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Neoliberalist Redevelopment and the Touristification of Everyday Life

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Title: Neoliberalist Redevelopment and the Touristification of Everyday Life

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Abstract:

In Montreal, former industrial brownlands are in the process of being reconverted. Amongst those, Griffintown is a former Irish neighbourhood next to the city center that runs along the Lachine canal, an important artery for the emergence of industrial Canada. Most of Griffintown has been abandoned for nearly 40 years, but the city of Montreal has finally chosen to encourage real estate promoters to invest in its rehabilitation, arguing for an urban entrepreneurialism at the service of the market economy (Harvey, 1989). Condominium towers have quickly proliferated, which has led to new questions. At first glance, the analysis of the case of Griffintown does not reveal a very developed leisure tourism. Our interviews and our observations confirm it. Investors do not seem to think that this sector is sufficiently profitable in the short term. The neighbourhood's industrial past only becomes an added marketing argument for the promoters. Thus, in order to convince private individuals to buy apartments in Griffintown, the real-estate discourse has become more and more akin to the discourse of tourism. The lack of consultation before the neighbourhood's growth has led to logistical problems such as the lack of public transportation, of schools, of doctors, and even of grocery stores. To remedy this, the promoters sell an experience, a landscape, and a lifestyle. We observe a touristification of daily life, through which we can identify the reproduction of neoliberalism's spatial practices. The neighbourhood also evokes an overflowing of the 'tourist bubble' (Judd, 1999), when the city governments, in partnership with tourism entrepreneurs, construct places where visitors can find suitable facilities and amenities, in a safe and convenient environment (Judd, 1999, p. 37).

At Griffintown, the municipality and the real-estate agents seem to produce this sort of spatial tourist bubble, but for wealthy residents of luxurious condos. The presentation will close by an opening towards the concept of touristification of everyday life as an example of expansion of contemporary capitalism in the private sphere in the new spirit of capitalism (Boltanski & Chiappelo, 2005).