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Person, place, and pragmatism: Theorizing urban spaces

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ABSTRACT

Cities old and new would benefit if they embraced a perspective distinct from the dominant thought regarding efforts to reinvent or contemporize themselves through urban renewal projects, specifically those related to social inclusion. Realism, as contrary to pragmatism, has been shown to impose a complacent attitude toward vulnerable urban communities through its attachments to predeterminacy. This paper analyzes the detrimental effects of a realist worldview on marginalized populations facing displacement as a result of these projects, and takes a Rortyan approach at delineating the implications of realist policy approaches in cities like Los Angeles, California, Detroit, Michigan, and Birmingham, England. The paper then turns to critique movements like 'Detroit vs Everybody' and Richard Florida's model in *The Rise of the Creative Class* as an effort to endorse a reconceptualization of policies in which elites relinquish their realist attachments in favor of outcome driven, pragmatic solutions that will, in turn, relieve these marginalized groups of the infringement imposed upon them.

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1. Introduction

The discourse used to describe urban renewal projects contributes to the notion that the displacement of marginalized local populations in urban areas is inevitable. We propose an alternative conceptual framework to a realist model of urban renewal in which the historically affected local populations are no longer imposed upon by realist informed public policy and thus establish their own sense of physical place. We argue that adopting a pragmatic approach to the perceived inevitability of displacement at the hand of urban renewal is an effective method for lessening cruelty among marginalized local populations.

We begin the paper with an applied dilemma to help locate the respective theoretical positions of competing approaches. A recent proposal for injecting new investment dollars in the North End neighborhood of Detroit, Michigan has been met with skepticism and even outright opposition from community members and neighborhood activists. The North End situation serves to provide a helpful context for how we might apply more general intellectual traditions to concrete examples. After stepping through these existing tensions, we lean back to sketch a fuller picture of the traditions themselves. On one side, we trace the common intellectual strains found in foundationalism and realism that can—and do—produce outcomes justified as simply a matter of the inevitable coming true. On the other side, we show how pragmatism challenges these metaphysical assumptions by resisting the philosophical inclination to ground preferences in any comprehensive theory. Although our analysis does rely on a Rortyan interpretation of pragmatism, Richard Rorty is but a single voice within the much larger pragmatic tradition. As such, we take a relatively brief inventory of important points of agreement as well as some of the ongoing debates within pragmatism itself.

Section 4 starts putting the pragmatic method to work in an attempt to expose the shortcoming of relying on realist discourse to adequately account for marginalization. Once we establish our strategy for

selecting which texts—i.e. our data—to include in our analysis, we interrogate an excerpt from a *Los Angeles Times* article on the anticipated fate of a local population facing displacement. By parsing out discourse that is contrary to Rorty's pragmatic approach to advance liberal societies, and in effect, discourse that ultimately inhibits such progress, this section relies on Rorty's advancement of championing a society in which public and private mores refrain from entanglement, one in which a desire for mutual protection supersedes an attempt to embrace a philosophical justification for human suffering. The section captures Rorty's approach by highlighting predeterministic discourse, namely words like 'inevitable,' 'fundamental' and 'essential,' all of which underscore an attachment to the idle gains of a realist worldview.

What follows seeks to undermine the conflation of private pursuits and public policy in the Rortyan sense, and through invoking examples of urban planners embracing such conflation in Birmingham, England and Detroit, Michigan, we explore its intrusive effects on these local populations at risk of displacement. Moreover, leaning on Rorty's version of self-description and Ray Oldenburg's concept of 'third place,' we argue that displacement from such third places deprives individuals of one form of their private pursuit of self-development, and thus contributes to an infringement well beyond physical marginalization. Our final section offers a pragmatic critique of realist informed approaches to urban renewal, which opts to pivot away from a philosophical vocabulary that accompanies a realist worldview in favor of an outcome driven expenditure that deems cruelty the most unfavorable of consequences. By critiquing the methods of urban theorist Richard Florida, this section further explores instances in Detroit, Michigan to argue that Florida's conception of those benefiting from such urban renewal efforts—the Creative Class, as Florida coins them—consequently prolongs a sense of alienation among other marginalized groups, and ultimately demonstrates that some of Florida's critics, in their attempt to refute him, fall victim to realist entrapment themselves. The section concludes by maintaining that upon people recognizing their susceptibility to humiliation, and putting vulnerability first, can solidarity and thus flourishing take place.

2. The North End conundrum

Cities all over are eager to attract investment, fueled in no small measure by the ongoing need for housing—including affordable family housing (Kim et al., 2020). Where capital goes—that is, which cities and then where within these cities it goes—is often a matter of how (re)development proposals get articulated. Approaches to urban planning become expressions of larger commitments about values, priorities, and trade-offs. Put more concretely, the question becomes: Who is it for? Consider for a moment a recent urban planning conundrum emerging in the North End neighborhood of Detroit. North End is near Midtown, Detroit, home to the city's only research university and its cultural district. Midtown's years-long economic transformation into a 'thriving' hub of interest and activity is but one narrative to describe the change, albeit the dominant one, no doubt (Bonner & Katz, 2023). And that model is spreading throughout the city, as well—to places like North End, whose residents' feelings are mixed, at best (Aguilar, 2021). North End resident and artist, Bryce Detroit has made clear his position, one that caught the attention of both passersby and media. He started erecting signs at the edges of the North End neighborhood that proclaimed, 'Hood Closed to Gentrifiers' (Cassimy, 2020). His protest campaign comes on the heels of a \$7.3 million housing project that (City of Detroit, 2023), in his and others' view, neglects the need for family-sized housing in favor of smaller units intended to attract someone new to the area, someone who, for Bryce Detroit, is not just 'foreign to [North End's] cultural norms' but often 'come under the guise of support' (Cassimy, 2020). Suspicions like his are well-founded and well-documented. (Connolly, 2022; Kern, 2022). Bryce Detroit's sights aren't so much focused on young tech bros potentially interested in renting studio apartments in North End as they are on, as he puts it, the more structural issue of 'land-use in my neighborhood' (Cassimy, 2020). His more significant quarrel is with policymakers, the people who read the people theorizing approaches to city planning and urban renewal.

Before getting to the 'What should be done?' question applied to North End or wherever, it is important to consider the 'What informs whatever answer is given?' question. Theoretical approaches to social issues ultimately state conclusions based on an initial set of assumptions. But within approaches that include these stated assumptions—often referred to as first principles, like assuming that the world has

an ultimate character to it for humans to then assess the validity of actions against said character—the approaches soon depart from one another in what that character happens to look like, thus offering justifications for solutions that stand in stark contrast to each other. Regardless, though, the initial set of assumptions on which to formulate philosophical responses to questions—to then be applied to, say, urban renewal—make them foundationalist. Foundationalists can appeal—and have appealed—to a variety of so-called foundations, such as religious texts for their ultimate point of origin from which to then proceed with their theoretical schematic. Some, in similar cases, have pointed to passages on race for justifying racism, segregation, and, for them, ‘what’s fair’ (Chappell, 1998); others point to different places in Scripture for justifying equality, integration, and, for this latter group, ‘what’s fair’ (King, 2018). Scripture certainly doesn’t have a monopoly on what foundationalists appeal to (Rorty, 1999, p. 151)—see also: (rugged) individualism, the (free) market, to name just two—and certainly, race is but a single choice among many foundational candidates. But in North End, a neighborhood in a city where race and jobs, especially automobile manufacturing jobs, and the intersection of those two, it is pervasive, as evidenced by Bryce Detroit’s characterization of recent investor attention in his neighborhood: for him, the history and legacy of ‘Black art’ is, among other things, part and parcel of the ‘cultural economy’ in North End (Cassimy, 2020). Specifically, context matters.

