attention was the fact that in all three languages the speakers were avoiding the term ‘gentrification’, substituting it in different ways, even though all three discussions were dedicated to gentrification and had this word in their titles.

³ In Portuguese: Debate – Gentrificação vs. Trabalho Informal | 8^a Mostra Ecofalante. All the translations of the examples are mine.

⁴ In Russian: Дискуссионный клуб Фонда МСУ - Нужна ли Москве джентрификация?

⁵ In Russian: ‘Капитализм не предполагает, что в центре города могут жить пенсионеры’.

⁶ The use of term ‘creative class’ is called into question in British corpus.

Table 1. Occurrences of ‘gentrification’ in the corpus and its substitutions.

	British corpus	Brazilian corpus	Russian corpus
<i>Occurrences of the term</i>	13	15	65 (in total) 14 (about Moscow)
<i>Reasons for avoiding the term according to the corpus</i>	Odd word (17:27) ⁷ , dirty word (19:36), (38:40).	Complicated polysemic term, which tries to say everything and says nothing, mobilized to describe different processes ⁸ .	Imported word ⁹ which marks the social-political aspect of the discussion (1:03:08), (1:04:20), the term is a bit confusing ¹⁰ (1:19:40), (1:21:20).
<i>Substitutions of the term</i>	[Urban] change, exciting things, [something] curating the neighbourhood, transformation, continuing growth of the city, process, shifts, strange tensions, indirect displacement.	Process, destruction, expropriation, dispossession, intervention, urban conflict, removal, eviction, expulsion, sweeping, displacement, change, substitution, valuation, experiences, verticalisation, urban structuring, financialisation, capitalisation, hipsterisation (ironically) ¹¹ .	Improvement of public services, urban development, borough and community development, resettlement, moving, intracity mobility, an attempt to comprehend the city, changes, substitution, renovation, structural changes, economic mechanisms, pushing out, fascism, Social Darwinism ¹² .

⁷ Here, and further on, the time in the video is marked.

⁸ In Portuguese: “um termo super complicado”, “um conceito polissêmico”, “assim que tenta dizer tudo e não diz nada, muito mobilizado para descrever os mais diferentes processos” (3:20).

⁹ In Russian: “импортное слово”.

¹⁰ In Russian: “этот термин немного путает всё”, “путает людей”.

¹¹ In Portuguese: “processo”, “destruição” (1:22:20), (1:20:10), (3:20), “expropriação” (15:05), (1:22:45), “desposseção” (1:55), “intervenção” (42:25), (53:00), (48:58), “conflito urbano” (48:58), (54:07), “remoção”, “despejo”, “expulsão”, “varrição” (31:28), (48:58), “deslocamento” (41:50), “mudança” (3:40), (48:58), “substituição” (3:20), (48:58), “valorização” (26:30), (24:20), (17:56), (34:15), “experiências” (48:58), “verticalização” (35:05), (36:20), “estruturação urbana” (1:10:20), “financeirização” (24:25), (37:05), “capitalização” (26:30) “hipsterização” (50:30).

¹² In Russian: “благоустройство” (1:00), “обустройство” (1:19:40), “развитие городов” (5:00), (1:24:40), “развитие района и сообщества” (1:35:42), “переселение” (6:25); “перемещение” (8:15), “внутригородская мобильность” (14:40); “попытка осмыслить город” (18:20), “изменения” (18:30), “замещение” (23:05), “реновация” (39:28), (1:00:45), (1:04:20), (1:07:35), (1:28:22), “структурные изменения” (1:04:20), “экономические механизмы” (1:50:05), “вытеснение” (1:20:00), “фашизм”, “социал-дарвинизм” (25:40).

As for the cities under analysis, the frequency of the term ‘gentrification’ is about the same. In the Russian corpus, it is noticeable that the term is more often used generically, referring to Europe or North American cities, not Moscow. The reasons for avoiding the term are explained as follows. In the British corpus, the term ‘gentrification’ is qualified as ‘odd’ and ‘dirty’. In Portuguese, the term is qualified as ‘complicated’ and ‘polysemic’, it is not clearly linked to a specific process and is not well explained. For the Russian corpus, the term is ‘confusing’, ‘imported’ and marks the social-political aspect of the discussion, which some interlocutors would like to avoid.

When looking for a substitute, the most popular word in English is – ‘[urban] change’ (used 9 times). For example,

“and those changes are bringing with them some significant opportunities” (5:06);
 “when the area gets, it’s an odd word, gentrified... but changes. And it’s about embracing change. We all have to work with change” (17:27).

