

THE 'CONFORMORALITY' OF RESIDENTIAL DISPLACEMENT DEBATES

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Abstract

Much scholarly discourse about the problems of and solutions to urban residential displacement has tended towards 'conformorality' and, in so doing, has overlooked certain key aspects for study. First, there has been a lack of interest in explaining the complex motives of displacers. Second, certain solutions to displacement have become so commonly espoused that their negative aspects have been obscured. Third, addressing these issues, this paper suggests new ways to confront 'conformorality' by encouraging scholars to engage with the deeper ethical and normative questions about displacement solutions that have, hitherto, not often been addressed. Through exploring these rarely discussed topics, scholars may be able create new or improved responses to displacement that target inherent issues.

Keywords

Displacement; solutions; private property; housing; conformorality

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1. Introduction

Scholarship that seeks to understand and prevent urban residential displacement¹ seems to have shied away from addressing certain aspects of the phenomenon. While a number of authors continue to research and contribute to a lively debate about the best responses to displacement, these discussions revolve around an apparently set list of possible solutions. Some of this stasis can be attributed to a lack of interest in investigating the perspectives of certain actors involved in urban displacement. Authors also seem to generally overlook some key conflicts inherent within the *context* of anti-displacement policies as well. What has constrained scholars in this cohort?

One hypothesis, building on work by Lisciandra, Postma-Nilsenová and Colombo (2013), is that this tendency evinces a type of 'conformality' operating between these researchers. Lisciandra, Postma-Nilsenová and Colombo (2013) propose a taxonomy of different norms in society, highlighting 'moral' norms as the most normatively powerful. To the authors, this power exists because 'justification of such norms would refer to the harm or injustice suffered by the victim' (Lisciandra, Postma-Nilsenová and Colombo, 2013, p. 752). This often evokes an 'emotional response' that makes the norm feel correct at its core instead of being socially dependent.

Clearly, urban residential displacement can be an extremely harmful experience to those who it befalls. This is for multiple reasons, but especially because it may create barriers that make it harder to increase individual welfare (Kingsley, Smith and Price, 2009; Atkinson, 2015; Robinson and Steil, 2021). It is fair to say that many scholars writing about how to prevent displacement would probably subscribe to a moral norm that displacement is wrong.

However, when 'moral indignation,' as Woods (2015, p. 98) calls it, is employed, it tends to diminish 'deliberative, consequentialist thinking.' Though his primary focus is human rights policies, Woods (2015) asserts that the strategies that come out of appeals to moral intuitions may result in either strategic omissions or oversimplified characterizations of events, individuals, and situations. These, in turn, may lead to 'suboptimal' human rights policies (Woods, 2015, p. 106).

It follows that it is possible that 'conformality' together with 'moral indignation' are preventing a deeper probing into topics that could guide anti-displacement policies in a more effective direction. This article points out some of those areas where conformality can lead to a discrepancy in research, hoping to provide fresh avenues of thought for current scholarship. The next section probes the perspectives of those who displace others, viewpoints which are not often the subject of in-depth study. Thereafter, the paper highlights the negatives and complexities of certain commonly studied solutions to displacement before exploring some important ethical and normative questions about the context of displacement responses that have, to date, not been often interrogated.

2. The rationale of displacers

Recent scholars writing about urban residential displacement have produced relatively few studies probing the character or motivations of those who initiate the displacement of others (Shiffer-Sebba, 2020). This may be due to the fact that researchers have less interest in the ostensible perpetrators of displacement due to 'conformality' around the anti-displacement norm. Additionally, others have suggested that limited attention to the perspectives of displacers is because of how overwhelmingly disparate their profiles and desires can be (Decker, 2023). However, the viewpoints of displacers are critical to understanding why displacers displace in the first place. Furthermore, they are crucial to understanding how to come to an acceptable solution for both

¹ Here, urban residential displacement refers to displacement which occurs due to social factors (such as displacement from gentrification, eviction, foreclosure, maltreatment, neglect, etc.). It follows, that displacement from natural disasters, war, famine, and other more extreme factors are beyond the scope of the present discussion.

displacers and those displaced. The following explores some of these experiences as well as the motivations that are often overlooked for three categories of displacers; this is not an exhaustive list.

