

A city for the wealthy? Mapping gentrification in Inner London

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Research questions

1 Where is gentrification happening within Inner London?

Multiple factors will be considered including: IMD, Areas of Intensification, Opportunity Areas, Occupation and property price change.

public green space: open land with natural vegetation that is open to the public

The geographic scope of this project is Inner London, UK.

This city is prone to significant changes in demographics and property values and the term "gentrification" was coined by Ruth Glass when studying social changes in London neighborhoods.

The primary study area units are Lower and Middle layer Super Output Areas (MSOA, LSOA).

gentrification:

a process by which "all or most of the original working class occupiers are displaced and the whole social character of the district is changed" (Glass, 1964).

2 How are public green space and occupation conected to gentrification?

Scope

Introduction and background

Gentrification is the process by which "all or most of the original working class occupiers are displaced and the whole social character of the district is changed" (Glass, 1964). All over the world, and especially in London, this started in the Post-War period but escalated in the 1980s with major urban regeneration initiatives.

Today, it is reflected in socio-economic and price changes of historic working-class neighborhoods increasingly reshaped by urban regeneration and investment. Due to their central location and historic working class populations, Inner London boroughs experience significant socio-economic changes associated with gentrification.

This study aims to evaluate where gentrification is happening within Inner London by analyzing factors such as the Index of Multiple Deprivation, investment areas, occupation classes, price changes, and green space accessibility. A Multi Criteria Decision Analysis (MCDA) will help in weighting these factors and identifying locations where gentrification is more likely to happen, ensuring that they are comprehensively considered when identifying and mapping areas of transformation.

To analyze these changes, data is aggregated using Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOA) and Middle Layer Super Output Areas (MSOA). These are statistical geographic units used to describe areas for census statistics: LSOA are defined as small areas with an average population of around 1,500 residents or 650 households, providing insights into local-level socio-economic patterns. MSOA are generally larger units compared to LSOA, with an average population of around 7,200 inhabitants; they are used for regional analysis. LSOA and MSOA allow to study gentrification at both the neighborhood level (LSOA) and the broader community scale (MSOA), enabling a comprehensive understanding of spatial inequalities.

This map of Inner London highlights its boroughs, providing a spatial context for analyzing gentrification trends. The UK map locates London within the national context, emphasizing its role as a global city and a hub economic and social transformation.

- 8- Lambeth
- 9- Lewisham



Methodology





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Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) is "the official measure of relative deprivation for small areas (LSOA) in England, it ranks every small area in England from 1 (most deprived area) to 32,844 (least deprived area)" (GOV UK). To help with this raking, deprivation 'deciles' are created alongside ranks. "Deciles are calculated by ranking the 32,844 small areas in England from most deprived to least deprived and dividing them into 10 equal groups, these range from the most deprived 10 per cent of small areas nationally to the least deprived 10 per cent of small areas nationally" (GOV UK).

The IMD acts as a key indicator for socio-economic conditions. The map below shows IMD deciles around Inner London, with darker shades representing higher levels of deprivation. Neighborhoods such as Tower Hamlets and Newham show high levels of deprivation, whereas Kensington & Chelsea are at the opposite end of the scale.

As they gentrify, neighborhoods typically have lower average IMD scores, indicating improvements in infrastructure and services, albeit at the cost of resident displacement among those of lower socio-economic status. The map underscores the uneven socio-economic landscape of Inner London, where pockets of deprivation persist despite rising affluence.



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Where is gentrification more likely to happen within Inner London?

Areas of intensification

"Areas of Intensification are built up areas with good existing or potential public transport links and can support redevelopment at higher than existing densities. They have significant capacity for new jobs and homes but at a level below that which can be achieved in the Opportunity Areas" (London Datastore). Their goal is to optimize land use in accessible locations to support London's growth and development.

The map below highlights Areas of Intensification within Inner London, such as Vauxhall Nine Elms and Whitechapel. It will be interesting to see if these areas are experiencing substantial price and demographic changes. Areas of Intensification often exacerbate gentrification pressures, particularly when new developments cater exclusively to higher-income groups.