For those of whom context matters most, and for whom foundational assumptions matter little or not at all in comparison to acknowledging and preventing more of what a slogan like ‘Hood Closed to Gentrifiers’ is calling attention to—i.e. the impending displacement of long-time residents—belong to pragmatism (Rorty, 2010, p. 190). On the other side, foundationalists, be it the sort with whom we pragmatists are on the ‘same side’—the side of equality and integration—or the sort with whom we are not, want the question about ‘What should be done?’ to address, first and foremost, how an eventual policy proposal comports with first principles about ‘what’s fair’ in a way that is independent of context—free of a place and a people, free of North End and Bryce Detroit (MacIntyre, 2007; Rorty, 2010, p. 271). Alternatively, pragmatists are those who, as a matter of emphasis, desire to reposition the ‘What should be done?’ question as a forward-looking reframing of the issue itself: ‘What would it look like in North End if long-time families were priced out and forced to relocate?’. A pragmatic reorientation is an attempt to circumvent philosophical discussions about ‘justified true beliefs’ to instead jump to real-world scenarios and their effects on people—people like Bryce. In this way, pragmatists would not necessarily be in disagreement with one sort of foundationalist’s favored outcome (i.e. integration, equality, and inclusion); the pragmatist’s opposition lies in any foundationalist’s insistence that the outcome is the ‘true’ or ‘real’ one because it demonstrates interpretive alignment with what the initially stated criteria for ‘what’s fair’ was. Pragmatists resist this intellectual and argumentative expedition in favor of simply wanting context, more and more concrete, on-the-ground context for weighing actual competing visions and plans for whom things like neighborhoods and projects exist and serve.

We used the word dominant earlier to describe the prevailing narrative surrounding Midtown, Detroit. That word aptly applies to the effect Richard Florida’s thinking and research has had on the field of urban planning, too. Florida’s creative capital theory suggests that ‘regional economic growth is driven by the location choices of creative people’ (Florida, 2004, p. 223). It is difficult to overstate the importance elites have given to his ideas (Tiruneh, 2014). Part of what makes his theory ‘essentially’ what it is is that it ‘identifies the underlying factors that shape the location decisions of these people’. (Florida, 2004, p. 223). These creative types comprise his Creative Class. Florida’s model for regional vibrancy has a dependent variable—the member of his Creative Class—and this person, for Florida, possesses an essential faculty, an underlying character to them that explains their desires and choices more than any contingent forces to which they have been exposed. For Florida, this ‘something’ is akin to a philosophical gene of sorts. Once this class has come to realize this quality has been there, in them, all along—and now owing it to their nature—their decisions become justifiably ‘true’ ones, ones about where to live and what to do once they’ve arrived. It is not a favorite cuisine or type of nightlife *per se*, although that can be a manifestation of it, but a certain experiential ‘craving’ Florida sees *in* them (Florida, 2004, p. 188). It is here where Florida’s Creative Class framework becomes realist, where his creative types are envisaged as realists.

Cities desperate to attract investment opportunities have clung to Florida’s ideas in hopes for a return to prosperity (Pratt, 2008), accepting with that proposition certain inevitabilities along the way, such as that ‘even

when experiencing culture is truly the goal, if hanging out in nightspots frequented by artists and aficionados is how [Creative Class members] choose to up [their] creative stimulation, [they] are going to pick up a lot of chaff along with it' (Florida, 2004, p. 185). That's bad news for the very temporal predicament in which Bryce and the other North End residents find themselves (Bridge, 2020). Florida does, however, acknowledge his creatives' susceptibility to becoming posers themselves (Florida, 2004, 185); and a decade later, Florida went much further, performing what has seemingly amounted to as a wholesale *mea culpa* (Wetherell, 2017). Worth mentioning here, though, is his enduring outsider-friendly stance (Florida, 2004, p. 292), especially noteworthy in light of urban planners and policymakers' attempts at creating institutions and atmospheres welcoming of diversity (Dreher, 2005), an outcome we can celebrate with realists, even if that aim was largely pursued from an instinctually foundational approach.¹

3. Theorizing from intellectual 'places'

Urban renewal project proposals do not necessarily throw around such technical jargon. It is important to zoom out here and situate this terminology as part of a larger philosophical lexicon, which will become increasingly helpful as the paper progresses. Foundationalism accepts fixed narratives; our pragmatism does not, and it is in this recognition that a pragmatist accepts what the truth—or the just or the fair—is, and can be, is no more than 'what works' (Rorty, 2010, p. 503). Further, 'what works' is decided by a community, in conversation in a context, rather than against some singular, capital-t 'truth' version reached via some system of inquiry that rests on some initial and unquestioned assumptions, or first principles. More technically, foundationalists posit that epistemic belief is an adequately structured atemporal complex capable of justifying claims based on procedures put forth on the assumption of *a priori* knowledge, a feature that runs through the various strains of foundationalism. One assumption like this is that of the realists: realists hold that reality itself has an intrinsic nature, something with which we can then act in accordance (Rorty, 1999, p. 151). In this way, realism nods to foundationalism through its commitment to permanent converging truths that lie independent of human interpretation (Searle, 1995). In short, there exists a single way to be human. Therefore, if humans are a *certain* way, then certain human behaviors consistent with such a conception are not just expected to follow but provide confirmation of this purported natural order.

It is here that we attach this realist tendency to the notion of inevitability, as inevitability serves to naturalize realism by granting it a conclusive, irrefutable predicate. So, because, in the realist view, this single reality offers an image of 'human'—as opposed to interpreting humans creating themselves with no preconfigured instruction sheet—then some ensuing action can corroborate the validity of such an image for the realist. For instance, if it is philosophically understood that humans are by their nature *a* particular way, and *this* particular way is predatory by nature, then we accept it—e.g. 'there will always be poverty', the source of which is metaphysics rather than politics (Gutiérrez, 1997; Karnani, 2011)—or, in ways, correct for it. On this reading of humans, predatorial behaviors are even embraced to the extent it is baked into the social calculus, where a certain number of prey lost have been written off as acceptable, if not regrettable, externalities. In such a scenario, predatory fill-in-the-blank [lending, listing, inclusion, etc., etc.] is not a matter of contingently planned or unplanned forces that happen to converge in some specific context—it may be that, sure, but it would also be more than that—it is part of the human condition, even if that condition is bemoaned, which is certain to happen because it is bound up in what is essential, philosophically, about being human. This binding aspect of inevitability with respect to realism occupies a place within the epistemic certainty of foundationalism that merits close attention, particularly the shoulder-shrug responses to the purported predeterminacy of cruel outcomes.

