Marking Territory in a Transforming Neighbourhood: the Šančiai 'Chair' Parade

M Y K O L Ė   L U K O Š I E N Ė
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ABSTRACT. The aim of this paper is to analyse the manifestation of a local institutionalised community's power and its resistance to gentrification in the Kaunas neighbourhood of Šančiai. Šančiai, during the last decade, is in the process of being rehabilitated, recreated and revisioned, by implementing new urban planning strategies and luxurious post-industrial urban visions. The manifestation of space production selected for the analysis presented in this paper is illustrated by the neighbourhood 'Chair' parade, where the power of the community and the resistance to mainstream gentrification manifests itself, applying the ritualistic event analysis proposed by Ronald L. Grimes.

KEYWORDS: urban transformation, gentrification, parade, community, ritual.

Šančiai, one of the eleven neighbourhoods in the city of Kaunas, has been in the turmoil of urban transformation for a decade. The neighbourhood of Šančiai previously existed in a somewhat isolated pocket in Kaunas city, well known for its industrial spaces and high crime rate or its dangerous environment, and during the last decade it has been going through the process of being rehabilitated, recreated and revised, by implementing new urban planning strategies and luxurious post-industrial urban visions. In the Šančiai neighbourhood, which is locally known for its military base establishments, real estate developers are reconstructing and renovating many of the military buildings, transforming them into modern luxurious living and working places.

There are several grass-roots community initiatives in the neighbourhood, like the 'Šančiai kiosk', which was purchased for a symbolic price, when local neighbourhood activists and artists collectively contributed expenses and became the collective owners of a kiosk. It became a public space of attraction in the neighbourhood and a symbol of the rebirth of Šančiai. Another public place for cultural and communal initiatives is the 'Cabbage field' – an abandoned territory in the military encampment in the neighbourhood, which used to store sauerkraut

as a vitamin c resource for soldiers in Šančiai. The 'Cabbage field' was cleaned and maintained by the activists of the local community, who have different and often clashing visions for this public space; while the local municipality or developers envision a modern skyscraper cityscape, many locals advocate for preserving the uniqueness of wooden architecture.

Šančiai is an ideal ground for anthropological research aimed at analysing the experiences of the people living in this neighbourhood and the ways public spaces are contested, (re)claimed and signified. The study is based on ethnographic research in the Šančiai neighbourhood that took place from 2016 summer into late 2017 autumn. The parade took place on the 16th of September 2017. The fieldwork included participant observation in various conjoined groups that participated in the parade and the preparation process for the celebration, such as the 'Lower Šančiai Community' meetings for the annual celebration, various workshops in the local library, centre for youth with disabilities, various spots in Šančiai neighbourhood (market place, the previously mentioned 'Cabbage field'), and rehearsals with activists drummers 'Rhythms of Resistance', who participated in the parade. The fieldwork included fifteen interviews with members of the community, people living in the neighbourhood, newcomers, and people who participated in the parade for the cause, but were not residents of the Šančiai neighbourhood, all of which added up to more than thirty informal conversations and many hours of participant observations. The aim of this paper is to analyse space production practices by the local institutionalised community in transforming the neighbourhood and establishing collective empowerment. Therefore, the author seeks to describe the processes of gentrification in Šančiai and to analyse the manifestation of public space production through the neighbourhood 'Chair' parade, as a manifestation of the community's power and / or resistance to gentrification. This paper presents the gentrification processes and the resistance to them in the case of the Kaunas' Šančiai neighbourhood, and describes the features and specifications of the gentrification process and the theoretical approaches (Zukin 1987; Tonkiss 2005; Lees, Slayter, Wyly 2008; Brown-Saracino 2010; Naegler 2012), which are applied in the research of urban transformation.

The definition of the local community raises questions about what a community is, and as Tony Blackshaw discussed, 'community' has become one of the more vague and imprecisely drawn concepts in the social sciences: it seems to mean everything and nothing (Blackshaw 2010: 2). Although this paper does not seek to discuss the borders or concepts of community, or to further over-imply that the term 'community' encompasses all the residents of Šančiai, 'community' is used here emically, as a word that constantly appeared during the research, and as part of the chosen name of the neighbourhood activists – the 'Lower Šančiai

Community' – while also referencing the representation of local residents. This research focuses on the space production practices and strategies that are employed mostly by the local institutionalised community – the 'Lower Šančiai Community' (from here on referred to as LŠC). Institutionalisation, in this case, means the registration of a non–profit association named the 'Lower Šančiai Community' at the end of 2014.

