



POLITECNICO  
DI TORINO

# Honors thesis

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MASTER COURSE OF ARCHITECTURE  
CONSTRUCTION CITY

*Abstract*

## **BROOKLYN, DISCLOSED**

**Reinventing the Brownstone Typology as a Solution to  
Artists Displacement in New York City**

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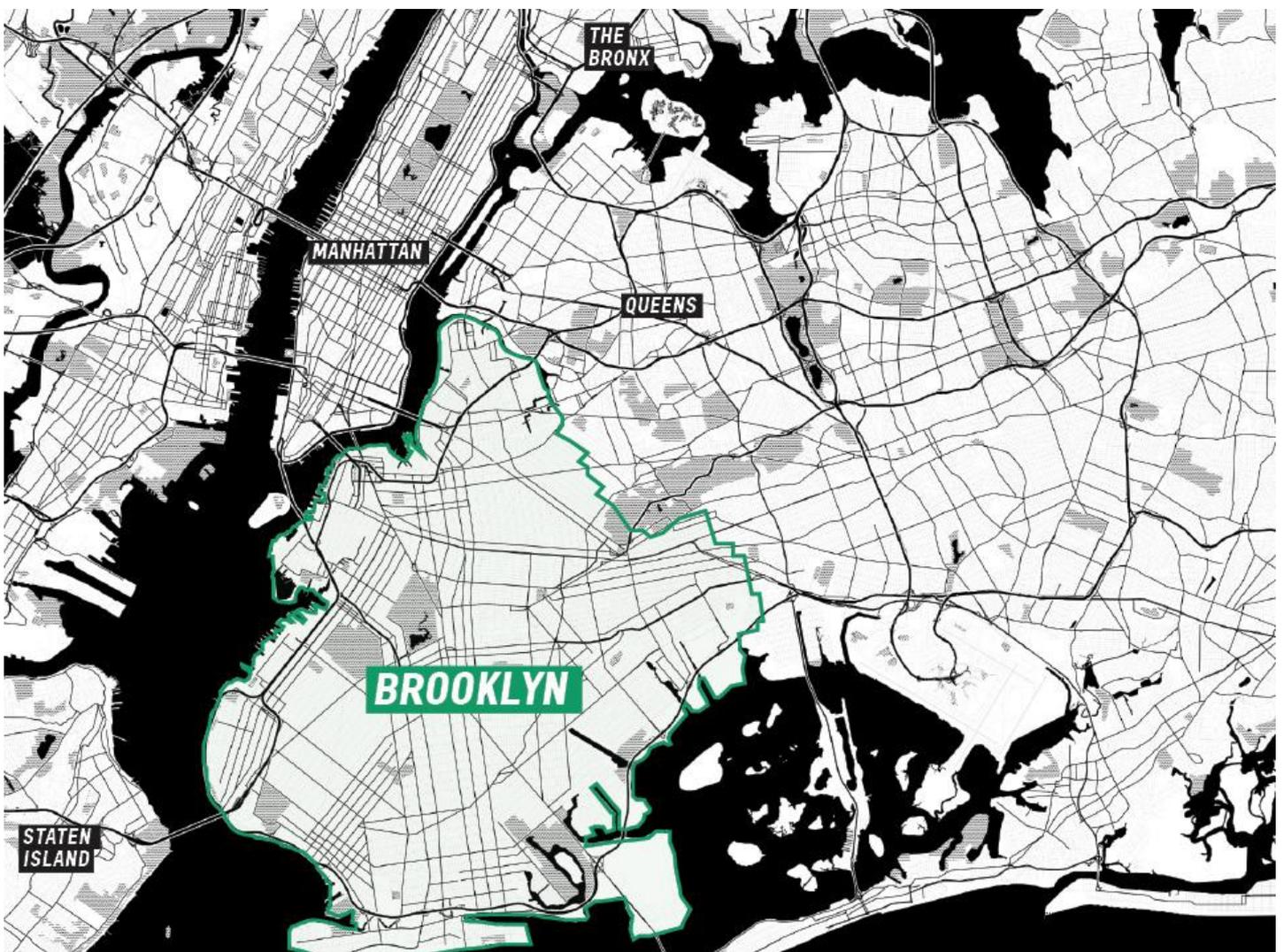
The purpose of this thesis is to investigate and analyze the different degrees of the gentrified urban environment in the borough of Brooklyn, New York City. The ultimate aim of the work is to use on-site tools and academic resources to propose a spatial solution to a socio-political problem. The critical issues addressed are central, as they have a direct impact on the residents and the city economy. The case of Brooklyn is one of a kind: although numerous neighborhoods are affected by intensified gentrification and regentrification, this condition hasn't been fully explored as a multi-faceted process affecting multiple neighborhoods in different ways yet, neither have its actors, its consequences. After defining the intricate nature of this phenomenon and what it entails, the research focuses on the neighborhoods of the so-called Brooklyn Gold Coast. This area, scattered around Prospect Park, has witnessed one of the most striking suburban developments of the 19th century, using the Brownstone townhouse as the leading typology for this expansion and, later, as a tool for gentrification. A rigorous analysis of this typology defines its distinctive features and finds its signature traits. In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, a new generation of white-collar professionals has relocated to the area and, by restoring old, decaying Brownstones and moving permanently there, has caused real estate values to increase and working-class residents to move out. Today, Brownstone Brooklyn presents itself as a compact enclave of the upper class where little diversity is preserved.