For a fuller picture, though, it is worthwhile to situate realism within the much larger theoretical dialogue. We are the heirs to this idea of objectivity, of the insistence on an independent reality (Rorty, 1989, p. 196, 2010, p. 228). The realists' resolve to chart human courses onto metaphysical maps helped us reach the Enlightenment and subsequently experience the euphoric liberation that that rationality produced—like the proliferation of education, equality, liberty, individuality, prosperity, and so much more. The Enlightenment's promise of self-determination, understood as something rationally bestowed upon individuals, spawned democratic revolutions and then nurtured commitments to civic participation. The certainty with which Enlightenment rationalists connected principles of equality and individuality to

the nature of what it meant to be a fully realized human being was permitted by realist dictum. As such, if free and equal individuals embody the accurate depiction of reality, then democratic government becomes legitimate, thus justifying statements like:

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume, among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation (US 1776).

Simply put, pragmatism can never make such a forceful philosophical assertion; it does not lend itself to the kind of 'metaphysical comfort' that comes with realists' confidence in their claims about certainty (Nietzsche, 2000). Pragmatism, in this way, is reduced to something much more temperate: the comparing alternative scenarios using this-worldly examples. Well in the twenty-first century now, we maintain that we can acknowledge and appreciate realism's intellectual contributions, while also asserting that its utility in the aid of progress is no longer required (Rorty, 1989, p. 194), thus swapping it for a different prompt: Are specific autocracies like A and B or specific theocracies like C and D, and their respective mechanisms for improving conditions, preferable to democracies like X and Y, and their specific mechanisms that have *this* kind of electoral system and *that* kind of constitutional amendment process? Then, let us compare specific features in these systems against one another to get to more of what we want rather than against some erected image of the nature of reality. Such is our use of the pragmatic method.

Now, just because democracies have been shown to deliver, say, higher levels of autonomy (Pendlebury, 2004) and prosperity (Norris, 2011) for their citizens does not alone preclude them from committing abuses like predatory majoritarianism against their own citizens. In this way, the pragmatic method *could* be deployed for achieving some stated goal (that, perhaps, pragmatists like us would find abhorrent), so long as there was no attempt to bolster their position with some comprehensive theory about humanity or truth or justice or fairness against which to gauge adherence or deviation, even if the process for communicating terms like 'utility' and 'desired' was blatant distortion (Rorty, 2010, p. 120). And therein lies the issue at hand: pragmatists like us are linguistically susceptible to the accusation of committing a kind of circularity incapable of condemning heinous acts on traditional philosophy's terms. One effective response, we posit, has been Rorty's unwavering commitment to keep the conversation fully in *this* world, again using very particular examples that contextualize the terms of both sides of the debate, playing the sides of one another by pointing to concrete scenarios that describe or depict what we want more of and less of (Rorty, 2010, pp. 225, 418). On the matter of equality, for example, we want less a conversation that begins 'We hold these truths to be self-evident' and more a conversation that begins 'Michigan 'House Bill 4966 would create the Land Tax Equity Act, which would allow [Detroit] to authorize a land value tax (LVT)' (Clanton, 2023), for how to improve delivery today of the equality ushered in and promised by the Enlightenment. We no longer need the former to prop up the latter. Rorty resists the attempt to lift pragmatism to the level of philosophy, rather pulling philosophy down, at once rebuffing the charge of circularity-induced moral relativism and indicting traditional philosophy of committing circularity in its own right; Rorty contends:

I think that the answer to this question is that the pragmatist cannot justify these habits without circularity, but then neither can the realist. The pragmatists' justification of toleration, free inquiry, and the quest for undistorted communication can only take the form of a comparison between societies which exemplify these habits and those which do not, leading up to the suggestion that nobody who has experienced both would prefer the latter (Rorty, 2010, p. 230).

Although we have come to mostly embrace Rorty's version of pragmatism that puts right at the fore a full-throated postmodern rejection of absolutes, Rorty by no means has proprietorship over the term pragmatism. While pragmatism's denial of truth corresponding to reality is a key element within the tradition (Rorty, 2010, p. 418), its emphasis on utility in outcome as a practice helps to separate it from traditional modes of intellectual inquiry. For example, pragmatism eschews contemplative slogans like 'good for its own sake'. For this reason, it is more method than philosophy. For William James, one of the first pragmatists, getting to 'the true' amounts to 'what is good in the way of belief' (James, 1955); for John Dewey, another giant of classical pragmatism, it is simply more and more 'growth' (Dewey, 1980)—where we're never going to reach fully grown, as it were. Like their historical counterparts, contemporary

practitioners employ pragmatism in various ways and for a number of ends. One difference among them is on the matter of real-world relevance these philosophical-like endeavors have, and consequently, the effect they then have on societies. On the one side, Richard Bernstein sees an important role for attending to philosophical quandaries in improving public life (Rorty, 2010, p. 474), as do other influential figures like John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas, both of whose thinking contain strains of pragmatism (Rorty, 2010, p. 437). Rorty takes the more skeptical position—that philosophy is not as central to politics or progress as others contend, or hope, it is. This provocative stance, at least within philosophy circles, has caused much consternation, with Rorty's critics charging him—especially his Jacques Derrida-like brand of postmodernism—with everything from quaint frivolity (Rorty, 2010, p. 475) to dangerous moral relativism (Rorty, 2010, p. 120). Moreover, they have accused him of committing what amounts to interpretive violence to supply textual evidence for achieving his anti-philosophical reimagining of pragmatism (Stieb, 2005). In fact, Rorty and longtime interlocutor Hilary Putnam sparred for decades (Malachowski, 2010), including over Putnam's accusation of Rorty propagating relativism, something Rorty fervently and repeatedly denied (Rorty, 2010, p. 192). But for as much as the two quarreled at or near the margins, Putnam's assertion that we all give up the attempt for a 'God's eye view' has been embraced not just by Rorty but remains an instructive metaphor for pragmatic narratives (Putnam, 1981). Putnam's pragmatic concession here prevents someone from serving as initially God's eyes and then ultimately as God's definitive mouthpiece. Like Rorty, we find Putnam's claim here convincing; we find Putnam's claim of Rorty's relativism much less so. Conversely put, Rorty's defense against relativism resonates with us, and we conclude that Rorty's refusal to ever leave this temporal world for what 'good' or 'growth', or whatever, means offers us our preferred tool for our own analysis.

4. Loss in Los Angeles

By the mid-2010s, less than a decade after the near collapse of major markets in 2008 which brought on the Great Recession, signs of investment started popping up once again in urban areas (Voith & Wachter, 2014). Much of this larger revitalization effort was an attempt to create an entire ecosphere for attracting new talent in expanding sectors like tech (Ratti, 2015), a strategy that left working class communities, especially those tied to sectors like manufacturing or service, susceptible to being pushed out of their homes and neighborhoods (Editor, EIG).