Opportunity areas

Opportunity Areas (OAs) are defined as "Key locations with potential for new homes, jobs and infrastructure of all types" (Mayor of London). OAs are "linked to existing or potential public transport improvements and typically have capacity for at least 2,500 new homes or 5,000 new jobs, or a combination of the two" (Mayor of London). "In many cases, they require major investment in transport and proper planning of utilities, social infrastructure and connectivity to support the day-to-day lives of residents", playing a central role in urban regeneration and gentrification (Mayor of London).

The map below identifies Opportunity Areas in Inner London. These areas attract significant investment, leading to increased property values and socio-economic shifts. While these investments bring economic growth, they also raise concerns about affordability and displacement, making OAs an important factor to consider when aiming to identify areas where gentrification is likely to happen.



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Occupation

Occupation class is an essential variable to identify gentrification patterns, as differences in occupational distributions are associated with socio-economic changes. Gentrification is generally characterized by the movement of wealthier residents into areas that were previously home to low-income populations. It is useful to focus on Senior Officials, Sales Occupation and Associate Professionals as these characterize different phases of gentrification. Senior Officials indicate the final stages of gentrification, while Associate Professionals signal its early phases. Analyzing Sales Occupations can give an idea of impact of displacement, as lower-income workers face challenges in maintaining housing amidst these shifts.

Considering Senior Officials and Managers, they are defined by the UK Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) as "individuals engaged in planning at the highest levels and who have a great deal of knowledge and experience about the production processes and service requirements needable to ensure the efficient and smooth running of organisations and businesses". They tend to bring wealth and demand for high-end housing, exerting pressure on property prices.

Sales Occupations are roles primarily focused on customer service and retail, with typically lower income and fewer benefits compared to other occupations. Workers in this category may face increasing housing unaffordability in gentrifying areas, as rising rents and property prices outpace their earning capacity.

Associate Professionals and Technical Occupations encompass a wide range of jobs requiring a mix of practical and theoretical knowledge, including roles in tech, creative industries, and high-skill services. Described as those with "an associated high-level vocational qualification, a large part of which is often obtained through a long period of full-time training or further study", associate professionals have been associated with the signs of early gentrification. Their high disposable incomes allow them to settle in once low-income neighborhoods, creating demand for property refurbishments, high-end amenities and culture changes. This occupational class, often associated with "creative gentrification," reflects Inner London's transformation into hubs for young, affluent professionals. For this analysis, the Associate Professionals class is especially important to identify gentrifying areas in Inner London. This group is frequently associated with "super gentrification," as neighborhoods turn into hubs for middle-class residents, eventually paving the way for wealthier Senior professionals. Their settlement reflects the gradual displacement of working-class or vulnerable populations





Price change 1996-2023

This map illustrates property price changes across Inner London, highlighting areas where values have significantly increased over time. The strongest colors indicate areas with a price performance difference exceeding +/-30% compared to the London median change since 1996 (1.0), while light pink represents regions with less than a 10% variation from the median. In general, dark green areas illustrate neighborhoods that have become more desirable to live in, with a greater than average increase in house prices. These changes display lower-income displacement as affordability decreases, marking price trends as key indicators of socio-economic shifts.

Rapidly rising property prices often correlate with the movement of higher-income groups, such as Associate Professionals, in areas undergoing redevelopment or significant investment. Understanding these changes is important to analyze gentrification, as price shifts directly impact housing accessibility and community composition. When analyzed alongside factors as IMD and Occupation Class, price changes will provide a lens to identify gentrification's spatial and economic dynamics.