The changes are called exciting (17:27), they are bringing with them “significant opportunities” (5:06), “extraordinary opportunities” and “incredible energy” (11:23), which shows a more positive attitude to these changes. At the same time, the urban change brings challenges, danger and threats:

“are we in danger of losing the creative class that we have here?” (2:59);
 “but the common threat, that runs through these changes, is the rising of values¹³, the cost of living, the cost of space” (5:06).

Overall, in English a variety of characteristics of gentrification can be observed: from

- positive – ‘exciting things’ (“lots of exciting things are going on in Hackney and in East London over the last 20 years”) (14:15) and describing it as ‘an economic resource’, ‘an economic asset’ (20:23), process of ‘curating the neighbourhood’ (20:23) to
- neutral ‘transformation’ (30:40), ‘continuing growth of the city’ (2:59), ‘process’ and ‘shifts’ (38:40).
- and negative, when gentrification is described as “strange tensions” (14:15) and “indirect displacement”: “even if there isn’t the displacement. Ultimately gentrification is about people being pushed out of the place. Even if there is no direct displacement, ultimately it is kind of indirect” (40:50).

From Table 1 one can see that the only match for the three languages to substitute ‘gentrification’ is the word ‘change’. The word ‘process’ is used in English and Portuguese, while in Russian gentrification is described as a tendency. In the British corpus under study gentrification is mostly presented as a positive process, although some dark sides of it are mentioned.

¹³ It implies an increase in the cost of living in the studied corpus.

In Portuguese, the same as in the British corpus, the most common word to describe gentrification is ‘process’ (*processo*, 22 occurrences):

“different processes that are taking place there”¹⁴ (1:55);
 “it is a process [...], which is this substitution of groups, in general, popular groups by high-income groups”¹⁵ (3:20).

In the Brazilian material, we hardly find a positive description of this process, gentrification is marked as ‘destruction’ (*destruição*), ‘expropriation’ (*expropriação*) and ‘intervention’ (*intervenção*) among the others. The threat to the local traditions and ways of life is emphasized. Gentrification in Brazil is shown as a process of shaping the territory and people’s lives to fit a certain standard (*padrão*), model (*modelão*) –

“a model, kind of standard, which acts on the territories”;
 “culturally, economically, politically reducing all the diversity that is there, all forms of life, trying to fit into this single model” (1:55);
 “forms of housing are reduced to the single standard”¹⁶ (3:20).

This standard is pictured as though it was brought on purpose, planned as a project –

“big urban projects” (1:55), (3:20), (37:40), (41:50);
 “a project of major interventions on the territory” (37:40)¹⁷.

These preplanned projects, according to the Brazilian corpus, can come from abroad –

“[urban projects] that travel around the world and are brought over the territories”¹⁸ (2:45);
 “too many gringos arriving”¹⁹ (48:58),

or can be implemented by the local government whose interests, according to the corpus, overlap with the market –

¹⁴ In Portuguese: “vários processos que estão se dando ali”.

¹⁵ In Portuguese: “é um processo [...], que é essa substituição dos grupos, no geral, grupos populares por grupos de alta renda”.

¹⁶ In Portuguese: “um modelão, meio padrão, que atua sobre os territórios”, “culturalmente, economicamente, politicamente, reduzindo toda a diversidade que está ali, todas as formas de vida, tentando enquadrar neste modelo único”; “formas de moradia são reduzidas ao padrão único”.

¹⁷ In Portuguese: “grandes projetos urbanos”; “um projeto de grandes intervenções sobre o território”.

¹⁸ In Portuguese: “que fica[m] aí viajando pelo mundo e vão aportando nos territórios”.

¹⁹ In Portuguese: “chegada muito grande de gringo”. The word ‘gringo’ in Portuguese is used for foreigners, initially North Americans, mostly white, not from Latin American countries. It usually marks a certain type of behaviour, different to the locals. Meaning an ‘alien’, but not obligatory with negative connotation (my explanation).

“projects, that are encouraged, promoted by the public authorities in partnership with the market. Sometimes it can be just one thing, right? Public power and market”²⁰ (3:20).

It is not very clear from the corpus, who this “local government” is. Is it the Brazilian government? The government of the state of São Paulo? The city of São Paulo? Or a particular neighbourhood? However, it is in this vagueness that the rhetorical effect of the statement is hidden. The vagueness of the definition of ‘gentrification’ overlaps with the vagueness of the description of the ‘local authorities’. Since the level of corruption in the country is high, this rhetorical expedient allows the speaker to capture the attention of the listener who is likely to agree with him, without going into details. The Brazilian listener can easily imagine any Brazilian ‘local authorities’ accepting their possible corruption, their possible economical interest in gentrification.

