

Subverting the “Migrant Division of Labor” through the Traditional Retail Market: the London’s Latin Village’s Struggle against Gentrification

While residential gentrification has long featured heavily in academic and policy debates, commercial displacement has only recently attracted scholarly interest, despite its equally disruptive impacts on communities and belonging. We analyze the experiences of migrant workers at the Latin Village, a Traditional Retail Market (TRM) in North London, which is threatened by gentrification. Through a combination of semi-directive and unstructured interviews, documentary research and participant observation we find that more than being just an economic space, the market offers a supportive community to migrants, predominantly from Latin America. The Latin Village provides opportunities for work that are more meaningful than what migrants would otherwise be able to access through London’s labor market, enabling them to better balance reproductive commitments and experience inclusion and a sense of belonging in the global city. The paper concludes by highlighting the importance of the workplace as a mediator of migrants' experiences of the city, which calls for further attention to instances of workspace displacement engendered by processes of retail gentrification and their consequences for marginalized communities.

Keywords: migrant division of labor, urban division of labor, regeneration, retail gentrification, traditional retail markets