Public green space

Public green space is important to consider when assessing gentrification, as it is plays a significant role in quality of life and influences neighborhood desirability. Green spaces provide environmental, social and health benefits that can lead to an increased demand from higher-income residents to live in formerly less-affluent areas. This dynamic can lead to gentrification by increasing property values and pushing out long term, lower-income residents

The map below displays public green spaces across Inner London, showing their locations with respect to various boroughs. Areas with higher concentrations of green spaces may experience a greater gentrification pressure due to their increased appeal, this underscores the need for equitable access to green spaces to mitigate exclusionary effects. Understanding the relationship between green space and gentrification helps contextualize the spatial inequalities that arise and can help identify locations prone to increased socio-economic changes.





Where is gentrification more likely to happen within Inner London?

Multi Criteria Decision Analysis

This Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis (MCDA) highlights areas in Inner London where gentrification is most likely to happen, taking into account IMD scores, occupation class (Associate), green space accessibility, property price changes, and proximity to Opportunity and Intensification Areas. By weighting these variables according to their influence on gentrification dynamics, the MCDA identifies neighborhoods where socio-economic pressures and urban development trends converge. The visualization allows for a spatially informed approach to identifying gentrification, helping to pinpoint high-risk areas (in dark red) where policy interventions and urban planning measures may be needed. This tool can offer critical insights for policymakers aiming to address socio-spatial disparities.



IMD

With areas with higher deprivation

being weighted higher than less

deprived ones

15%

WEIGHTING VARIABLES

Areas of Intensification + Opportunity Areas

With areas closer to AOI and Opportunity Areas being weighted higher based on 2 mile buffers around them

Occupation - Associate

With areas with a higher concentration of Associates being weighted higher than other ones

Green space



With areas closer to green space being weighted higher based on 0.5 mile buffers around them

Price increase

0%

With areas with a higher price increase being weighted higher than other ones





MCDA, Green space and Occupation

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How is public green space connected to gentrification?

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Inner London Boroughs
Very high risk and concentration
High risk and concentration
Moderately high risk and concentration
Moderate risk and concentration
Moderately low risk ad concentration
Low risk and concentration
Very low risk and concentration

How is the Associate occupation class connected to gentrification?



12 miles

Future gentrification in London? MCDA analysis



Analyzing the MCDA results, overlaid with green space and occupation class (Associate), a high risk of gentrification can be identified across the three boroughs of Camden, Hackney, and Westminster. Camden demonstrates a moderate-to-high risk of gentrification, driven by the combination of its substantial green spaces and the concentration of Associate occupation, both of which contribute to rising property values and the borough's increasing attractiveness to wealthier demographics. Hackney, on the other hand, emerges as a high-risk zone because of sharp property price increases and a significant presence of Associate occupation, highlighting the borough's ongoing transformation despite having fewer green spaces compared to Camden. Lastly, Westminster, despite being a very central borough, stands out for its high gentrification risk with two of the largest public parks in Inner London as well as a considerate amount of Associates.

Conclusion and limitations

To conclude, my analysis provides an understanding of gentrification risk in Inner London, with a Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis (MCDA) framework to assess the relationship between socio-economic and spatial factors. By integrating data on the IMD, occupation class (Associate Professionals), property price changes, green space accessibility, and proximity to Opportunity and Intensification Areas, the MCDA identified neighborhoods with varying levels of gentrification risk. The results highlight three main high-risk zones: Hackney, Camden, and Westminster, where socio-economic pressures and urban development merge, leading to displacement and rising housing unaffordability.

My methodology combined quantitative spatial data with weighted variables to generate a risk map, allowing for a nuanced understanding of gentrification trends. However, it is important to reflect on limitations, including the exclusion of qualitative insights like community perception. Additionally, the weighting choices for variables remain subjective and could have influenced the MCDA's outcome. Future research could incorporate qualitative insights to deepen insights and refine predictive models.

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Opportunity Areas, London Datastore, 2023. Green space, London Blue and Green Cover, London Datastore, 2023.

Price paid:

Price Increase, Office for National Statistics, House price statistics for small areas in England and Wales Statistical bulletins.

Demographics:

IMD, Indices of Deprivation, London Datastore, 2019. Occupation, Office for National Statistics, 2022.