This paper discusses the practice of space production carried out by the LŠC. It highlights the Šančiai neighbourhood festival and the 'Chair' parade in 2017 as a resistance practice responding to the gentrification processes and the uncontrollable transformation of the neighbourhood, which isolates the residents from decision making and participation in processes of urban change. The agency of the LŠC, organising community events and festivals like the 'Chair' parade, is analysed as the neighbourhood's resistance to gentrification (Soja 2010). The parade was analysed as a ritual–like event, that is created by a community to establish power in the neighbourhood, like the creation of the tradition of the orange parades in Northern Ireland (Turner 1967; Geertz 1980; Bell 1992; Bryan 2000; Grimes 2013).

The breaking point in the gentrification processes of the Šančiai neighbourhood must be the year of 2008, when the reconstruction of the abandoned masonry military buildings began. The agency and the presence of the local residents' voices in the public discourse became visible only from 2015, after the community was institutionalised at the end of 2014. The institutionalisation, in this case, is the official registration of the LŠC as an association on the 18th of December 2014. After the institutionalisation of the LŠC, the agency of the people involved in the community's work gained momentum and they started organising neighbourhood festivals, named 'Šančinės'. During the organisational process in preparation for the festival the need to "show, who owns Šančiai" was articulated, therefore the author of this paper suggests that the space production processes in Šančiai, such as the parade in 2017, which was a dominant event of annual festival 'Šančinės', is a form of resistance to the gentrification processes and the cultural practice of making a powerful presence of the community apparent.

The paper is based on ongoing ethnography that employs a participant observation methodology, which started in spring 2016. During that time, the author conducted participant observation in a wide range of Šančiai residents' activities: LŠC meetings, the preparation process for the 'Chair' parade, local library events, knitting group meetings for the locals, and others. However, marching in the parade is not enough for a researcher, the process of the preparations and the rationale behind the concept and aims was revealed in everyday conversations, discussions, conflicts, etc. Taking on the role of an observing participant I assisted in all of the parade's phases, as it helped in establishing the confidence

of the organisers, in understanding the parade and the reason and meanings of its portrayal, and the inner workings of the community.

The transition in urban studies referred to as "spatial turn" (Lefebvre 1991; Bitusikova 2010: 281; Low 2014) focuses on the importance of the construction and production of spaces as perspectives that are interlinked. This helps us understand the role, function, and the symbolic meaning of a public urban space in societal and historical contexts. Andre Sorensen researched the recreation and the reclaiming of public spaces for meaningful community needs by analysing how streets in Tokyo are claimed by art festivals, and by also engaging new participants in shared property rights and implementing political strategies for successful community empowerment (Sorensen 2009). Similarly, in Madrid a public space was claimed as one of the examples for emerging social practices (Monge 2016a), while research conducted in a community garden there uncovered a continually monitored political, hyperconnected project (Monge 2016b). Another research case is the community gardens in New York, where residents initiated the community's participation in collectively reconstructing public spaces (Sokolovsky 2011). Maria Buslacchi researched tensions and conflicts in Marseille between top-down urban regeneration developers preparing the city for European Capital of Culture 2013 and the local residents (Buslacchi 2017). Other researchers who focused on gated communities encapsulated by urban areas discussed and ethnographically researched the polarisation and marginalisation that occur in the process of living space control (Caldeira 1996; Low 2003). Post-socialist countries' urban ethnographies and research focuses more on a post-socialism theoretical perspective in the anthropological research of social production and construction of space, also symbolically revisioning and analysing symbolical representations in urban spaces (Bitusikova 2007; Aglinskas 2012; Čiupailaitė 2014). Robert Rottenberg researched the Vienna gardens as a field of power play that became an arena for negotiations between the local government and the community (Rottenberg 1995).

Urban culture is distinguished as another important and well researched topic in urban anthropology, drawing in the analysis of cultural memory, identity and symbolic meanings and representations of urban spaces (Landry 2006; Florida 2012). Urban villages are also examined in urban studies as a way of recreating old urban spaces and attaching new meanings. Fernando Monge researched new emergent practices and alternative lifestyles in Madrid that reshape a vital, singular place of the old city, thus revealing global and local processes that occur in contemporary cities (Monge 2016). Gentrification, as an urban development process, is also more and more researched ethnographically. Non Arkaraprasertkul, drawing on ethnographic research, examined an alternative form of gentrification in a traditional urban neighbourhood in Shanghai, where original residents

themselves are actors in the gentrification process (Arkaraprasertkul 2016). Lidia Manzo focused on comparative research of urban transformations in inner city neighbourhoods in Milan (Italy) and Brooklyn (New York, USA) and researched the changing neighbourhoods as places of symbolic elaboration of socio-cultural boundaries (Manzo 2012).