2.1 Landlords

Different types of landlords often have different reasons for evicting their tenants. Desilver (2021), a scholar at the Pew Research Center, writes that in the US '[l]andlords aren't a homogenous group of faceless corporations. In fact, fewer than one-fifth of rental properties are owned by for-profit businesses of any kind.' Desilver emphasises that 2018 US Census data shows that roughly 70 percent of landlords are 'Mom and Pop' operations, which usually own only one or two rentals. Data from Eurostat (2023) shows a similar situation in EU Member States and demonstrates that well over 50 percent of real estate activities were operated by 'micro enterprises' in 2020 – i.e. those that employ fewer than 10 people. However, the proportion of micro enterprise real estate actors varies enormously between different states. In countries like Italy and Portugal the percentage of micro enterprises in the real estate sector was as much as 93.2 percent and 87.1 percent respectively in 2020.

Small-scale landlords may see eviction as a key mechanism by which to protect their financial wellbeing. Larger rental companies might be able to absorb small losses more easily from damage to properties, late rental payments, and so on, due to their access to greater financial capital and size via economies of scale (Decker, 2023). In contrast, smaller operations, by virtue of *their* size, may rely more heavily on each of their properties as stable sources of income. This income might be used to pay for employees' or owners' living expenses, taxes, or even repairs to the homes they rent out. For smaller landlords especially, it can feel important to have the tool of displacement to maintain control over what may be an invaluable investment. After all, landlords are in a precarious position in that they must trust tenants – many times virtual strangers – to take responsible care of valuable properties. This includes trusting them to conform to reasonable rules regarding pets, late payments, tenant-initiated renovations, and so on (Clark, 2007). Differentiating between the needs and desires of larger rental companies and small-scale landlords is a necessary step to craft more equitable policies that recognise the differing capabilities of each.

2.2 Lenders

Some authors have pointed out that lenders do not always gain from initiating foreclosures. Foote et al (2010, p. 116), citing a study by White (2009), suggest that there may be a major built-in flaw within the mortgage industry that leads to thousands of unnecessary foreclosures. When White analysed 21,000 liquidated first mortgages during the US subprime mortgage crisis of 2008, he found that the average loss was a staggering 55 percent of the principal owed – on average \$145,000. In contrast, the average loss on another set of mortgages where the lenders chose to modify the original terms was \$26,610 – seven times less than the loss incurred by the liquidators. Foote et al ponder an obvious question: why would lenders *not* modify the conditions of a mortgage rather than incur a greater loss by forcing foreclosure? White (2009, p.1119) offered a likely explanation: the decision to foreclose was not made by the investors who funded the loans but by the companies hired to service the mortgages (i.e. to collect the monthly payments).

Foote et al (2010) also speculate that lenders still apparently operate on the somewhat substantiated rationale that modifying loans may lead to less preferable outcomes. Lenders may fear that borrowers will string them along and cause greater losses down the line. They may also be afraid that by modifying the terms of a loan, they are in essence capitulating to the threat of non-payment by borrowers who will choose to continue making their mortgage payments rather than face displacement. In addition, when a borrower is defaulting because, for example, the borrower has lost their job, lenders do not always see that changing the terms of a loan will help the borrower pay (Foote et al., 2010).²

2 Note that both lenders and borrowers can be greatly damaged by foreclosure. From this understanding, perhaps new solutions (e.g. mandatory mediation or allowing a borrower the time to seek funds from another lender) should be created to allow for a mutually beneficial outcome.

2.3 Gentrifiers

The issue of gentrification is complex, divisive, and fraught with debate about who is responsible for its consequences. In the case where gentrification leads to displacement, there is uncertainty about who is the 'real' displacer. Different culprits can be identified: the city government that promotes neighbourhood rehabilitation; individuals or companies that 'flip' properties or raise rents dramatically; the individuals who desire and subsequently move into gentrified homes; or community activists with Not-in-my-Backyard (NIMBY) initiatives. It is clear that, sometimes, gentrifiers gentrify purely to seek an increase in profits, at whatever cost to renters or the community. This is the case for 'flippers' and those landlords who, seemingly overnight, drastically increase rents.

At times, however, the motives of a gentrifier may be more complex than simple profit extraction. City governments may rehabilitate run-down neighbourhoods to provide original residents much needed amenities. Those who could be called *individual gentrifiers* – middle to upper class residents and shops that move into gentrifying areas – have been the subject of numerous protests in recent years (Rogers, 2015; The Times Editorial Board, 2017; Breijo, 2022). However, in their case, it is not any individual's decision that causes gentrification. It is rather the decisions of numerous individuals *en masse*. Thus, it must be understood that those people may have a genuine desire to improve their quality of life by moving to a less-expensive neighbourhood, possibly closer to their work or family. Additionally, consider that businesses accused of aiding gentrification would not be viable were there not a ready clientele for them to serve.

