INFLUENCE OF THE SELECTED MINORITY GROUP ON GENTRIFICATION OF CHICAGO NEIGHBORHOOD EDGEWATER

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Abstract: As the world became more globalized place, big cities became social self-sustained eco-systems. Constant change of cities is an essential part of its charm, but also a possible problem. Changes of urban cities with worst connotation are gentrification and gentrification is the cause of segregation on so many levels. This paper analyzes what factors led to the process of gentrification of the Edgewater neighborhood in Chicago, Illinois (USA). The main goal is to discover the possible causes of a gentrification's paths and its influence on changing urban neighborhoods. This paper uses the example of Edgewater and the influence of the LGBT community on the neighborhood gentrification. Using theories and methodology of urban sociology, it identifies Edgewater as a 'gayborhood', analyzes factors of the creation of such a community, its specific culture and symbolic representation. Finally, it questions the exploitation of this specific culture as a base for symbolic economy, growth machine and gentrification of the neighborhood.

Keywords: urban geography, neighborhood, community, gentrification, cultural representation

Introduction

With the modernization of the world, development of traveling systems and in late years, globalization, cities became social self-sustained eco systems with tendencies for growth. Internal migration and in-state immigration to big, westernized cities both influenced the creation of different social structures and cultural and ethnic diversity within those cities. Through acculturation and assimilation of different cultures, new, westernized culture, as way of life, emerged. In modern time, one of the big changes in cities happened as a consequence of deindustrialization in 1970s and '80s. This change shifted power relations and rearranged social, economic, political and spatial structures in the westernized cities. This founded further urbanization and exploitations of new structures for individual's personal gain, such as gentrification in United States.

Gentrification, as a term, changed definitions and its connotation from movement of romanticized attempt to preserve the old building and spirit of the city from inevitable change to spatial restructuring and expanding of downtown

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at the expense of inner city (Zukin, 2010). More recently, it is defined in a couple of independent ways (Schlichtman, Patch & Lamont, 2017): "the in-migration of affluent households to poorer and lower value areas of the city" (Atkinson & Wulff, 2009, p. 6) and "the transformation of a working-class or vacant area of the city into middle-class residential and/or commercial use" (Slater, 2009, p. 4). But, what factors lead to gentrification? In attempt to explain this crucial question, this paper analyzes the example of changes that emerged in the Chicago's neighborhood — Edgewater. This paper will address three questions in order to explain how the LGBT community changed this neighborhood. First, after a brief history of the neighborhood, it uses statistical data and "Neighborhood Pride" research to show Edgewater as a "gayborhood". Second, it determines community specifics and its influence on the neighborhood. Finally, it connects the specific culture of that community and its cultural representation as a base for symbolic economy, growth machine theory and eventually, gentrification.

Edgewater's historical background

Chicago is one of the most multiethnic and multicultural cities in the US. But, even though it is very metropolitan city with great socio-economic, cultural, ethnic and racial diversity and with size of approximately 614 km^2 of land and estimated 2,695,598 residents, Chicago has that "small town spirit" where it's easy to feel like you're at home. The division of the city into 77 communities and more than 100 neighborhoods (https://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/about/facts.html) contributes to this feeling of belonging which is often lost in big city. Edgewater is one of the most up-and-coming neighborhoods in Chicago in last couple of years. One of the reasons for its transformation and gentrification is the influence of the gay community who has been leading the main role of gentrification of that neighborhood.

Edgewater is one of 77 community areas of Chicago, located about 12 km north of the city's downtown – "The Loop", with 62,198 residents. According to the 2015 census, the population of the community is 53.6% White, 15.9% Hispanic or Latino, 14.0% African American or Black and 12.8% Asian. Moreover, Edgewater has 36.1% of foreign born residents, comparing to 21.2% in Chicago in 2010 (http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/documents/10180/326513/Chapter+1_Demographics/87618538-486c-4d36-a141-3f3413e4d0a4). During the twentieth century, Edgewater solidified its status as one of the most prestigious residential areas in Chicago. "During the city-wide housing crisis of the 1940s, apartment buildings were subdivided into smaller units. The area began to become overcrowded (…) at the same time, the smaller commercial strips within

Edgewater promoted their own distinctive flavors (…). Among the shop owners on Argyle were Vietnamese, Thai, Japanese, Koreans, Indians, Pakistanis, and also Spanish-speakers, Greeks, and Albanians. (…) Later, merchants from other ethnic groups and enterprises run by lesbian women supplemented Andersonville's Swedish flavor" (http://www.encyclopedia. chicagohistory.org/ pages/413.html).