A 2016 publication by the editorial board of the *Los Angeles Times* predicts the supposed fate of residents living in Marmion Royal, an apartment complex in Highland Park, as displayed by the title alone: 'Gentrification in L.A.: It's cruel, and it's inevitable'. As a result of hedge funds and private equity firms buying and upgrading apartment buildings within the area, increased rent prices for Marmion Royal tenants are forthcoming and will only, according to the board, 'delay the inevitable'—that is, tenants seemingly have but three routes from which to proceed: 'they can either pay the rent increases, move or be evicted' ('Gentrification'). While much can be evaluated regarding the less than glamorous effects often accompanying urban renewal projects on the marginalized people of a given area, our focus, though related, is one centered on discourse. The editorial board anchors itself in a worldview that depicts displacement as nothing short of inevitable; the board questions not what will happen to Marmion Royal tenants but ponders instead the matter of when. Such predeterministic discourse can be understood further when analyzing the similar discourse comprising much of the board's mission statement:

We reject overreaching moves by public authorities to control the culture or private mores. Citizens' right to privacy, to decide for themselves how best to lead their lives, is fundamental. It is in keeping with our Western roots to champion individual autonomy and the freedom of conscience. The United States has developed into one nation whose citizens are engaged in a common enterprise ('About the Times').

We condone the board's advocacy for such a dichotomy. However, we take issue with the board's advancement of an 'engaged, common enterprise', since it fashions society as one united by some abstract common goal rather than one united by a real world need for mutual protection.²

The problematic turn of the board's discourse manifests itself further through the realist undertones of words like 'fundamental', and 'roots'. To say that the right to privacy is fundamental is to suggest there

is a natural or essential feature in the public sphere that entitles some to certain reapings and that potentially denies others (Rorty, 1989, p. 33). Such philosophical terminology that rests on notions of rights and entitlements proves to be stagnant, as the agency lies not within us, but within the presupposed outside agent from which such allocations derive. The result of this, as demonstrated by the editorial board, is that citizen agency is immediately relinquished for the comfort in believing that the sufferings of those marginalized—in this case, the displaced tenants of Highland Park—are a regrettable, predictable necessity. While we agree that displacement as a result of urban renewal is cruel, we argue against the realist notions behind its inevitability.

The inevitability of suffering as a result of urban renewal is heavily attached to realism, as maintained by Rorty. Because realists intend on discovering *the* version of truth in objective reality, as opposed to pragmatists, like us, who wish to construct theirs in solidarity, realists are susceptible to the rhetorical backlash of their predeterministic discourse (Rorty, 2010, p. 228). Consequently, this search for objectivity dissociates them further from outcome driven pursuits, as they are immersed in their quest to fill the gap between human nature and nature itself with a discourse predicated on ‘the intrinsic nature of things’ (Rorty, 2010, p. 184). While such an incessant drive for bridging this gap may be a self-fulfilling expenditure in the private realm, it measures up to just that. Adopting realism in the public realm is to refrain from, for instance, giving a reason for human suffering and instead it is to rely on something out in the world pointing us to ‘the way things are,’ as done by the editorial board (Rorty, 2010, p. 114). The editorial board’s statements are informed by realist thought, as their argument grounds itself in the inherent nature of the tenants’ eventual displacement, which in turn, is reiterated through discourse that amplifies its supposed inevitability. With that, the realist’s comfort with the current or inevitable order of society becomes clear: realists provide a philosophical justification for the happenings of society not from a perspective tangible enough to be remedied, but from a perspective fixed on prescribing a sense of divine order to them (Rorty, 2010, p. 236). The editors’ three-route prediction for explaining the tenants’ circumstance is a prime example of such order: by limiting the possibilities of the tenants’ futures to just three options, the editors embrace a realist worldview. The predeterministic discourse used by realists proves not only counterproductive for diminishing cruelty, but on our view, is harmful, as it fosters a society complacent in its own stagnation.

5. Third place and Birmingham, England

A similar cycle of stagnation manifests itself through urban renewal practices in England. In an effort to make the city more appealing, urban renewal measures in Birmingham, England, have ultimately ‘prevent[ed] the quarter [from] becoming engulfed by residential accommodation and [have] eroded its unique culture and identity’ through displacing a local population (Jones, 2016). Fox and Grapes, an ‘older-style ‘traditional ale’ pub,’ was acquired by the Birmingham City Council after the ‘Eastside regeneration programme,’ and has been forced for sale as a result of the revitalization plans (Porter & Barber, 2006, p. 218). The program calls for purchasing local businesses or plots of land within the boundaries that the Birmingham City Council declares will contribute significantly to the regeneration scheme, and consequently make way for trendy parks, shops, and bars. Despite protesting against such measures, the owner of Fox and Grapes failed to nullify this decision, as removing the bar, according to the council, is necessary ‘to enable the comprehensive redevelopment of the area to proceed’ and ‘[its retention] within the scheme will necessitate accommodation and other refurbishment works to ensure that it sits appropriately within the redevelopment scheme’ (Porter & Barber, 2006, p. 218). These proclamations, we maintain, are attached to a realist worldview, as the use of the word ‘necessitate’ connotes the inevitable undertones related to revitalization. Moreover, the ‘accommodation’ the council refers to relates not to those who currently frequent the pub, but to the anticipated population that the council seeks to incentivize to come once the neighborhood has been ‘appropriately’ remodeled, and thus provides a realist justification for the former’s displacement. By thinking in terms of what has already been defined for the urban planners, such as in the case of Fox and Grapes, they embrace a realist worldview to justify the continuation of a real-world problem affecting those facing displacement. For us, with Rorty, relying on realist descriptions supports the notion that one has not come to understand themselves and is simply ‘weaving new candidates for

belief and desire into antecedently existing webs of belief and desire' (Rorty, 2010, p. 287). Indeed, when considering the impact of such discourse, one must 'see redescription as a tool rather than a claim to have discovered essence' (Rorty, 1989, p. 39). This, in particular, is where urban planners of Birmingham, for instance, have failed: by adhering to the realist worldview already provided for them, they consider the displacement of Fox and Grapes as inevitable, and thus impose their public policy onto the private space of its patrons.