In contrast, NIMBY activists, even though they come from within gentrifying neighbourhoods, are portrayed as gentrifiers themselves because they oppose new construction that planners and others believe will prevent gentrification. In these cases, many times planners will 'privilege' their own 'centralized expertise' about what is best for communities over local activist (e.g. NIMBYs) opinions (Gibson, 2005, p. 383). In some ways, planners' reluctance to consider NIMBYs concerns could be seen as an example of 'conformality' at work. Furthermore, planners are often the ones blamed for the failures of these projects, and they may be bitter towards those who they perceive as the real culprits. There are a number of scholars, though, that believe that NIMBYs have sometimes been painted in an unnecessarily negative light.³ Neighbourhood activists opposing new construction may be a more diverse group than often assumed (Aramayona and Batel, 2022, p. 51). NIMBYs may sometimes have genuine civic concerns such as protecting the character of neighbourhoods (Aramayona and Batel, 2022), a goal which ironically often motivates anti-gentrification efforts. Authors McElroy and Szeto (2017) and Wyly (2022) have also written critiques of yes-in-my-backyard (YIMBY) movements, which may have the perverse effect of inflating property prices even more than if there were no new construction.

2.4 Discussion

The suffering of displaced people is real and one of the largest reasons why we should be concerned about displacement in today's society. However, ignoring or completely vilifying displacers in the process of trying to find solutions to displacement is counterproductive. Potential displacers, like landlords, do not always cooperate with policies they see as detrimental to their livelihood. For instance, surveys by the National Apartment Association (Donovan and Pham, 2023) in the US show that a sizeable portion of landlords and investors say they would choose to leave the market if certain types of rent control were enacted. Neglecting to investigate the circumstances that lead people to displace others and ignoring displacers' opinions could spell trouble for the effectiveness of anti-displacement policies.

3. The negatives associated with standard solutions to displacement

Within existent literature on urban residential displacement, the set of possible responses to displacement seem to be a fixed list that are cycled through by many scholars. Articles mainly focus on solutions like rent control, public housing, eminent domain, inclusionary zoning, and legal/financial assistance to stop displacement for

3 See, for instance, Burningham (2000), Batel and Devine-Wright (2020), and Aramayona and Batel (2022).

various reasons.⁴ This pattern could lead a reader to regard such solutions as obvious, uncontested, empirically proven, or the only options available. However, this is not true. There is still vigorous debate about the efficacy and justice of using certain 'standard solutions' in various urban contexts to prevent displacement. This article shines a light on some of the negatives of those solutions. It also suggests that more specific empirical research needs to be undertaken to understand when certain solutions work, and when they do not.

3.1 Rent control

One of the most cited solutions to displacement is also one of its most hotly debated: rent control. While rent controls are meant to limit increases in rents, there are some justifiable arguments about their negative effects. Kholodilin and Kohl (2023a) document how rent controls have been shown to depress new construction, increasing housing shortages. The same researchers also note that rent controls have the potential to drive out renters in favour of homeowners (Kholodilin and Kohl, 2023b). Finally, in their analysis of the studies conducted about the historic efficacy of rent controls, Marsh, Gibb, and Soaita (2022) maintain that there is simply not enough evidence to come to a clear conclusion about their long-term effects.

One problem is that different kinds of rent control evoke different responses. The latter set of authors agree that 'crude first-generation rent controls' (Marsh, Gibb and Soaita, 2022, p. 743) can generally be relied upon to produce negative repercussions. However, they also insist that this kind of generalisable conclusion is an extreme outlier in the context of the research. Marsh, Gibb, and Soaita (2022, p. 740) also assert that current policy decisions about using rent control are often more a result of 'contextual factors and political struggle' than analysis of any conclusive data that demonstrates its effectiveness.