When referring to Brazil, two different internal powers are mentioned by the speakers regarding the urban life and changes: the Brazilian state and hidden ‘unofficial powers’ within the ‘informal territories’ (*terra informal*), again without explanation, who are they? The logical way will probably be to imagine some criminal structures behind these unofficial powers. But, according to the interlocutor, these are (without explanation again) the financial market and capital:

“Here in Brazil, if we go to a football match, we will buy a ham sandwich and beer with a credit card, right? [...] market mechanisms are very cruel to see, as even the spheres where the state didn’t manage to reach, the financial capital arrived and is appropriating part of the income of these street vendors”²¹ (29:14).

The speaker accuses the banks and capitalism in general of interfering in the lives of poor Brazilians and street vendors, and of appropriating part of their profits. But at the same time, the state does not give them any rights or security. They are talking about the poorest social strata of Brazil, where people and their homes are often not even registered (according to the Brazilian corpus). The interlocutor clearly sees a parallel between this intervention and gentrification and tries to show it to his listeners. Words from the economic sphere are used to replace the word ‘gentrification’: ‘valuation’ (*valorização*), ‘financialisation’ (*financeirização*) and ‘capitalisation’ (*capitalização*). The word ‘capitalisation’ has a more negative connotation, when combined with the word ‘regime’: “a capitalisation regime” (*um regime da capitalização*) (26:30). Brazil is shown as a phenomenon bigger than just the ‘state’ of Brazil, where different powers and interests meet in the area of urban planning and change. However, this part of the reflection is filled with rhetorical manipulation and inaccuracies.

²⁰ In Portuguese: “projetos que são incentivados, são promovidos pelo poder público em parceria com mercado. Às vezes pode ser uma coisa só, né? Poder público e mercado”.

²¹ In Portuguese: “aqui no Brasil, se a gente for num jogo de futebol, a gente vai comprar um lanche de pernil e cerveja com cartão de crédito, né? [...] mecanismos de mercado é muito cruel ver, como até as esferas, onde estado não conseguiu chegar, o capital financeiro chegou e está se apropriando uma parte da renda desses ambulantes”.

In the Russian corpus gentrification has a variety of substitutes:

- from positive – ‘improvement of public services’ and ‘urban development’
- to strictly negative – ‘fascism’ and ‘Social Darwinism’.

Russian speakers in the studied material confirm the fact that the word ‘gentrification’ is new to them, one of the interlocutors makes a mistake calling the process ‘gentriisation’ instead of gentrification (*джентриизация* (1:17:35), he repeats it several times and the others don’t correct him. Another speaker later says:

“I always thought. Well, always... About three, probably, five years ago, when I heard this term, read about it, and understood what it was”²² (1:40:55).

The range of substitutions from Table 1 depicts the discrepancy in understanding the term by Russian speakers. Plus, the corpus has a couple of categorical statements about the existence of urbanism as a science:

“I want to say right away that there is no scientific urbanism”²³ (5:00);
 “I would like to start speaking with the concept of gentrification, which, in principle, does not exist as a concept”²⁴ (5:45).

In comparison, in both the British and the Brazilian corpus there is no denial of the existence of gentrification as a term and urbanism as a science. The Russian discourse looks more categorical in general in comparison to the British and the Brazilian ones. Some researchers consider this feature (*категоричность*) typical of the Russian rhetorics (Kolesov 2006), while for the British and the Brazilian discourses it can be perceived as being not polite.

In Russian, gentrification was described as ‘tendency’ (*тенденция*), ‘subject’ (*тема*) (1:04:20) ‘concept’ (*концепция*), ‘phenomenon’ (*явление*), ‘situation’ (*ситуация*) (1:17:35), ‘process’ (*процесс*, 20 occurrences) and a “part of our public policy” (*часть нашей государственной политики*) (1:30:30). The speakers discuss the possibility of applying the term to the processes taking place in Moscow: the resettlement of communal flats (*расселение коммуналок*) and infill (*уплотнительная (точечная) застройка*). The discussion spins around different understandings of gentrification as a natural or an artificial process. In the Russian corpus gentrification is mostly seen as a natural process for Western cities (4:07), (25:52), (58:58), (1:07:35), and as an artificial process, forced by the government or businesses, for Moscow (5:00), (6:25), (18:20), (23:43), (1:03:08). Hence the different evaluation: natural processes in urban life are considered positive (8:15), (39:28), (58:58), (1:04:20) and artificial ones – negative (14:40), (37:15), (58:30), (1:00:45), (1:15:15), (1:16:13), (1:17:35).

²² In Russian: “я всегда думал. Ну, как всегда? Года три, наверно, пять назад, когда я услышал этот термин, прочел и понял, что это такое”.