Because pubs act as physical spaces for their patrons and promote the development of social and personal bonds, the removal of Fox and Grapes not only robs the residents of Birmingham from a unique public interaction center, but also threatens the pub's position as a third place for its patrons, as the 'loss of third places appears to hinder an already fragile context in which opportunities for residents to congregate and join together are extremely reduced' (Cabras & Mount, 2017). Leaning on Ray Oldenburg's conceptualizations, people's 'first place' is home, their 'second place' is work, and their 'third place' is one in which they can freely express themselves, which promotes meaningful community interactions, as it offers 'vital anchors in community life, providing for broader, more creative interaction which is informal but intentional' (Sleeman, 2012). More importantly, third places are little if not avenues from which people exercise their private pursuits, which, through the 'physical invasion of nonregulars' (Anderson & Goode, 2015, p. 348), those seeking personal fulfillment, as the patrons of Fox and Grapes do, are overshadowed by those, who, even unreflexively (Bourdieu, 1990), 'disrupt the harmonious conditions of third place that regulars anticipate from the homely third place environment' (Anderson & Goode, 2015, p. 348). A third place further fosters a sense of self, and aids in validating that sense of physical space, and by extension, a sense of belonging (Rorty, 1989, p. 23). Indeed, the patrons of Fox and Grapes form meaningful interactions that inform their self-descriptions with the values embodied in the pub's culture; as such, the outside acquisition of the pub enables the displacement of customers by indirectly deterring personal relationships that have flourished naturally in their third space and allow for community building. The renewal efforts not only displace those who contribute—through their formation and subsequent sharing of their own self descriptions—to the identity of the pub, but ultimately conflate public policy with private pursuits through their infringement upon customers' third place. The Birmingham City Council 'envisages a very different local clientele for the Fox and Grapes', and by doing so, imposes its realist vision upon Fox and Grapes patrons, and thus endorses their eventual displacement (Porter & Barber, 2006, p. 222).

6. Space and Corktown, Detroit, USA

The renewal efforts' public impositions on private pursuits can be explored further through conceptualizing space. Both figuratively and physically, 'space is held to acquire recognizable form through the agency of some social practice or process, and space is of interest because it structures the experienced world in terms of these practices or processes' (Hillier, 2008, p. 220). The social practices of the Birmingham residents who frequent the pub, then, are invariably infringed upon through the renewal efforts' occupancy of their physical space. The Birmingham City Council professes that "cleaning up' city spaces to reflect the projected sensibilities of future Eastside residents and workers is an essential activity to create the economic and socio-cultural conditions for redevelopment of the space' (Porter & Barber, 2006, p. 222). The council's description of revitalization as an 'essential activity' reflects a realist worldview, and, in effect, attaches inevitability to such issues that are seemingly unworthy of serious consideration, which, for us, helps to explain their complacency about displacing that local population. Indeed, the detrimental effect on local populations, where realist public policy conflicts with spaces in which private development flourishes, extends well beyond Birmingham to other cities like Detroit, USA, where displacement as a result of urban renewal is commonplace (Larsen, 2017). Detroit and Birmingham exhibit many parallels, as they are both currently viewed as places of investment and growth. One specific area in Detroit, known as Corktown, is undergoing urban renewal efforts itself. The UFO Factory, a local bar in Corktown, which serves as a unique place of interaction for its local community, was purportedly 'unintentionally damaged' when construction workers for a development firm, whose bid for the bar was rejected by the UFO owner, knocked down a large portion of its exterior during excavation for an adjacent project in conjunction with the city's larger revitalization plans for that neighborhood (Houck, 2017). The Greater

Corktown Development Corporation (2018) declared the following in defense of its overall efforts and broader goal for the area despite the impact of current residents:

The group is currently working on three residential infill projects with a total of roughly 50 units, and, now that private investor capital is returning to the neighborhood, plans to shift its focus to supporting commercial and retail activity along Michigan Avenue, which straddles both historic Corktown and North Corktown. (GCDC)

While the primary focus of the revitalization program was originally to promote the neighborhoods of Corktown's local population, it is clear, as evidenced by the above, that the commercial development of the area is now a result of private investors—who informed by a realist approach to public projects, although likely inadvertently so—continually displace such populations.

Again, despite the damage to the UFO Factory, local residents believe the city had already accounted for the bar's destruction through its reluctance to assist with any measures to recover damages, as supported by one community member: 'Judging by our past interactions, I don't think they [the development authority] have our best interest in mind' (Houck, 2017). Indeed, the authorities' approach to urban renewal promotes a realist worldview in which such public policy, again, imposes itself upon the patrons of the UFO Factory, similarly to those of Fox and Grapes. By deeming the UFO Factory's removal a positive step toward and a necessary consequence of revitalization, then, urban planners in Detroit's Corktown district not only embrace a realist discourse to accompany their realist worldview, but in doing so, infringe upon the lives of longtime residents who have understood the bar to be their important third place as the vehicle by which to pursue their self-identity and development.

The real-world effect of this realist informed urban renewal plan transcends much further than physical marginalization. A pragmatic approach to self in a third place such as a local pub allows for an individual to uphold an informed self-image and self-description through meaningful, leisurely conversations (Rorty, 1989, p. 35, 2010, p. 347). Furthermore, the 'individual subject is bereft of those relational dynamics that inform any sense of self (Painter-Morland, 2011)', which depicts the significance of those interactions made both in Birmingham and in Detroit, for instance, by providing individuals with the opportunity to foster such relationships. The 'regulars' to spaces like the UFO Factory comprise the pub's identity and contribute to its unique culture; by doing so, patrons embrace 'continual redescrptions' to form better versions of themselves and, for Rorty, to deny the philosophical presumption of living in an 'inherited' world as a realist would presume (Rorty, 1989, p. 96). The significance of maintaining a pragmatic sense of self, then, lies in its seeking of private—as opposed to public—development, unencumbered by the imposition of realist public development projects.

7. Hipster inauthenticity and local imposition

Having laid out our case for a realist informed public policy, we now turn to give context to such implications using Richard Florida. Florida's *The Rise of the Creative Class* details his theory of urban renewal, which has become an emblematic model for urban planning. Written as a sort of call to urban planners to cater to the interests of these individuals, Florida defines the Creative Class as people 'not looking for a life delivered through a modem', but for one that is 'heart-throbbingly real' (Florida, 2004, p. 166). Of course, Florida's proposed quest for this constituency's personal fulfillment is not only realist in its effort to validate a seemingly one and only 'real' from which the Creative Class may draw upon, but proves problematic in its conflation of such private pursuits with public interest (Rorty, 2010, p. 286). For instance, Florida bolsters the Creative Class by depicting their lifestyle as one fixated on 'multidimensional experiences'; according to him, the Creative Class thrive upon the 'creative stimulation' they receive from their most sought out activities, namely by engaging in 'indigenous street-level culture', where they are free from 'draw[ing] the line between participant and observer, or between creativity and its creators' (Florida, 2004, p. 166). While such engagements may appear to be harmless, they, in fact, have been shown to be impositions upon the victims targeted, and thus foster a sense of prolonged resentment among them. Because little consideration for such individuals abounds, Florida's theory ultimately endorses the alienation of them at the expense of fulfilling the interests of the Creative Class. Such imposition not only confirms Florida's realist model of urban renewal, but alternately suggests there is

something 'natural' about those who comprise the Creative Class that inevitably grants them such an esteemed role in society (Rorty, 2010, p. 228). Moreover, Florida contends society would undoubtedly reap the benefits of their status if only they were aware of its influence. Hence, his theory predicates itself on encouraging urban planners to facilitate the most accessible way for the Creative Class to channel their influence by catering to their intrusive interests.