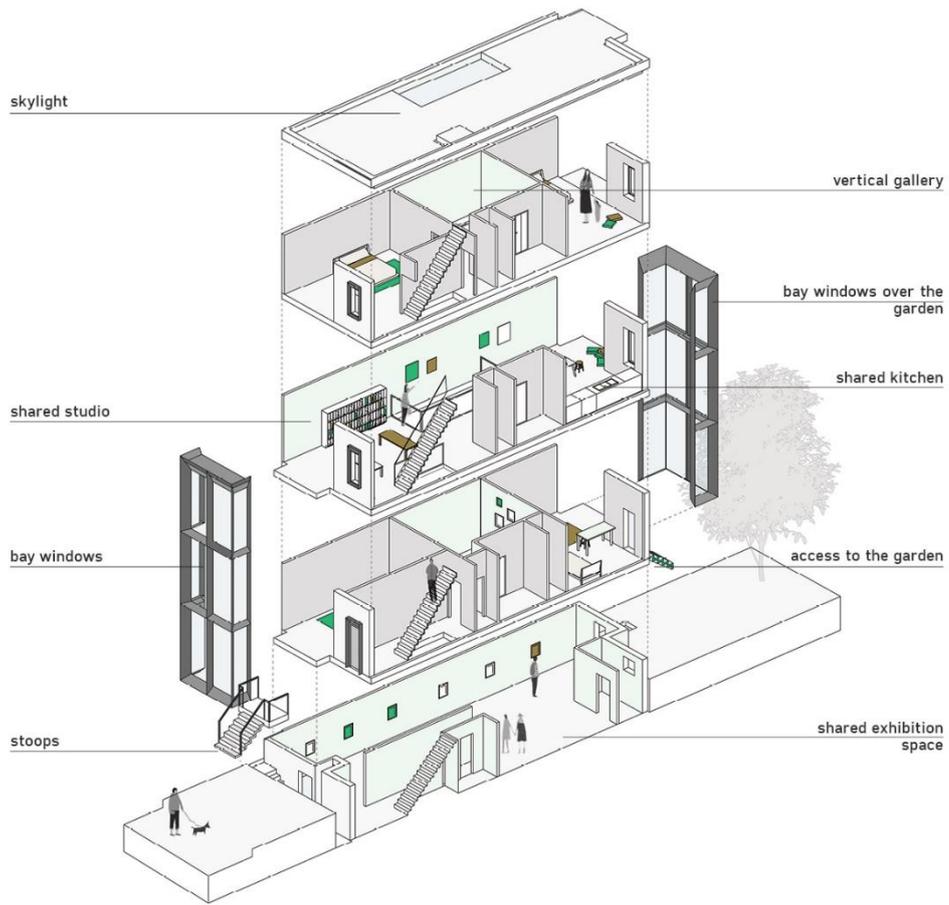
The second part of the thesis work focuses on the neighborhood of Williamsburg, North of the Gold Coast, that has been interested in the recent year by another type of gentrification. Being a former industrial district, artists communities escaped Manhattan to inhabit former commercial spaces. Despite the blossoming of the neighborhood, thanks to art and the hip culture, artists attracted, in turn, the interest of the city government that transformed Williamsburg into a tourist attraction, through a rezoning of the area. A thorough research on the city economic interests and outside investments toward neighborhood "revitalization" explains the dissipation of the original authenticity, due to the exodus of artists to other areas of New York City.

The third and last part of the thesis tries to merge the two mentioned issues, by means of a proposal that addresses both. As a result of on-site research, the low rise, residential neighborhood of Ridgewood appears to be potential fertile soil for gentrification, due to an aging population and possible future changes in the zoning regulations. The proposal offers a live-and-work dwelling for up to two artists' households. This architectural solution explores and suggests the typology of the Brownstone, interpreted in a contemporary language, as a

possible key to artists displacement and a cultural catalyst for a dying residential neighborhood. Taking advantage of the current zoning regulations, the proposed project occupies a vacant lot, coded for a two-family building, with the intention of preventing artists to move in flock and triggering further gentrification. Furthermore, the intervention proposed can be potentially implemented elsewhere, with a tangible impact for artists and local residents, benefitting both.

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