²³ In Russian: “я сразу хочу сказать, что никакого научного урбанизма нету”.

²⁴ In Russian: “говорить я бы хотел начать с концепции джентрификации, которой в принципе как концепции не существует”.

The conclusion of the discussion was that some unpleasant processes should be accepted in case they are inevitable: “We should work on it [...] We should work on it as with a phenomenon, as with a problem [...] Therefore, I believe that gentrification alone is not a problem”²⁵ (58:58).

Gentrification in the corpus under study is understood as a word from different fields:

Table 2. Areas of human life and knowledge to which gentrification relates.

	Gentrification is related to:
<i>British corpus</i>	property market (38:50), (20:23), British class system (38:40). It is about property and neighbourhood.
<i>Brazilian corpus</i>	neo-liberalism (51:40), urban liberal agenda (1:06:40), urban politics (31:28) and capitalism in general (29:11), (24:20). It is about ‘territory’ (território) and ‘land’ (terra).
<i>Russian corpus</i>	exclusively to business (1:00:45), architectural studies and design (1:41:55), neo-liberalism (51:40), economic mechanism (1:50:05), is a socio-political term (1:03:08), is more a “political term, rather than a scientific one” ²⁶ (5:45). It is about housing (жильё) and flats (квартиры).

From Table 2, we can see that the phenomenon of gentrification is not only understood in different ways in the British, the Brazilian, and the Russian corpus, but also refers to different spheres of human life. The British corpus shows a more traditional understanding of the term, it is related to the British class system and local property market. Both the Brazilian and the Russian corpora relate gentrification to a neo-liberal agenda and see it as a socio-political term. In Brazil gentrification is related to territory and land, while in Russia (in Moscow) it is related to housing and flats.

When speaking about London, São Paulo and Moscow, the interlocutors showed different attitudes to the concept of ‘community’, a central concept of gentrification. As well as a different understanding of who are the ‘winners’ and the ‘victims’ of gentrification.

2. The concept of ‘community’: collectiveness vs ghettoization

One of the concepts connected to gentrification is the concept of ‘community’. In the British corpus, ‘community’ (28 occurrences) is related to the concept of ‘neighbourhood’ and is positively evaluated. As in the examples:

²⁵ In Russian: “с этим надо работать. [...] Надо работать как с явлением, как с проблемой [...] Но делать это надо. [...] Поэтому я считаю, что отдельно взятая джентрификация не является бедой”.

²⁶ In Russian: “это политический термин, более чем научный”.

“Where those residents can connect with the new economy, the new job opportunities. And those relationships have been built between entrepreneur and resident [...] positive relationship [...] far more collaborative [...] more about exchange of opportunity going on to everybody’s advantage” (22:17); “The survey that comes back this year is that 90% of residents of Hackney feel that everybody in Hackney gets along extremely well. That is not a figure, that is reflected in other East London boroughs” (45:50).

‘Community’, the concept that ‘unites people’, is considered positive in the British corpus.

In the Brazilian corpus, specific words are used to describe the types of local communities, such as ‘*favela*’²⁷ and ‘*quilombola*’²⁸. Plus – ‘*casta*’ in connection with local Indian communities:

“In the case of the Indians, these are the lower castes that are also exploited”²⁹ (1:01:43).

Brazilians don’t evaluate the concept of ‘community’ (*comunidade*), it is used in a neutral way in the studied material. In Portuguese the general tendency is to substitute the word ‘*favela*’ with ‘*comunidade*’, which is considered more neutral (my observation). In the studied corpus, a slightly positive evaluation of any type of collectiveness (*coletividade*) and collaboration can be noted:

“The most important resistance is the collective one”³⁰ (1:24:10).

But this collaboration does not really exist in Brazil, it stays on a hypothetical level for the speakers:

“The public and urban space should be the space of coexistence, it should be a space where bonds are created, and this would even reduce the violence [...] but what we see in Brazil is the opposite”³¹ (1:02:50).

An absolutely different attitude to the concept ‘community’ (*сообщество*) can be observed in the Russian corpus. One of the professionals starts the discussion in the following way:

²⁷ Favela, also spelled favella, in Brazil, a slum or shanty town located within or on the outskirts of the country’s large cities, especially Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. A favela typically comes into being when squatters occupy vacant land at the edge of a city and construct shanties of salvaged or stolen materials, Encyclopedia Britannica: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/favela> (accessed on 20.3.23).

²⁸ Quilombo, also called mocambo, in colonial Brazil, a community organized by fugitive slaves. Quilombos were located in inaccessible areas and usually consisted of fewer than 100 people who survived by farming and raiding, Encyclopedia Britannica: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/quilombo> (accessed on 20.3.23).