A consequence of Florida's theory is that it ultimately helps to set the conditions for hipsterfication. For us, the hipsterfication of an urban area is characterized by some of those constituting the Creative Class, whom we also dub as hipsters, exercising their private pursuits for some attempt at autonomy, often characterized by purchasing a so-called experiential encounter. Since consumerism has transformed from a type of conformity to a desire to show disdain for conformity and embrace counterculture ideas, it has promoted 'coolness' to be a 'nonconformist balance that manages to square circles and to personify paradoxes' (Botz-Bornstein, 2018). Indeed, in their attempt to reject conformity and embrace their own borrowed version of what is seemingly cool, hipsters view their coolness as something rooted in authenticity, and by extension, something that grants them autonomy (Frank, 1997). As such, hipsters, rather than attempting to create their own autonomy, merely conform to an already established vision of cool, and by doing so, ultimately suggest there is some essential feature of coolness. Rorty argues that realists, too, are guilty of such conformity by advancing their assumption that knowledge has an essence. The problem with this lies in the fact that it 'presupposes that knowledge, man, and nature have real essences which are relevant to the problem at hand' (Rorty, 2010, p. 230). Hipsters themselves, then, follow, if not consciously embrace, a realist worldview when they set out to supposedly discover some preconfigured definition of cool rather than creating such a definition for themselves, thus encouraging them to pursue a misguided sense of autonomy.

Because Florida's model has gained hegemonic status (Peck, 2005, p. 766), urban planners have been providing a platform on which these hipsters can pursue that misguided autonomy, and do so by invoking policy that is conducive for such individuals to exercise their impositions onto already present local populations. Not only is this problematic because of its conflation of philosophical autonomy with public policy, but through understanding reality on the basis of essence, hipsters provide a realist justification for their pursuit of autonomy rather than a pragmatic sense of creation. Rorty argues that a bulk of achieving autonomy lies in redescription: for instance, those equipped with the intellectual resources may attempt to redescribe themselves in terms of autonomy in the private sphere of their life so to detach themselves from the dominant realist understanding of the world (Rorty, 2010, p. 293). Moreover, those successfully seeking such pragmatically conceived autonomy begin to succeed where hipsters begin to fail. By assuming themselves the beneficiaries of Florida's unification between public policy and private autonomy, they ultimately summon their descriptions of themselves in such public places like a local pub or bar. The issue of conflation stems primarily from the fact that it allows hipsters to incur harm over marginalized populations, as policy makers, in their pursuance of Florida's model, prioritize the individual attempts at autonomy by hipsters over the real sufferings of those at risk for displacement.

Such hipster imposition has already taken hold in the Detroit area (Thompson, 2014), for instance, as evidenced by social influencers attempting to implement Florida's theory into their own planning efforts. Florida's private pursuit of self-creation³ ultimately conflates private fulfillment with public policy, the latter of which, in alignment with Rorty, we argue need not be informed by a philosophical foundation,⁴ but instead should inform itself solely on the basis of outcome. Public policy should be implemented based on the kind of solidarity that deems cruelty the most abominable practice (Rorty, 1989, p. 197)—the kind of cruelty associated with the seemingly inevitable impositions thrust upon local populations, as provided by Florida's theory in practice. For example, the 'Cool Cities' initiative in Michigan, as an effort to mobilize local communities, implemented several 'regeneration strategies' to promote 'excitement...open-mindedness, [and] buzz' into urban development practice, which, ultimately, was the reason for the construction of 'upscale bar[s]' in Detroit (Peck, 2015, p. 742), ones very much unlike the UFO Factory. Such attempts to provide revitalization through the so-called authentic experiences reveal the vulnerability of Florida's overall argument. While such initiatives have been implemented as ways to attract the interests of the Creative Class, they have failed for much of the same reason, as exemplified through one poignant reaction to the Detroit Electronic Music Festival by one of Florida's own interviewees:

Here was a free concert that drew a million people the first year...and featured a stellar lineup of Detroit and some national performers and DJs, a great boon to the city and its image...but the event is losing much of the uniqueness/authenticity that makes people want to come to this event from around the world. (Florida, 2004, p. 228)

While such initiatives provide the Creative Class with a platform on which they may exercise their search for authenticity by attending a concert whose genre of music was largely foreign to them, they fail either way. The Creative Class's complaints about 'inauthenticity' reveals, first, that urban initiatives are not, in fact, adequately catering to their search for authenticity; and second, the Creative Class's failure stems not only from their own failure to assume responsibility as the actual perpetrators of such 'inauthenticity', but in their public attempt to seek out authenticity through these initiatives, Florida's theory succeeds at promoting public policy that caters to these individuals at the expense of the marginalized populations who are given much less consideration. In short, we are arguing that the reason events like the DEMF have lost authenticity is because of the very attendance of Creative Class hipsters.

8. Detroit vs. Everybody and alienation

More evidence for the failure of Florida's implemented model stems from a similar reaction of a Detroit native who has recently gained national attention from his T-shirt slogan 'Detroit vs. Everybody'. The sentiment of 'Detroit vs. Everybody' not only affirms the extent of imposition at work as a result of urban renewal, but in doing so, perpetuates that same realist discourse through its universalistic⁵ advances of an 'us vs. them' worldview. Detroit native, Tommey Walker, the creator of this expanding brand, was increasingly dissatisfied with the media's portrayal of his hometown city, along with its 'lack of cultural recognition for the place that has contributed so much to society', which prompted him to envision a brand that could reinvent that portrayal and 'restore pride for Detroiters, universally' ('Our Story'). Moreover, Walker considers 'Detroit vs. Everybody' a 'battle call for all Detroiters, but also a feeling that all human beings must face and that is being "vs. everybody"' (Lee, 2017) as evidenced by the brand's mission 'we are guided by our Midwestern values of hard-working quality and community' ('Our Story'). While we agree with Walker's attempt to retaliate against the widespread imposition made possible by the implementation of Florida's realist urban model, we argue against his universalistic approach in Walker's execution. Because his entire movement bases its purpose on a platform that endorses terminology like 'we' and 'us' as synonymous with 'all human beings', it is susceptible to the stagnation of a universalistic discourse. With Rorty, discourse predicated on social membership such that 'common humanity' is necessitated by 'philosophical foundation', as Walker's assertions suggest, lends itself to a worldview that assumes that what a community may gain from such discourse binds itself in some 'common goal' that is supposedly inherent among us (Rorty, 2010, p. 294–295).

