The wicked problem of Gentrification

The Case:

Gentrification is the process of urban reconfiguration with profit-driven motives, often in working-class neighborhoods and communities of color. This process has side effects of increasing housing prices and leads to a focus on the voices of the power-holding majority group. Thus, we chose to focus on the marginalized groups that are less heard in this process as we found silenced minority groups to be a common theme among our disciplines.

Research Question:

How is gentrification responsible for displacing already marginalized communities?

Data Analysis By Discipline:

Public Management & Organizational Sciences:

The government focuses primarily on new residents and not on current residents. The lower socio-economic class is driven away and replaced by a richer and more highly educated population. The government sees this as an "improvement" to the city, but this is not necessarily the case. Essentially, this change has a negative impact on the lower class and a positive impact on the upper class.

Methodology:

- Interviews with the "local" residents who are in the middle of the gentrification process

- Statistics about how many owner-occupied homes have been added and how many rental homes have disappeared in a given time

- How social classes have changed

Strengths and Weaknesses:

- A strength is that you get a good understanding of the situation of the people in the middle of the gentrification process.

- The weakness of interviews is that you only cover a limited number of stories and not the entire target group. (So it's only a small group of which you have data)

Communication:

When new neighborhood are being filled with higher income residents, there is a shift in power. The neighborhood is being made more attractive for the rich to live in and everything old is replaced by something new. Gentrification can make a unknown city to a well known place. People who have a higher income are generally smart and creative, which in turn helps the city become more attractive, because having distinguished people living in your city has a more positive feel to it. One negative side to gentrification is that stereotyping is a common practice. People generalise other people and categorize them as well. When a neighborhood is viewed as bad the people who live there are also considered bad people and the other way around. In the worst cases gentrification can lead to racism, because when a neighborhood is poor people usually tend to blame the residents on the color of their skin.

Methodology:

- Interviews

- Surveys

Strengths and Weaknesses:

- A strength of these approaches is that they give a clear view who lives where and why you have data)

- A weakness is that not everyone's opinion is noted and not everyone gives an honest answer

Engineering & Urban Planning:

Engineering and urban planning disciplines would emphasize the need to meld the developmental with the social aspects of planning. Thorough research needs to be done within the target community before starting any new developmental projects to identify local culture and demographic trends. A greater focus needs to be put on communicating with local leaders in order to co-design solutions that can improve the city while still maintaining a protected neighborhood that doesn't lead to minority group exclusion.

Methodology:

- City mapping and demographic evidence of past development results

- Looking specifically at decrease in certain populations where new developments have taken place

Strengths and Weaknesses:

- A strength is factual information that shows demonstrated consequences

- Another strength is the ability to identify methods of development that may result in more equitable space-sharing

- A weakness is that these methods don't account for social relations within community

- Another weakness is that these methods don't look for more nuanced explanations for reasons marginalized groups leave a gentrified area

Global Gender and Sexuality Studies:

Global Gender and Sexuality Studies emphasize the need to take the displacement of LGBTQ+ communities, as well as women of color particularly, into account. Current research shows that LGBTQ+ individuals of color are disproportionally effected by the effects of gentrification. A sense of performative progressiveness from newcomers into such neighborhood adds to a further divide between residents as existing prejudices separate the community. For already marginalized community members, the influx of wealthy and privileged newcomers can effectively push them out of their own neighborhood with not only increasing rent prices, but a disrespect of LGBTQ+ spaces

Methodology:

- Interviews

- Surveys

- Existing statistical data

Strengths and Weaknesses:

- A strength is in using personal testimony to gain insight to marginalized communities and the effects of gentrification on those who are already suffer from other negative societal impacts such as discrimination

- A weakness is that it can fail to highlight the role that wealthy LGBTQ+ play a role in gentrification of poor neighborhoods as well

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