²⁹ In Portuguese: “no caso dos índios são as castas inferiores que também são exploradas”.

³⁰ In Portuguese: “a resistência mais importante é a coletiva”.

³¹ In Portuguese: “o espaço público e urbano deveria ser o espaço de convivência, deveria ser um espaço onde se criam laços e isso inclusive reduziria violência [...] mas o que a gente vê no Brasil é o contrário”.

“Why I, in fact, do not like being called an urbanist and do not consider myself an urbanist? Because urbanists are very positive about communities. There is such a myth that if community has been formed, this is very good. And for the city, and for the environment, and for everything. Actually, this is not true”³² (8:49).

Further on, he, followed by other speakers, develops the criticism of dense intergenerational communities (*плотные межпоколенческие сообщества*), explaining why they are dangerous for the positive development of the city. The idea of separation and segregation comes forward in these explanations, communities are seen as closed and rigid groups of people, who do not want to accept newcomers. When describing communities in Moscow, the speakers use the words ‘enclave’ (*анклав*) and ‘ghetto’ (*гетто*). The process of creating communities – ghettos – is called ‘ghettoisation’ (*геттоизация*) and ‘fragmentation’ (*фрагментация*) of society. All these examples have a strong negative connotation in Russian corpus:

“And the center of Moscow may eventually turn into a network of disparate ghettos: ghetto for the rich, ghetto for the poor, ghetto for locals, ghetto for those who come from outside the third transport ring”³³ (14:40).

The only positive description of the ‘community’ in the Russian corpus is related to the experience of one interlocutor’s grandmother who used to live in a communal flat³⁴ in Soviet times:

“She didn’t want to leave the communal flat. She felt well there, including because it had a cozy environment”³⁵ (1:25:37).

In the example cited nostalgia for the good old days can be observed, when both society and communities were, according to the speaker, better and friendlier.

Below I would like to show how differently the ‘winners’ and the ‘victims’ of gentrification are described in the studied material.

³² In Russian: “Почему я, собственно говоря, не люблю, когда меня называют урбанистом, и не считаю себя урбанистом? Потому что урбанисты очень позитивно относятся к сообществам. Есть такой миф, что, если образовалось сообщество, то это очень хорошо. И для города, и для среды, и для всего. На самом деле это не совсем так”.

³³ In Russian: “И центр Москвы в конечном итоге может превратиться в сеть разрозненных гетто: гетто для богатых, гетто для бедных, гетто для местных, гетто для тех, кто приезжает из пределов третьего транспортного кольца, чтобы провести время, и им позволено развлекаться на одной территории”.

³⁴ A communal flat or *kommunalka* appeared in the Soviet Union following the Russian revolution. They emerged as a response to the housing crisis in urban areas and were a product of the ‘new collective vision of the future’. They were typically shared between two to seven families. Each family had its own room, which served as a living room, dining room, and bedroom for the entire family. The hallways, kitchen, bathroom and telephone were shared among all the residents. The communal flats were the predominant form of housing in the USSR for generations, and still exist, <https://www.definitions.net/definition/communal+apartment> (accessed on 3.5.23).

³⁵ In Russian: “она не рвалась уезжать из этой коммуналки. Ей там было очень хорошо, в том числе потому что там была уютная среда”.

3. The ‘winners’ and the ‘victims’ of gentrification

As gentrification is considered to be both a socio-political and economical process for all three cities, there are groups of people who benefit from it, and groups of people who are considered victims. Interestingly they are described in different ways.

Table 3. Winners and victims of gentrification.

	British corpus	Brazilian corpus	Russian corpus
<i>Winners</i>	Communities (11:23), neighbourhood (20:23), people involved in property market (38:40).	High income groups, government, market, global financial system, liberal authoritarianism, institutional investors, investment funds, pension funds, powerful builders or developers, upper middle class, higher class, higher income people, higher purchasing power class, state itself, foreigners, start-ups, and advertising creative economy ³⁶ .	Wealthier people, people with higher income, young, rich, and successful, socially more active, and financially wealthier people, wealthy people, prosperous people, me (depending on the context), asocial elements (depending on the context), low-income segments of the population (depending on the context, as they can move to new houses), business, upper stratum [of society], marginal stratum [of society] (depending on the context, when elites are considered marginals), marginal elements [of society], jet set ³⁷ , children of our officials, who stole a lot, and of businessmen, affiliated with them, parents of jet set, completely maddened by stolen money, snobs, drunk, stoned people under drugs, marginals, a bit crazy people in power, creative intelligentsia ³⁸ , hipsters, nouveau riche, our new Putin’s nobility (with irony), old historical quarters (in case they are taken care of) ³⁹ .