Just as Florida bases his theory in realism, Walker understands 'common' philosophically, and in doing so, similarly equates it to a sort of universal human disposition. We argue for an understanding attached not to a philosophical vision, but one that is a product of societal deliberation, with such deliberation being incessant upon the diminishment of cruelty. While Walker's campaign is in service of those marginalized, his universalist vocabulary by mimicking that of Florida's, invites—albeit quite possibly unintentionally—the same imposition it seeks to rebuke. According to Detroit columnist Dan Nosowitz, '[Walker's] campaign sits at the intersection of authenticity and appropriation, gentrification and branding' (Nosowitz, 2018). What began as a call for solidarity in response to the alienation experienced by some Detroiters has resulted in a co-option that finds justification in servicing those who comprise the Creative Class. Walker's realist reaction to Florida's model allows for the Creative Class to claim themselves as the 'Detroit', where we fully intend for them to represent the 'everybody'. Such unintended consequences, then, portray the ultimate outcome of attempting to instill a universalist vocabulary on a prevailing universalist conversation. This dynamic not only helps perpetuate Florida's model in theory, but its realist attachments serve to justify the actual displacement of those alienated in Detroit. By presuming that there exists an inherent 'us', Walker promotes both the existence and prolongation of an imposing 'them', thus advancing universalism onto the same problem that spurred it.

Florida's Creative Class perpetuates the actual alienation of Walker's 'Detroit' by pursuing the experience, at least in Florida's terms (Florida, 2004, p. 228) of 'Detroit's' alienation for its seemingly authentic appeal. While Florida's Creative Class rejects the term ascribed to them as alienating, they—for their own sense of personal fulfillment—ultimately seek to experience what they reject through rendering themselves as Walker's 'Detroit', again, despite being the 'everybody'. Similarly, upon being coined by Florida as 'Bohemians', for instance, the Creative Class was quick to denounce the label, for they did not consider themselves 'alienated' as, say, Bohemians of the 1960s contended to be, or, that is, 'living in the culture but not of it'. Instead, they saw themselves as 'creative people with creative values, working in increasingly creative workplaces, living essentially creative lifestyles' (Florida, 2004, p. 210). The Creative Class's rejection of what was perceived as Florida imposing on them a certain terminology is, then, significant because it not only reflects their own sense of awareness that they are not, in fact, actually alienated, but also demonstrates that they commit such imposition when they themselves latch onto the authentic experiences of those who have, indeed, embraced alienation. While Florida contends that the Creative Class's recognition of their role as 'the natural...and [the] only possible leaders of the twenty-first century' (Florida, 2004, p. 315) is what will bolster urban renewal, this conflation of which we have identified ultimately legitimizes the Creative Class's imposing actions, and makes ripe an environment for future displacement—the kind of displacement associated with the realist discourse of inevitability, despite the sophisticated attempts to make arguments against it, as much of the critical scholarship on Florida does. In the end, we maintain that such efforts fall short because they seek to correct for Florida by adopting his realist jargon.

9. Realism vs. realism

Florida's theory of urban renewal renders itself susceptible to many criticisms by relying on realist discourse to promote the role of the Creative Class. Our sample of the scholarship critical of Florida—through their descriptions of his urban theory—recognize, as we do, the extent of his realist appeal. Jamie Peck, for instance, contends that, per Florida, the Creative Class is allowed to 'nurture their own creativity through work and play' in order that, eventually, they 'bear [their]...unrealized responsibility...to lead' (Peck, 2005, p. 741). Such recognition of the Creative Class's ordained role given by Florida substantiates not only Florida's realism, but also its ease of discernment. Furthermore, Florida's critics affirm his realist notion that urban planners must accommodate the Creative Class by acknowledging his belief that 'a city or region cannot hope to experience economic renewal and growth [without the Creative Class]' (Morgan & Ren, 2018, p. 128). Florida has garnered international attention from urban planners and policy makers who seek to devise and implement revitalization projects in their own urban locales; his theory has become almost emblematic for such spectators, as evidenced through Peck's recognition of its pervasiveness: '[T]he allure of Dr. Florida's prescription has been sufficient to secure robust domestic sales, and a growing international market. The sobering evidence of this lies in the sheer number of cities that have willingly entrained themselves to his course of treatment' (Peck, 2005, p. 766).

As such, with the scholarship, we acknowledge the diffusion of this phenomenon, as the literature has emphasized not only its key features, such as using the concept of creativity as embodied by both those types and associated elites (Bontje & Mustard, 2009, p. 844; Krätke, 2010, p. 850; Peck, 2005, p. 742) as the leading facet of its revitalization effects, but precisely because it has attracted this widespread interest in the first place. One reason for the attention stems from Florida's 'nebulous' (Krätke, 2010, p. 836) notion of what is 'creative' and its subsequent centrality to efforts for urban renewal, along with the conceptual framework from which he constructs and introduces his Creative Class. We argue that such scrutiny is well deserved because where the terminology lacks definitiveness, 'ambiguity' remains (Peck, 2005, p. 741) and, indeed, renders a 'meaning from which to claw back' (Morgan & Ren, 2012, p. 128). Moreover, we agree on the point, with the literature, that 'words are restless things' and their connotative undertones prove important. By invoking a vague construction of the Creative Class, then, Florida begins to lose proprietorship over what it may entail, thus inviting interpretations that allow for such people to aid in urban displacement and ultimately marginalize vulnerable local populations who are excluded from his 'arbitrary assignment' of the Creative Class group of people (Krätke, 2010, p. 836).

While Florida's critics recognize the realist attachments to his proposed solution, they, too, rely on the same realist discourse that justifies the inevitability of marginalization. One real world consequence of Florida's 'sweeping theoretical assertion[s]' (Peck, 2005, p. 755), in action, ultimately reflects a realist 'voyage of discovery' that is specifically extended to those members of the Creative Class (Peck, 2005, p. 744). While we can appreciate the acknowledgment of this through the insistence that Florida has been asserted 'to serve as a justification for urban restructuring measures in favor of certain functional elites' (Krätke, 2010, p. 850), the repercussion, as proven to be, has reduced 'members of residual communities' to mere spectators (Morgan & Ren, 2012, p. 128)—such as, for our purposes, Walker's members of 'Detroit' and Birmingham's patrons of Fox and Grapes.

For us, the state of becoming a spectator of one's own life and in one's own home amounts to a sense of alienation (Rorty, 1989, p. 59)—the type of alienation which translates into a particularly realist vocabulary through its deterministic undertones. Such a vocabulary relies on words like 'must', as demonstrated by Walker when revealing his specific motivation for starting 'Detroit vs. Everybody' (Lee, 2017). Walker's sense of alienation in the spectator zone that *is* his 'Detroit' ultimately allows such struggles to be perceived as inevitable. Walker's assertion not only reflects a broader universalism, but further echoes the human commonality, in the philosophical sense, that pragmatists seek to avoid completely (Rorty, 1989, pp. 59, 67–68). Moreover, a January 2015 British article demonstrates parallel reasoning through the headline proclamation 'Why the Fox and Grapes Pub in Digbeth Must Be Saved' (Chinn, 2015). The implication, here, is one in which a philosophical essentialism exists, binding that third place to the very fabric of the local population as if the connection possessed some intrinsic quality to social life there. This conception not only reflects a pervasive realist vocabulary, but in doing so, actually aids in prolonging such alienation by recognizing its supposed inevitability.