Edgewater as a "Gayborhood"

According to the "Chicago Tribune's" article from August 2014, LGBT neighborhoods are changing rapidly. The number of Chicago gay enclaves is increasing, but the deconcentrated population, could lead to a more fragmented lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community (Podmolik, 2014). Amin Ghaziani stated for the article that "existing visible gay neighborhoods like *Boystown* or *The Castro* (in San Francisco) are in fact deconcentrating (…) They are moving and establishing new LGBT clusters in city neighborhoods such as Rogers Park and Andersonville and suburbs such as Oak Park. They are moving for some of the same reasons that anyone leaves one neighborhood for another: They grow older, mature and possibly have children, all of which change what they want in a community." Furthermore, Ghaziani said that "as gay people feel safe in more parts of the city, they no longer feel limited. I call this an expansion of the residential imagination." The article also states that, by the census date from 2010, half of Illinois's estimated 25,710 unmarried partner households lived in Cook County, and 40 percent of them lived in four Chicago's neighborhoods — Lakeview, Edgewater, Rogers Park and Uptown (Podmolik, 2014). Moreover, the research of some dating websites (such as OkCupid) and real estate websites (e.g. Trulia) show that there is a changing path of 'gayborhoods'. This research combined data from the 2015 5-Year American Community Survey at the ZIP code level with OkCupid user data on where their users are searching for same-sex partners (McLaughlin, 2017). They used census data to identify zip codes with high-concentration of gay and lesbian couples and examine the average price-per-meter of real estate in the area. In Edgewater, a home on average costs \$1,410 per m^2, which makes it affordable for living (Pinckney, 2012). Chicago's website DNAinfo used this research to show the changes in Chicago gay neighborhoods. The 60640 areas, which covers Andersonville, Edgewater and part of Uptown, came in second across the city with 32.5 percent of OkCupid users looking for same-sex partnerships, (Rice & Ali, 2017). Furthermore, the highest percentage of male residents of Edgewater is 35–39 years old — 42.9% and 40–44 years old—69.6% (http://statisticalatlas.com/neighborhood/Illinois/Chicago/Edgewater/Household-Types).

The number of the same-sex marriage licenses registered from the Cook County Clerk Office show that there are 62 percent more married male same-sex couples in Chicago than female ones. Chicagopride.com in its article "Chicago's Boystown didn't rank in the 'Neighborhood Pride' top 10" emphasizes that, by the mentioned study, Edgewater was ranked as 6th "gayest" in the country, with 34.0% of its households occupied by single people looking for same-sex partners and 18.6% by same-sex couples. Moreover, with this 53% of its households occupied by LGBT people, Edgewater took over the "gay throne" from the Boystown. Additionally, a "Redeye" article from June 21st, 2012 transmits the 48th ward Alderman's, Harry Osterman's view of this research. He says, "Edgewater is diverse on many levels and the gay and lesbian that live in our community have always made it a much better place to live." What he means by "much better place to live" wasn't explained, but it surely shows that this change of community started the gentrification machinery rolling in Edgewater neighborhood.

Using previous data that underline the change in population of Edgewater, as a base for setting the framework for the paper, the factors that led to this change seen as gentrification will be analyzed, or at least the start of it. Using the theories of *Gemeinschaft*, community vs. neighborhood, community saved and liberated, social networks, construction of identity, cultural representation and usage of symbols for claiming the territory, it will be answered to the questions: how Edgewater changed? And how a new community and culture was created and sustained? Finally, creation of place of living as a commodity and its exchange value set the base for using newly developed culture of the Edgewater as a growth machine and as a frame for gentrification will be demonstrated.

Neighborhood vs. Community

Edgewater is one of 77 Chicago's neighborhoods. Neighborhoods have their own administrative boundaries, they are easy to identify, and they represent a territory seen as the most important organizing factor in urban social relations. They are crucial for normative integration of the individual into a larger social system. On the other side, communities are developed as a response to depersonalization in growing cities. Community represents networks of interpersonal ties, usually outside of the household, which provide sociability and support to members and it is grounded on a common locality, solidarity, sentiments and activity (Wellmen & Leighton, 2013). Even though Edgewater is a neighborhood, what makes it interesting or different from the other 76 neighborhoods is its LGBT community. This community has a lot in common with ethnic enclaves in the sense of closeness, solidarity, support and its own

characteristic culture and its symbolic representation. Ferdinand Tönnies sets two basic types of social formation: *Gemeinschaft* (community) and *Gesellschaft* (society) (Tönnies, 2013). He stated that unlike *Gesellschaft, Gemeinschaft* is organically formed, instinctive driven force. It is compared to Emile Durkheim notion of mechanical solidarity of homogeneous population bound by similar values and beliefs (Durkheim & Simpson, 1933). In this sense, we can observe the change in Edgewater as effect of natural creation of homogeneous gay community, bound by similar values and belief. More the neighborhood changed, and more gay community got stronger, more members of LGBT wanted to live there. Change in size of population (residents), density and heterogeneity (Wirth, 2013) of Edgewater set this neighborhood on a trail of urbanization and late, gentrification. Louis Wirth indicates some of the factors of choosing the settlement for living: density, land value, rentals, accessibility, prestige, income, racial and ethnic characteristics, social status and so forth. It is already said that Edgewater is concerned as affordable place to live with its $1,410 per m^2. The Edgewater average household income per year is somewhere in the middle of all of Chicago's neighborhoods, at 32nd place with average of $48.5 thousands. This makes the neighborhood affordable for living, especially compared to other lakefront neighborhoods.