³⁶ In Portuguese: *grupos de alta renda, poder público, mercado* (3:20), (53:00), *o sistema financeiro global* (17:56), *autoritarismo liberal* (22:10), *investidores institucionais, fundos de investimentos, fundos de pensão* (24:20), *construtoras ou incorporadoras poderosas, classe média alta* (47:00), *pessoas de classe mais alta, de maior renda, classe de maior poder aquisitivo, próprio estado, gringo* (see footnote 19) (48:58), *economia criativa de publicitário* (1:08:50).

³⁷ Literally ‘golden youth’, comes from French ‘jeunesse dorée’, meaning spoiled, jaded, fast-paced youth from wealthy families, https://dic.academic.ru/dic.nsf/dic_wingwords/960/Золотая (accessed on 21.3.23).

³⁸ ‘Intelligentsia’ usually is not translated from Russian. These are educated people in a society, especially those interested in the arts and in politics, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/intelligentsia> (accessed on 21.3.23).

³⁹ In Russian: *более обеспеченные люди* (1:50), *люди с более высоким достатком* (5:45), *молодые, богатые и успешные* (3:22), *социально более активным и финансово более состоятельные люди* (23:05), *богатые люди* (36:40), (1:35:00), (1:40:11), *преуспевающие*

<i>Victims</i>	People in general (40:50), (30:40), diversity (33:03), creativity (33:03) and creative class (2:59), (1:08).	People in general, workers, diversity, low-income groups, ways of life, types of housing, affective memories, neighbourhood relations, sociability, jobs, small street vendors, people who perform manual labor, stories, architectural heritage, historical heritage, families, production of goods, people, who didn't fulfill our social function, black, low income black, small creative ventures, craftsmen, environmental perimeters ⁴⁰ and culture in general (1:22:45).	Retired people (used 6 times), grandmothers, my grandmother, people in general, people with income below average, people with medium and low income, people who rent flats, people who pay rent, less wealthy people, poor people, poor, rogues ⁴¹ , bad looking poor retired people with wrinkled skin, socio-economically disadvantaged population or groups of population or stratum of population, small businesses, city authorities, population in general, asocial element, people with a level of income below the minimum for the center [of Moscow], people with declining income, low-income and socially vulnerable groups, me (depending on the context), my neighbors, mother of three, music teacher, family with very modest income, elite, the future elite of the country, normal human environment, intellectual, social, vast majority of people who are essentially normal, people who live in housing, intelligentsia ⁴² , that lived in the city center, historical center of Moscow,
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(1:35:42), я (39:28), асоциальные элементы (39:28), малообеспеченные слои населения (39:28), бизнес (1:00:45), высшая прослойка (1:13:27), маргинальная прослойка (1:13:27), маргинальные элементы (1:48:10), золотая молодёжь (1:15:15), (1:16:13), дети наших чиновников, много укравших, аффилированных с ними бизнесменов (1:15:15), родители золотой молодежи, совершенно обезумевшие от украденных денег (1:16:13), снобы (1:15:15), пьяные, обкуранные, обколотые люди (1:15:15), маргиналы (1:17:35), немножко уже свихнувшиеся люди у власти (1:17:35), творческая интеллигенция (1:19:40), хипстеры (1:40:55), новориши (1:48:10), наше новое путинское дворянство (1:51:50), старые исторические кварталы (58:58).

⁴⁰ In Portuguese: pessoas (7:30), (31:28), (33:30), (35:54), (41:50), (1:20:10), gente (35:30), (40:50), trabalhadores (34:15), diversidade (1:55), grupos populares (3:20), (48:58), formas de vida (3:20), (44:20), formas de moradia (3:20), memórias afetivas (7:30), (1:20:10), relações de vizinhança, sociabilidade (7:30), trabalhos (7:30), (40:50), pequenos ambulantes (15:05), camelões (40:50), população da mão de obra (15:05), histórias (35:30), (1:20:10), patrimônio arquitetônico (35:30), patrimônios históricos (1:20:10), famílias, produção de bens, pessoa, que não cumpria com nossa função social da propriedade (40:50), negros, negros de baixa renda (54:07), pequenos empreendimentos criativos (1:07:00), arteção (1:08:50), perímetros ambientais (1:20:10).

⁴¹ In Russian, two words are commonly used for 'poor' people: 'бедный' and 'нищий', which means 'extremely poor'. The word 'нищоброд' has a strong humiliating meaning, it unites two words 'нищий' and 'бродяга' (vagabond), meaning a person who is unable to secure a certain level of well-being plus has a limited state of mind and destructive beliefs. For more information see Babenko, Likhina (2019).

