

Gaps found in research on 'climate gentrification'

March 29 2022, by Laura Oleniacz



A flooded street in Davenport, Iowa. Credit: Kelly Sikkema on Unsplash, https://unsplash.com/photos/_whs7FPfkWQ

Climate change, and policies related to it, are displacing vulnerable communities. But a new analysis of research on this phenomenon—called "climate gentrification"—finds that there is a lack of long-term research that examines these issues. What's more, the analysis finds that members of vulnerable communities under study are

not being given a voice.

The Abstract spoke with review co-author Zeynab Jouzi, a graduate student in parks, recreation and tourism management at North Carolina State University, about what climate gentrification means, and what the analysis found. The analysis was published in the journal *Frontiers in Climate*.

The Abstract: What is climate gentrification?

Zeynab Jouzi: Climate gentrification is already happening in some cities in the United States. It's displacement of [vulnerable communities](#) because of [climate-related events](#) like floods, hurricanes or high temperatures. It's an important environmental and social justice topic.

TA: What are the ways climate gentrification can impact people or communities?

Jouzi: There is direct displacement because of climate events like flooding.

There is also indirect displacement where investments to increase resilience to climate change increase the price of homes or the price of rent, so the vulnerable cannot afford to live there anymore.

This can also be called "green gentrification": when some nature-based solutions, such as adding [green space](#) to increase an area's resilience to climate change, make a neighborhood more expensive, acting as a barrier for [vulnerable people](#) to get into that good and safe environment.

There is also "carbon gentrification" where strategies to mitigate climate change increase costs. So maybe a city or neighborhood will be [low-](#)

[carbon](#) and resilient to [climate change](#) impacts, but the people inside the city are not original residents of that city; they cannot afford it. They have to leave.

Another kind of displacement is cultural displacement. That's a situation where maybe I can still afford to live in a place, but many of my neighbors, the barber, the [grocery store](#), the people I used to have connections with, they can't stay, so they leave the neighborhood. I live here, but my connections are displaced. All of this has physical and mental negative impacts on populations.

TA: You describe the concept of "neo-liberal growth in gentrification." What is that and how is it related?

Jouzi: The neo-liberal growth model places [economic development](#) and private interests above everything else. So when I make a decision, I don't think about the justice aspect. This was one of the themes we saw in the research on this topic. It's often used to describe the root of the problem—not really thinking and considering social, ecological and environmental justice. Anyone who has money and power can do whatever they want. Sometimes this can come at the cost of others' well-being.

TA: How well studied is this topic?

Jouzi: The topic is still very new. We looked at 12 peer-reviewed studies dating to 2018. We only looked at studies in the United States. That's because we believe socio-economic history of the United States, with redlining and historic segregation, are among the drivers of gentrification here, and we wanted to look at the work that's been done on that.

TA: What gaps did you find in the studies on this topic?

Jouzi: One research gap we identified is the lack of longitudinal data. All of the studies happened in a short time, so we have just characteristics of climate gentrification in the short term. If we had more long-term data, we'd be able to identify the sequence of events leading to climate gentrification and the policy implications.

Another gap is in the lack of participatory research. Generally, there is not enough community engagement, so people don't have their voices heard. Participatory research in climate gentrification could lead to co-production of knowledge, which means that people and the researchers create knowledge together.

TA: What are some of the takeaways from this paper?

Jouzi: Climate gentrification is complex. It involves spatial dynamics—a physical place—and it has a time aspect. It's rooted in the past, it's happening now and it will have impacts in the future. It has multiple causes. We developed a framework for how these variables are inter-related that future researchers can use to make sure all of these aspects are taken into account.

Our framework is based on Coupled Human and Natural Systems theory. In the past, these two systems were treated separately. We argued that the best way is to couple human natural systems so we can find a balance between two main components of climate gentrification, including the social and natural sciences.

TA: Are you planning research on this in the future?

Jouzi: The main topic of my dissertation is on [food insecurity](#), specifically on links between food insecurity in Africa for people living near national parks or protected areas. In the future, I'll be interested in exploring links between [climate gentrification](#) and food insecurity.

More information: Kelsea Best et al, Climate Gentrification: Methods, Gaps, and Framework for Future Research, *Frontiers in Climate* (2022). [DOI: 10.3389/fclim.2022.828067](https://doi.org/10.3389/fclim.2022.828067)

Provided by North Carolina State University

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