This type of realist discourse repeats itself in the selected body of critical literature. And yet, although we applaud the sentiment on the particular point that scholars 'should actively take on the challenge posed by emerging urban growth ideologies' (Krätke, 2010, p. 850) and further, while we also agree 'that there is no justification' for such restructuring, we resist combating Florida's realism with more realism, which ultimately seeks yet another philosophical justification in critique of Florida's model. Rather, we advocate for a discursive reconceptualization, in pragmatic terms, where 'such a person would not need a justification for her sense of human solidarity, for she was not raised to play the language game in which one asks and gets justifications for that sort of belief' (Rorty, 2010, p. 290). With that, then, where Peck maintains that 'creative-city strategies are predicated on, and designed for, the neoliberalized terrain' (Peck, 2005, p. 764), we, with Rorty, 'rather than granting the objector [in this case, Florida] his choice of weapons and terrain by meeting his [Florida's] criticisms head-on' (Rorty, 1989, p. 44), instead prefer to conceive of redress to the displacement of marginalized local populations pragmatically. We propose, finally, making a departure from 'an age of spectators' (Rorty, 2010, p. 379) to an intellectual culture where 'to think such a justification sufficient would be...that vocabularies...are human creations' (Rorty, 1989, p. 53) and not 'voyage of discovery' (Peck, 2005, p. 744).

Our primary aim has not been to confront either Florida or the critical literature head-on, but to pivot away, adapting the Rortyan strategy 'to make the vocabulary in which these objections are phrased look bad' (Rorty, 1989, p. 44). Thus, we do not want to 'build on' a critical view 'evaluat[ing] some essential aspects of the development of creative knowledge industries (Bontje & Musterd, 2009, p. 844)', whereby doing so allows Florida's proponents to counter in-kind (Rorty, 2010, pp. 116–117). Moreover, nor is it our goal to engage in a way that, like Krätke, 'extends Peck's critique of Richard Florida's theory' (Krätke, 2010, p. 836) or to replace Florida's—or his followers'—'strategies' as, for Peck, 'pre-constructed' proposals for 'this fast policy market' so as to realize in concrete form the seductive 'travel truths' (Peck, 2005, p. 767) with a counter claim that offers something, philosophically, about 'The Way the World Really Is' (Rorty, 2010, p. 419). Our dismissal of such a proposition prevents us from recognizing—or the urge to want to—tap into a shared faculty that binds our common humanity as if it were affiliated with the intrinsic nature of personhood, where the realization of such is actualized once the Creative Class, in Florida's words, just 'grows up' and evolves into the 'more cohesive, more responsible group' (Florida, 2004, p. 316)—where, here, 'responsible' connotes a version of 'universal moral obligation' (Rorty, 2010, p. 361) that is synonymous with realism's 'commonality'.

10. Conclusion

In sum, we want to disengage from the kind of critiques above—that is, no longer taking realism on with more realist vocabulary. Such attempts amount to playing the language game on the rhetorical turf that justifies consequences, including cruelty, as inevitable and thus a regrettable necessity. With Rorty, we want to give up on locating the grounds on which to justify a sense of community and solidarity—in argument or policy—together, and instead, assess outcomes solely, and specifically, here, urban revitalization initiatives, on whether vulnerable local populations' shared susceptibility to be hurt by displacement has been avoided. To claim success in such a way would require no further philosophical substantiation in support of the outcome; such practices would come from reevaluating vocabulary and then adopting a pragmatic one.

To this end, we laid out the broader theory-oriented terms, first in the context of the North End neighborhood and then as part of a scholarly dialogue. Using words like texts to mean data and argument in place of results, we pragmatically asserted that to view displacement from a realist's vantage point, as performed by the editors of the *Los Angeles Times*, is to deepen oneself into a state of compliance. Additionally, we posited that once the inevitability of suffering is removed from the calculus of urban renewal projects, we can ameliorate the discursive justification of such cruel practices and humiliating consequences. We then portrayed the dangers of conceptualizing urban policy through a realist framework, as it not only excuses the physical marginalization of those affected, but, with Ray Oldenburg, infringes on their private pursuance of individual growth. Last, we emphasized—through the example of Richard Florida and then a response from Tommie Walker—that attempts at combating realism with another version of realism proves, on our analysis, outmoded in its futility. The marginalization of local populations stemming from realist urban policies are not likely to stop until the policies themselves are no longer realist. Ultimately, progress does not emerge from the same place that stifles it; accordingly, we argue not for a reformulated parallel debate but for an altogether different conversational practice.

Notes

1. The authors are indebted to the referees for their feedback as well as to Ty Jones and Mohamad Rammal for their research assistance.
2. The board's "engaged, common enterprise," as with the realist's metaphysically conceived "common goal," assumes such a goal has, for humanity, an "intrinsic nature" (Rorty, 1989, p. 59), one that transcends *this* particular community and extends to our—as in *the* human—community in the objective and thus realist sense. For realists, then, there no longer exists *a* community but *the* community, one in which they seek to measure against an objective reality, and through which, they apply these theoretical frameworks as philosophical foundations on which to pass public policy. To adhere to or advocate for the realist common goal is to abstractly ask of humans to position themselves in relation to—and require that they pursue—that metaphysically preconfigured understanding of what makes a "good" community and that which contributes to "good" public policy. But to propose such a venture amounts to accepting a single, or common, way to be human, where the private self conflates with the publicly endorsed, theoretically formulated definition of human. Pragmatists like us, with Rorty, prefer delineating the private and public versions of self—the versions that reconcile these spheres—through understanding ourselves as a "band of eccentrics collaborating for purposes of mutual self-protection rather than as a band of fellow spirits united by a common goal" (Rorty, 1989, p. 59).
3. We draw a parallel from Richard Florida, here, to Rorty's pragmatic interpretation of intellectual endeavors, specifically with respect to Freud's activities, where Rorty writes about Freud—and we argue is applicable to Florida—that "Freud gave up Plato's attempt to bring together the public and the private, the parts of the state and the parts of the soul, the search for social justice and the search for individual perfection. ... He distinguished sharply between a private ethic of self-creation and a public ethic of mutual accommodation. He persuades us that there is no bridge between them provided by universally shared beliefs or desires. ... [Freud] cannot be used to define social goals...for humanity... There is no way to force Freud into a Platonic mold by treating him as a moral philosopher who supplies universal criteria for goodness or rightness or true happiness" (Rorty, 1989, p. 33). As such, for us, neither should Florida.
4. We use the word "philosophical" as pretty much synonymously with metaphysical, which like the term "realism" presumes a neutral and knowable objectivity that theorizing can attain, something we pragmatists reject.
5. The term "universalistic," again, like "philosophical" and "realist," connotes what pragmatists want to lose—the pursuit at objectivity. Pragmatists, instead want to swap such a vocabulary laden with "philosophical foundations" (Rorty, 1989, p. 44) for one in which solidarity needs no "grounding" and is satisfied with eliminating cruelty as outright sufficient (Rorty, 2010, p. 293).

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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Data availability statement

The authors have used no data to make available.

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