3.2 Public housing

Another common response to displacement is advocating for the construction of more public housing. It is widely conceded in planning circles that some public housing projects have been infamous failures – for example, the Pruitt Igoe complex in St. Louis (Bristol, 1991). However, advocates of public housing generally overlook the broadly reported problems with its administration. Based on interviews with public housing tenants in the Czech Republic, scholars Urban and Kajanová (2021) reported that the majority of negative complaints about housing concerned issues with the system and administration. Residents took issue with the length of tenure; mandated to be a maximum of one year. One interviewee said that, though they were grateful to have received the housing, 'I have been here for almost three months and should probably start looking for something else' (Urban and Kajanová 2021, p. 20). This resident's testimony suggests that, sometimes, public housing's implementation ends up being geared more towards providing temporary shelter. Temporary shelter is also useful, but it does not serve as a remedy to displacement long-term.

Residents also raised issues over the tedious and convoluted maze of documents that they had to complete and the long wait times they experienced before being offered apartments (Urban and Kajanová 2021). Long wait times are a theme globally, with prospective tenants waiting a median of 18 months in the US – with 25 percent having to wait over three years before being offered an apartment (National Low-Income Housing Coalition 2016). This is, nonetheless, a relatively short period compared with Hong Kong's average wait-time of six years (Hong Kong Housing Authority, 2022). Where public housing is positioned as short-term, urgently needed shelter, wait times such as this entirely undermine the argument for public housing as an effective tool by which to reduce the harms of displacement.

The reason for wait times is, of course, to do with an inadequate quantity of housing (and/or a lack of maintenance on what is already constructed). It is worth recognising that public housing is expensive to implement and local or state governments simply may not be able to keep up with its construction or upkeep.

4 For rent control: see Slater (2021) and Marsh, Gibb and Soaita (2022). For public housing: see Madden and Marcuse (2016) and Ye et al (2024). For eminent domain: see Blumenfeld (2023) and Baiocchi et al (2020). For inclusionary zoning: see Stabrowski (2015) and King (2018). For legal/financial assistance: see Braakmann and McDonald (2020) and Cassidy and Currie (2023).

3.3 Eminent domain

A growing number of activists have begun to champion the idea of using the instrument of eminent domain – meaning the ability of a government to take private assets and put them to public use – as a way to socialise and reduce rents in private housing developments.⁵ As suggested by Philipp Stehr (2023), study of eminent domain needs to be renewed by political philosophy. As recently as 2021, a majority of citizens in Berlin voted in favour in a (non-binding) referendum that advocated that the city use its power to expropriate 240,000 properties. Those properties came from some of the largest rental companies in the city and the proposal of the referendum suggested that the city rent them out at more affordable prices. While the referendum contained very specific potential plans for the project of expropriation in Berlin (Stehr, 2023), such plans should be considered precarious for a couple of reasons.

First, historical records provide us with examples (Hubbard and Lees, 2018; Pritchett, 2003) of governmental entities using eminent domain in ways that ostensibly attempted to create more affordable housing, but did not truly work. Second, there is little guarantee that governments will stick to the promises they make about expropriation projects. Matthew Parlow (2006) details a particularly egregious instance. In the early 1950s, residents of Chavez Ravine, a majority low-income and Mexican-American neighbourhood in Los Angeles, were displaced and their homes demolished to make way for a new public housing development backed by federal funds. However, newly elected officials in 1953 decided that the project did not fit *their* agenda. Instead, they set their sights on a baseball stadium – now the famous Dodger stadium. Parlow argues that the fraught history behind the use of eminent domain in Chavez Ravine is not unusual. He writes that ‘cities have long used their eminent domain powers in such a way as to benefit private interests’ (Parlow, 2006, p. 846).

The construction of Dodger Stadium demonstrates how the best of intentions can be upended by any number of unexpected developments. In that particular instance, it was by the election of new members of government with different ideas – or perhaps different allegiances. It is hard to excuse such injustices, but if eminent domain is going to be wielded as a tool to mitigate displacement, harsh political realities must be factored into decision making.

4. New ways to approach displacement solutions

There are many deeper, ethical and normative questions that have not been engaged with by scholars who study residential displacement. These include: questions about how displacement solutions interact with and fit into housing systems in the locales where they are intended to be implemented; questions about how displacement solutions affect the right to private property; and the ways in which governments can create environments where stakeholders in a displacement dispute can resolve the problem at the grass-roots level. By directly confronting the underlying premises of displacement responses, scholars can open the door for more ‘deliberative’ and ‘consequential’ thinking (Woods, 2015).

4.1 Approach to housing systems

When scholars develop displacement solutions, they too often fail to consider how their solution might fit into the basic philosophy of the housing system in a (given) place. Table 1 illustrates three possible approaches to housing for a society (be it a city, country, small enclave, or other).