⁴² See footnote 38.

			Moscow, Moscow of the future, historical buildings, aura, with its Moscow courtyards and history, borough, Hispanics, blacks ⁴³ from areas of, say, New York, scientific institutions, science, industry, intellectual elite ⁴⁴ .
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From Table 3 we can see how different the lists of ‘winners’ and ‘victims’ of gentrification for the British, the Brazilian, and the Russian corpus are. The Brazilian and the Russian lists are also longer and more diverse. The list of ‘winners’ does not have any 100% match, while the universal ‘victim’ in the three parts of the corpus is identified as ‘people in general’.

Interestingly, the British do not divide the winners and victims of gentrification along the lines of ‘rich’ and ‘poor’, they avoid this division. But it can be seen in the Brazilian and the Russian material. The British are careful not to name those who have benefited from gentrification. They ask the question but do not provide a clear answer:

“Hoxton has undergone absolutely dramatic gentrification since the early 1990s. And that has had winners and losers, and I think we need to sort of do an assessment of who’s benefitted from this” (38:40).

Brazilian ‘winners’ in the studied corpus are more global, some of them are foreigners and come from abroad. This is not shown in the British and the Russian corpus. Brazilians think that families and human relations are affected by gentrification in a negative way. They mark ‘diversity’ as a ‘victim’, the same as in British corpus. Traditional local jobs, affected by gentrification, are in a central position for Brazil, the whole discussion is dedicated to them:

⁴³ This word doesn’t exist. The existing words are ‘негры’, ‘чернокожие’ or ‘афроамериканцы’.

⁴⁴ In Russian: пенсионеры, бабушки, моя бабушка, люди, люди с доходом ниже среднего (1:00), люди, у которых средний и низкий достаток (1:00), люди, которые снимают квартиры (6:25), люди, которые платят арендную плату (6:25), менее состоятельные люди (23:05), бедные (58:58), (1:19:40), (1:40:11), (1:46:30), малоимущие (1:19:40), нищелюбы (1:15:15), плохо выглядящие, небогатые пенсионеры с морщинистой кожей (3:22), социально-экономически необеспеченное население/группы населения/слои населения (4:07), (6:25), (23:05), (1:46:30), малый бизнес (6:25), городские власти (18:20), население (18:20), асоциальный элемент (1:03:08), люди с уровнем достатка ниже прожиточного условного минимума для центра (1:03:08), люди, у которых снижается доход (1:19:40), малообеспеченные и социально незащищенные слои (1:09:07), я (1:16:13), мои соседи (1:16:13), мать троих детей (1:16:13), преподаватель музыки (1:16:13), семья с очень скромным достатком (1:16:13), элита, будущая элита страны (1:16:13), нормальная среда человеческая, интеллектуальная, социальная (1:16:13), абсолютное большинство людей, которые по сути своей нормальные (1:17:35), люди, которые живут в жилье (1:24:40), интеллигенция, которая жила в центре города (1:25:37), исторический центр Москвы (1:35:00), Москва и Москва будущего (58:20), историческая застройка (1:35:00), aura, с ее московскими дворами и историей (1:35:00), район (1:35:42), латиноамериканцы, негры из районов, предположим, Нью-Йорка (1:46:30), научные заведения (1:46:51), наука (1:46:51), промышленность (1:46:51), интеллектуальная элита (1:48:10).

“I am very happy with the title of the discussion because it is ‘Gentrification versus informal work’. And actually, gentrification is the informal work. Because these processes are completely linked”⁴⁵ (8:42).

In the British corpus creative class and economy are marked as ‘victims’ and in the Brazilian one as ‘winners. Similar mismatch happens to ‘neighbourhood’ and ‘neighbourhood relations’: in the British corpus neighbourhoods ‘win’ from gentrification, in the Brazilian one – they are ‘victims’.

Russians from the studied material see the ‘winners’ of gentrification to be based inside their country and inside Moscow. These are mostly local elites who are described in a very negative way and are even called with irony “new Putin’s nobility” (1:51:50). Rich newcomers are described as ‘marginals’. A couple of surprising examples can be observed. Only in the Russian corpus are ‘city authorities’ marked as possible ‘victims’ of gentrification, not ‘winners’ (depending on the context, as they can lose the trust of the population as a result of gentrification). Polar understanding of who are the real elites of the country can be seen. The elites are marked as snobs and jet set, completely ‘maddened by stolen money’ (they are ‘winners’), but real and ‘true’ elites of the country are ‘victims’. These true elites are described as talented and educated children, who suffered from gentrification and had to leave.

