

The quantitative and qualitative analysis of gentrification in the neighborhood of Harlem in New York City revealed the complexity of the whole process. The process of gentrification in this case study is not a coherent transformation of a neighborhood. Similarly, gentrifiers of different races and classes arriving in the area cannot be denoted by one term of middle-class or affluent people because of the variety of their backgrounds and origins.

The process of gentrification in Harlem has so far occurred in three successive waves. The first wave can be characterized by small numbers of urban pioneers arriving in Harlem and making the neighborhood more attractive for further newcomers. This wave of the late 1970s and early 1980s was described in the study of Schaffer and Smith. However, given the insignificant amounts of urban pioneers acting as gentrifiers in the area, they seriously doubted the possibility of gentrification reaching its momentum in Harlem. Yet, after two decades, more precisely in the late 1990s, the second wave of gentrification took place in Harlem. The quantitative analysis of the census data concerning housing and racial composition of the neighborhood proved why the tentative conclusions of this particular study do not apply.

One of the predictions of Schaffer and Smith insisted on the significant presence of white residents coming to the area. The census data showed the percentage of white resident in the area in 2000 represented only two percent of the whole area. The expected affluent white gentrifiers were replaced with other racial subgroups, predominantly by middle-class and professional African Americans and Hispanics. The latter group, for instance, did not even appear in the study of Schaffer and Smith predicting the future of gentrification in Harlem.

While the first wave of newcomers appreciated predominantly the low prices of real estate market in the deteriorated neighborhood, the second wave of newcomers had already witnessed the prices on the surge. They decided to return to Harlem for ideological reasons, acting as role models for the youngest generation or renovating brownstones. These middle-class residents and professionals feel they may contribute to the long-time neglected and abandoned area by their presence and help during the transformation from the ghetto into livable neighborhood. The first two waves substantially differ from the last one, denoted by a new term of supergentrification. The

main actors called financiers or in other words the most affluent individuals, value especially the amenities of the area and the short distance from downtown. As the process of supergentrification is led by corporations, their chain stores and retail parks substantially change the original look of the whole community. In Harlem, the residents on the one hand benefit from the presence of new services and amenities. On the other hand, they realize the changing architecture of Harlem that may soon look like the rest of Manhattan. While the first two waves of gentrification were motivated by decisions of individuals enabling the invisible hand of the housing market to take place, the last wave is the result of visible policies of private corporations and the government.

Another particularity of the process taking place in Harlem, is the presence of racial tensions, reflected in the articles published by New York Times. The history of Harlem suggests the abandonment of the solidly black area by the whites and also black middle-class in course of the twentieth century. The residents who stayed even during the most difficult years naturally oppose the influx of newcomers, fearing the prices in the neighborhood they have supported throughout their whole life might eventually go up and threaten them with displacement. In spite of the optimistic conclusions of the two studies, the first one by Freeman and Braconi, and the second one by Newman and Wyly, discovering lower mobility rates in the gentrifying neighborhood, this does not mean that no one is being displaced. The New York City Housing Vacancy Survey should definitely include in the statistics the amount of displaced persons from smaller areas like sub-boroughs or neighborhoods and precisely detect from where these people are arriving. Moreover, the process of displacement will surely exacerbate in the following ten years when most of the rent regulation and rent control contracts will expire.

The process of gentrification taking place in several cities all over the United States cannot be summarized under a single definition. Each city has its own history of particular gentrifying neighborhoods, which acts as one of the major determinants of the speed and scope of the process. Similarly, the momentum of gentrification depends on the location of a neighborhood. The most likely ones to experience revitalization are those with unique architecture, located close to vigorous downtown, resembling the one of Harlem. Therefore, the process differs not only on the level of cities, but also within the neighborhood itself, according to the results of quantitative analysis based on the decomposition of individual tracts in Harlem.

The same exceptionality applies also for the process of displacement. The residents of New York City benefit from the exceptional amount of rent regulation and rent control contracts. In case of Harlem, the strong support of low-income residents resulted in 1993 in the lowest mobility rates among the gentrifying neighborhoods citywide. However, as it has been already mentioned, this advantage may not last in the future.

The analysis of the exceptional revival in case of 129th Street showed that not every street in Harlem experienced the equal amount of gentrification, reflected in terms of per capita income, education attained or the racial composition. Even though it may seem that the process of gentrification affects the neighborhood as a whole, in reality, Harlem has witnessed renewal of certain parts within its borders while the some streets stayed completely neglected in the midst of various successive gentrification waves.

From this viewpoint, gentrification in the neighborhood of Harlem reflects the series of decisions effectuated by individuals, private powers and governmental policies. The mixed nature of the process distributed unevenly the benefits of neighborhood revitalization leaving small abandoned enclaves in sharp contrast to renovated luxurious brownstones and newly constructed malls.