5 For instance, see Baiocchi et al (2020), Gustavussen (2022), Glesby (2023), and Dethlefsen (2023).

Approach to housing	Main authors/sources	Description	Current policy approaches
Special Entitlement	Bejrums and Jaffe (1989), Jaffe (1989)	Housing is considered an entitlement. Entitlements are heavier than property rights and denote 'collective pronouncements for the societal good' (Jaffe, 1989, p. 317)	One example of a country with such policies is Sweden, which has: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater state involvement in housing process • Indefinite leases (unless otherwise specified) • Rent decided on sq m basis and rental court settles rent disputes
User-owned	Lefebvre (1968)	A new social contract should be developed where citizens decide that the people who utilise the space of the city should be the ones with control over it, eliminating any need for formal property rights.	Lefebvre's idea was utopian from its outset and has remained so on the city scale. However, some small enclaves or off-the-grid societies do operate in this way (ex. Slab City in California, USA).
Private Property	Jaffe (1989), Snare (1972)	This system treats housing as a financial asset. Snare (1972) describes private property owners as having the 'right of use,' 'right of exclusion,' and 'right of transfer' of a property.	Private property has been the primary approach to housing in Anglo-American countries especially (i.e. the US, England, Australia, etc.).

Table 1 Policy approaches to housing

Rather than being an exhaustive list, the three approaches show divergent philosophies and approaches to housing. In the first case, the idea of housing as a 'social entitlement' grants governments more regulatory power (e.g. to introduce rent controls or provide public housing). In such contexts landlords and lenders may have lower expectations of property control. This approach embodies what some have called the 'decommodification' of housing (Hoekstra, 2003; Murie, 2013); the proposition that housing should not be treated as a good to be bought and sold as in the housing as private property system. Advocates criticize the system which views housing as private property for creating residential alienation, inequality, and a less 'humane' housing system (Madden and Marcuse, 2016, p. 56, 79-80).

Others, though, contend that the private property system is the one that could truly prevent displacement. Among them is Casey Dawkins (2020, p. 16), who draws on Christopher Essert's (2016) ideas in warning that, if a right to housing is put in the hands of the state, then individuals will be 'subject to the will of a collective authority' which past history suggests has not done a good job of protecting them from displacement. Dawkins proposes that policies such as enforced, open-ended leases or a requirement that landlords prove 'just cause' when not renewing leases could improve tenants' ability to avoid displacement in a private property system. Others, such as Przybylinski (2022, p. 1722) advocate for the institution of some kind of right not to be excluded, 'allowing for an individual to access propertied-space broadly, given that it applies to no particular property, but simply properties in the abstract.'

In a more utopian user-owned society, there may be no need for anti-displacement policies since the users of a space are explicitly entitled to occupy the space. This situation is also interesting because, unlike with social entitlements, a user-owned system guarantees housing without government involvement. Such a system comes with its own, different problems, of course, including multiple residents attempting to assert rights over the same space.

4.2 Rights

The impression is that many articles that treat gentrification, eviction, and foreclosure or advocate for solutions to displacement like rent control and eminent domain never engage directly with normative questions about the right to private property. Yet, many policies – especially rent control, since ‘control’ is in the name – directly affect the amount of power which owners have upon their land in a private property system.

If we do not believe that owners should have absolute control over their properties, where should private property rights start and end? That requires not only consideration of what is effective for the prevention of displacement, but also raises ethical questions about how much control an owner deserves. Even further, we need to decide what the purpose of private property is in the context of displacement prevention.

On a similar note, various iterations of theoretical rights to space in the city have been used for decades to argue that the individuals who utilise the space of the city for their own livelihoods should be better protected from displacement.⁶ However, as Hubbard and Lees (2018, p. 9) assert, ‘what is often forgotten’ in debates about rights to space in the city ‘is that, strictly speaking, rights to the city are legal in character.’ In short, without codification, claims of rights have no legal power and cannot be upheld by state authorities. At the same time, other scholars have rejected the idea that codifying rights is important. They claim that, since a sovereign state can choose at will whether or not to uphold any such so-called rights, fighting for superficial declarations impedes the real work of resolving issues at the ground level (Mitchell, 2003; Tushnet 1984; Rorty 1996).