Years ago, LGBT communities could be defined through a "community liberated" argument (Wellmen & Leighton, 2013). Due to development in technology and communication, easy transportation and mobility of people, spatial boundaries don't necessary apply to creation of communities. But, matter of acceptance of LGBT population changed in the last years, as it was stated before by Ghaziani, "as gay people feel safe in more parts of the city, they no longer feel limited" (Podmolik, 2014). This change influenced the creation of gay settlements as "community saved" argument. Community saved argument refers to neighborhood-based communities persisting in industrialization social system with strong social ties organized into extensive networks that are source of support, sociability, sentiments and solidary activities (Wellmen & Leighton, 2013). Edgewater today is exactly that, a neighborhood based mostly on the gay community with social network that makes it more special and more desirable for living for other member of gay community.

Cultural representation and self-identification

One of the main problems in modern multiethnic, multicultural and multiracial cities is difficulty of process of self-identification. Process of self-identification refers to the process of an individual identifying himself with socially contracted, dominant national, religious, ethnic, racial, cultural or subcultural

entities. Outsiders are usually seen as a social type or category (Simmel, 2013). This process of depersonalization replaces individuality with categories (Wirth, 2013). Even though homogeneity of any kind can cause the lack of cultural exchange and lower chances for acculturation, in the case of gay community homogeneity in Edgewater, it serves as an agent of self-identification and as a factor of rebuilding, a once marginal, community.

Specific culture has the power to create an image and those who create images stamp a collective identity. Symbolic economy or "motor of economic growth" is the production of symbols in which cultural representation influences how particular spaces should be "consumed" or used and by whom (Zukin, 2013). A community's specific cultural representation of the place and usage of specific symbols for claiming the territory can be seen in Edgewater - rainbow flags on apartment windows and balconies, on stores and bar windows, a rainbow pillar on Hollywood Beach etc. There are more gyms opening in the neighborhood, clothing stores and "gay friendly" bars. Those social spaces in Edgewater are a base for strengthening social networks and those social networks are the pillars of community, in the case of Edgewater, LGBT communities.

As part of the social construction of modern cities, specific cultural representation of city or neighborhood is used for creation of place of commodity, place to be bought and sold, rented or leased and used for making a life. It creates a social context of how that place is used and exchanged (Logan & Molotch, 2013). Neighborhoods became an opportunity to promote consumption, different lifestyles and experiences (Betancur & Smith, 2016). Seeing Edgewater as new, hip 'gayborhood' rises its use and exchange value not just for LGBT community members. Idiosyncratic location benefits and its strong community, material and psychological use of neighborhood rises the market value of Edgewater. This community-based culture and its socially constructed use and exchange value are main factors that put Edgewater on a trail for a "growth machine" that seeks profit gain, usually by individuals (Logan & Molotch, 2013). Inevitably, this process will lead to gentrification of the neighborhood. Big projects such as The Edgewater Beachwalk project (Koziarz, 2016) will, as a result, raise rent and displace many people. Exploitation of the lakefront as one of the main resources for developing neighborhoods in Chicago will fully gentrify Edgewater in a short period of time.

Conclusion

As the diversity, density and heterogeneity of "multi-everything" westernized cities grow, changes in all urbanistic fields are happening faster and faster.

Neighborhoods are rapidly changing due to rising cultural exchanges. New communities are emerging as self-identifying frames offering sense of belonging in estranged cities. This self-identification and sense of belonging were once connected to nations, religion and common history, but as world modernized and globalized, those memberships in big cities are now connected to smaller groups and communities based on ethnicity, race, culture, sub-culture and sexual orientation. These groups and communities create their own characteristics and different culture. But with commercialization of everything and "for profit" gain as the base of almost every movement in modern cities, these unique communities are endangered. Their unique culture is being used for someone's personal gain. The creation, sustention and promotion of unique cultures within big, westernized urban areas, is a natural process but, how do we stop this process from being exploited. Using culture for symbolic economy, a growth machine and gentrification stops, or at least aggravates cultural exchange, and causes social, economic, cultural, racial and spatial segregations. And those segregations are "the cancer" for modern cities seen as specific social eco-systems.

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