

**Stony Brook University and Florence University of the Arts are pleased to announce
the 11th Annual Conference, which will take place in Florence
on Friday, December 6 and Saturday, December 7, 2019.**

The international conference is titled:
Consumption, Gentrification, and the New Colonialism

The term “gentrification” was coined nearly 60 years ago by the German sociologist Ruth Glass. Her 1964 essay described the changes observed in the social structures and housing market of inner London areas. The word has a deliberately ironic connotation, and it is used to designate the ascent of a new “urban gentry” parallel to the rise of the 18th and 19th-century English rural gentry, an intermediate social class which ranked below the landed aristocracy but above farmers and peasants. Glass identifies gentrification as a complex process involving many factors, the most notable being the rise of prices and the displacement or replacement of the working-class population by the new middle class. The concept has been subsequently applied to many other cities worldwide, and the current, widely-accepted definition refers to “the production of new urban spaces for progressively more affluent users” (Hackworth, 2002).

Modern gentrification can be firstly explained as the spatial manifestation of the transition from an industrial to a post-industrial economy based on financial, business, and creative services (Hamnett, 2003). But the reshaping of the social geography of cities is just one aspect of a larger phenomenon connected to globalization, new forms of consumption, and mass tourism. In this sense, Florence provides a striking example: not only have the long-term residents been “pushed out” of central neighborhoods because of unaffordable costs, but the signs of a traditional economy are also gradually disappearing, endangered by the logic of profit and capitalism. Artisanal workshops, movie theaters, home-style *trattorie*, and local retail stores have shut down while a plethora of new eateries, fast-foods, hotels, B&Bs, and luxury apartments have mushroomed throughout the historical center in recent years. There have been positive innovations as well – the new tram lines, a more viable carsharing system, the requalification of some areas – aimed at resolving longstanding problems such as traffic and pollution. Yet the general impression is one of degradation and “disneyfication,” a transformation of Florence into a big theme park targeting “fast” consumers who are often unaware and disengaged from the city’s cultural heritage.

A final issue for consideration is the interpretation of gentrification as a new form of colonialism. Some scholars argue that gentrification is “a part of man's continual obsession with conquering, disempowering, politicizing and capitalizing over other individuals for their own gain” (Wharton, 2008). According to this thesis, gentrification reiterates mankind's perpetual desire to acquire new possessions and reaffirm the idea that some groups of people are superior to others. The achievement of power and political control entails the usurpation of the land, with little or no regard to the area's previous population. Gentrification is a modern version of colonialism because it operates according to the same methods of uprooting and displacement, thus creating elitism, power imbalance, and social exclusion.

This conference will seek to shed light on the aforementioned issues. Florence's situation mirrors a series of dramatic changes that have deeply impacted the urban fabric in the last

decades, and it can be easily compared to many cities both in Italy and abroad. Historically, urban living has always played a decisive role in the socialization of individuals and in the construction of a shared set of social norms. What is witnessed today is a process of erosion of the social cohesion and the exacerbation of individualism. The unavoidable process of modernization and renewal must be carried out while being attuned to history and tradition. Civic leaders must be supported by architects, scientists, environmentalists, and sociologists in the creation of a sustainable urban planning in which innovation and globalization are aligned with the necessary respect for local cultures.

The Conference addresses fields and disciplines such as Architecture, Art History, Cinema, Communication, Economics, Food, Geography, History, Hospitality, Literature, Sociology, Politics, Photography, Technology, and Urban Planning and Development.

Suggested topics include but are not limited to:

1. The transformation of urban spaces in Florence and other Italian cities
2. The evolution of production and consumption styles in the last 70 years
3. The impact of mass tourism on modern cities
4. The erosion of the social fabric in contemporary cities
5. The polarization of city centers/suburbs
6. Immigration and the “new citizens”
7. Sustainable architectural and economic development

ABSTRACT SUBMISSIONS

One-page abstract (not exceeding 300 words) and short Curriculum Vitae.

The above material must be submitted in the English language to conferences@fua.it no later than July 15th, 2019.

All proposals will be examined by the Conference Scientific Committee, which will notify selected candidates by July 31st, 2019.

Conference presentations will be conducted in English for a maximum of 20 minutes.

The selected papers will be published in an online volume of the conference proceedings.

CONFERENCE VENUE

Florence University of the Arts

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