If a scholar does decide that rights are important, their lack of implementation has left various key questions unanswered. How would they interact with current housing systems? Once again, how can such broad rights be integrated into systems of private property rights? If we believe in a ‘Right to Stay Put’ as Chester Hartman (1984) does, or a ‘Right to Place’ as Imbroscio (2004) does, what must we change about property rights to ensure that they are accepted? How would that affect landlords, lenders, or other property owners/managers? Might certain rights to space in the city inadvertently engender new and different types of displacement? All these issues engender ethical and normative decisions about the role of landlords, tenants, lenders, owners, and government in society.

4.3 Anti-displacement through voice

Most of the anti-displacement solutions that are promoted by scholars, including those discussed previously, call on governments to implement programs or policies. However, it might also be worthwhile to explore ways in which governments can create environments in which different parties can more effectively and efficiently negotiate amongst themselves to reduce displacement. This could involve empowering those who might potentially be displaced by giving them more bargaining chips in the housing process.

This paper utilises the theory espoused by Albert Hirschman (1970) in his landmark book, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*, to guide suggestions advanced. Hirschman’s basic economic premise is that, when a firm fails to satisfy its customers with the quality of its product, those same customers have three options: they may abandon the firm’s product by using the *exit* function; they may use their *voice* to encourage the firm to change; or they may stay *loyal* to the firm. Hirschman believes that, too often, economists see exit as the only option that creates efficiency within a market. They fail to recognise the power of voice to provide an important remedy to inefficiencies. The insights of *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty* have already been utilised by scholars in housing studies in numerous ways – from discussing citizens’ responses to dissatisfaction with their neighbourhood to explaining how policies about homeownership have developed over time (Chisholm, Howden-Chapman and Fougere, 2016).

6 See, for instance, Lefebvre (1968), Mitchell (2003), Hartman (1984), Imbroscio (2004), Harvey (2008), Marcuse (2009), Newman and Wyly (2006), Miura (2021), and Soaita (2022).

This article suggests that the theories of *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty* can be aptly applied to understand landlord and lender attitudes towards the use of displacement. Currently, when a resident violates the terms of a housing contract and landlords or lenders are dissatisfied with a resident's behaviour, typically the sole remedy that the contract offers is an 'exit' option. This means the go-to response of landlords and lenders is eviction or foreclosure. However, as Hirschman (1970, p. 37) asserts, 'the decision whether to exit will often be taken in the light of the prospects for the effective use of voice.' If customers are persuaded that their use of voice will not be wasted, 'then they may well postpone exit' (Hirschman, 1970, p. 37).

Eviction and foreclosure are often lengthy and costly processes. In addition, landlords and lenders have to go through the extra strain of finding either a new tenant (and losing money as they wait to do so) or re-selling a foreclosed property. Perhaps authorities could mandate the use of mediation and negotiation processes as a first response to contractual disputes.⁷ This way voice could be used to find context-dependent solutions between the two parties that benefit both and avoid displacement. After all, landlords and lenders (and especially ones with large portfolios) are only after financial gain in the process of lending money or renting out their properties (Miller, 2021, p. 818). Settlements that include payment plans of overdue rent, or possible bartering for labour, could prevent displacement via voice.

5. Conclusion

The tendency towards 'conformality' in the ways in which scholars study and propose solutions to issues of urban residential displacement continues to stifle the exploration of new and different approaches to problems. Major aspects of the displacement phenomenon deserve further study in order to create more imaginative and practical policy options. This article has demonstrated that those who are responsible for displacement *can* have sound reasons for acting. Any attempt to create policies that reduce unnecessary displacement must address the reasonable concerns of landlords, lenders, possible gentrifiers, and government officials. The article has also shown that many of the most supported and touted proposals to 'solve' unwanted displacement are highly fallible. They should not be considered to be either the only or most automatically valuable solutions. There is a need for additional study to provide concrete answers about their utility in context. Finally, this article has brought some key ethical and normative questions to the table about how displacement solutions are supposed to interact with the legal and societal environments they operate within. In addition, it has suggested a new way that scholars might attempt to formulate responses by empowering the parties involved in housing to negotiate solutions themselves. By continuing to push against the tendency to conform with other scholars' opinions and ideas of what is important in research and instead finding uncharted aspects of displacement to study, scholars might be able to unlock new discoveries that could help to make displacement prevention fairer and more effective.

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7 This could be achieved especially by making it easier to access courts or legal knowledge – see Golio et al (2022) and Cassidy and Currie (2023).

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