

Police Observation Devices, Gentrification, & Exclusive Real-estate Practices in Chicago's Pilsen and Humboldt Park Neighborhoods



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Abstract

My research focuses on two shifts taking place in today's urbanized world. The first is a shift in law enforcement towards the use of surveillance technologies to monitor public spaces. The second shift concerns the displacement of poverty-stricken communities as gentrification decreases the availability of affordable housing in minority-dominated neighborhoods. This research concentrates on the intersection of these trends by analyzing the relationship between public police surveillance and real-estate investment practices in Chicago's Pilsen and Humboldt Park neighborhoods. Drawing from scholarly literature on surveillance and gentrification, this study sheds light on the role Chicago's police observation devices (PODs) play in gentrifying poor, minority-populated neighborhoods that are highly coveted by real-estate developers. My research also uses qualitative methods to analyze the perceptions local residents and community center representatives have towards PODs. The conclusions of this project reveal that minority stereotypes, the use of PODs to monitor minority populations (while simultaneously protecting new developments and gentrifiers), and the consequent increase in an area's cost of living are correlated and work to socially and economically displace low-income minorities from their neighborhoods. In order to fight the displacement of marginalized populations, it is vital that we understand the confluence of police surveillance and gentrification in Chicago.