‘Retired people’ (*пенсионеры*, 6 occurrences) and ‘grandmothers’ (*бабушки*) – were the most common examples of ‘victims’ in the Russian corpus. Retired people in Russia are regarded as a vulnerable group and generally people in need. This was the unfortunate result of the economic shocks that the country went through over the past decades. Twice an example with ‘my grandmother’ (*моя бабушка*) was used and a couple of personal stories about gentrification were shared (1:25:37), (1:50:05). Gentrification in Russian material, is affecting ‘normality’, ‘normal’ people, and relations, bringing a new and threatening people and reality, according to the speakers.

The race aspect in the British corpus is not touched, while it is discussed in the Brazilian corpus and mentioned in the Russian one, but as an example of gentrification in New York (1:46:30) and racial segregation in Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic) and South Africa (55:00 – 55:05), not Moscow. The race aspect of gentrification in Russia is not discussed in the corpus under analysis.

Conclusions

The phenomenon of gentrification has been a source of animated discussions in the urbanistic community for decades. Even experts still cannot agree on whether gentrification is happening globally, or if it is a phenomenon exclusively present in the Western world? What to say about the general public? A comparative discourse analysis of discussions around gentrification in London, São Paulo and Moscow has shown that professionals from these cities clearly see similarities

⁴⁵ In Portuguese: “com título da mesa eu estou muito feliz porque é ‘Gentrificação versus trabalho informal’ e na verdade a gentrificação é trabalho informal. Porque esses processos são completamente casados”.

between what is going on right now around them, and the phenomenon of gentrification, initially described in the UK. Brazilians speak about the transformation of Luz, Berrini and so called Cracolândia areas, the program 'My house, my life' (*Minha casa minha vida*) and the construction of Olympic sport facilities in Rio de Janeiro. Russians in the studied corpus speak about resettlements of communal flats and infill, the improvement of the Patriarch's Ponds area, the demolition of the ZIL factory, the programs 'My street' (*Моя улица*) and 'Renovation' (*Реновация*) in Moscow.

The main difference in the perception of the term lies in its evaluation and in the understanding of where it came from. For the British, it is a local term referring to the British class system and the local property market. For Brazilians and Russians, it is a foreign and incomprehensible term imposed on them by the neoliberal agenda. Brazilians perceive gentrification as something unnatural for Brazilian cities, as a process introduced from outside and destroying the way of life they are used to. Russians see gentrification as a natural and even positive process for Western democracies, but not for Moscow. Possible gentrification in Moscow, as they see it, divides people, destroys human ties, and spoils the unique atmosphere within the city.

The British avoid the rich/poor division; it is not clear from the British corpus who benefits from gentrification. Nor does it discuss the race aspect of gentrification within London. Brazilians and Russians clearly divide the residents of São Paulo and Moscow into rich and poor, where the rich benefit from gentrification and the poor are victims. The poor and vulnerable group in Russia include Russian pensioners, who, as a result of the economic turmoil of recent decades and the transition from a planned to a market economy, are still struggling to make ends meet. Even science and scientific institutes, forced to adapt to the new market economy, are becoming victims of gentrification in Moscow, according to the corpus. For Brazilians, the main victims of gentrification are the poorest, inhabitants of favelas and quilombos, Indians and ethnic minorities. These groups are historically considered vulnerable in Brazil, given the country's history of colonisation, the slave trade, and patterns of internal migration of people seeking job opportunities or escaping from hunger and droughts. In the Russian material ethnic minorities are not mentioned when speaking about gentrification in Moscow, but they appear when they talk about New York and the Dominican Republic.

With the help of lexical means of the Portuguese language, a terrible image of destruction and expropriation is created. Gentrification in Brazil is marked as 'dispossession', 'intervention' and 'urban conflict', in contrast with the neutral English 'change' and positive 'extraordinary opportunities'. The discussion in Russian becomes polarized and categorical, especially when it touches the question of communities inside Moscow. The term 'community' is perceived as a positive one in English, it 'unites' people and forms neighborhoods. The same notion in Russian receives strong criticism: communities are described as closed and rigid groups of people who do not want to accept newcomers. Dense intergenerational communities, for Russians, can become a basis for fragmentation of the society and creation of ghettos. Brazilians, on the contrary,

use the word 'community' in a neutral way and a positive evaluation of any type of possible collectivity and collaboration in the studied corpus was observed.

The study shows how differently the same phenomenon can be perceived and interpreted in different societies in a short period of time. A discrepancy in the language of 'rich' and 'poor' participants of gentrification was observed. In the end of the paper, I prefer to mention that the results of this study cannot be generalized and applied to all Brazilians, Russians or British people. It is one of the case studies that aims to contribute to the development of comparative discourse analysis.

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