GENTRIFICATION AS A COMPLEX PHENOMENON

Since the phenomenon of gentrification became a subject of research in 1950–1960, it has become anchored in urban studies research as an important concept. Authors discuss many slightly varying definitions of gentrification as the transformation of a working-class or vacant area of the central city into an area of middle-class residential and / or commercial use (Lees, Slayter, Wyly 2008: preface), or, more specifically, urban gentrification as the market renewal of low-rent areas, especially inner-city areas, by middle-class or higher-income populations (Tonkiss 2005: 81). Chriss Hamnett defines gentrification as:

> [T]he social and spatial manifestation of the transition from an industrial to a post-industrial urban economy, based on financial, business and creative services, with associated changes in nature and location of work, in occupational class structure, earnings and incomes, life styles, and the structure of the housing market (Hamnett 2003: 2402).

According to him, there are several required and inevitable conditions for gentrification to take place: (1) there must be potential gentrifiers, (2) a supply for inner city housing and (3) the cultural choice to live in the inner city (Hamnett 1991: 186). Moreover, he notes that gentrifiers share a set of cultural orientations and motivations for engaging in gentrification (Brown-Saracino 2010: 168). There must be some cultural taste or common visions of the future, which encourage gentrifiers to choose a particular neighbourhood to settle in, not just affordable housing opportunities. Also, it is emphasised that gentrifiers have the ability to recognise the potential of downtrodden places and properties, and to direct their transformation (ibid.). Even though stereotypically and sarcastically they are considered to be the representatives of bohemia, the creative class or hipsters, this is not always the case. Nevertheless, most scholars agree that gentrifiers tend to accompany the movement into previously economically depressed central city neighbourhoods (ibid.).

Researchers Harvey Molotch and John Logan have discussed the city or its neighbourhood development and the main actors in the process (Molotch 1976;

Molotch, Logan 1987). Addressing the Šančiai community's institutionalisation through Molotch and Logan's theory of the city as a growth machine shows how parties with similar interests consolidate their power to gain traction and participate in urban change processes not only as passive observers.

Molotch states that "a parcel of land represents an interest and that any given locality is thus an aggregate of land-based interests everyone has in mind a certain future for said parcel, which is linked, somehow, with his or her own well-being" (Molotch 1976: 310). That means that any owner, be it a person, state, or business, sees the property as an investment in one way or another and associates their future with it. State or local government usually decides which neighbourhood is revitalised, when it is done, which streets are chosen, what is important and should be preserved, what buildings can be demolished, and so on. Consequently, the decisions of the state are extremely important and grant a significant power in gentrification processes. Neoliberal state governments often act hand-in-hand with the private sector and, sometimes, it is impossible to distinguish the influence and the initiators. "Localities are generally mindful of these governmental powers and attempt to maintain the kind of 'business climate' that attracts industry, for example: favourable taxation, vocational training, law enforcement, and 'good' labour relations" (ibid.: 312). This also means that the state can improve business conditions, the mass media can advertise or contrarily criticise current conditions, encourage the refurbishments to attract more investment and / or new settlers. Brendan L. Lavy, Erin D. Dascher and Ronald R. Hagelman III researched media portrayal of gentrification and redevelopment on Rainey street in Austin, Texas and attempted to evaluate who and what is given preference in order to begin the disentanglement of the complex social power dynamics at work in the changing of urban landscapes (Lavy [et al.] 2016: 198). The researchers found out that media coverage had a significant impact in shaping the transformation of the redevelopment and perception of it (Lavy [et al.] 2016). Molotch and Logan discuss the city as an arena, a shared place of commodity and habitation, and the neighbourhood and neighbouring spaces are locations, which suffer from the impact of the conflicting interests (Molotch, Logan 1978).

The resistance to gentrification processes is also widely researched, from large resistance movements to small initiatives, local empowerment, which all talk about societal conversation about urban development processes, players, and decision makers (Tonkiss 2005; Newman, Wyly 2006; Lees, Slater, Wyly 2008: 254–256).

The theory of a city as a growth machine in the transformation of Šančiai provides an analytical macro-level tool in researching and understanding the structural processes of city or neighbourhood development. This theory allows the researcher to identify and analyse different interest groups in transforming

and developing the neighbourhood and thus combine this macro analysis and understanding with a micro level anthropological lens, to research experiences and viewpoints of the people living there. However, the theory has its limitations in this research: it does not have a lens for a post-socialist historical aspect that makes the context of Šančiai different from the usual western urban growth and it also explains only the potential motives for the consolidation of power.

Public spaces in the city have always been a place to claim and contest. In the light of a notion of a city as a property-based potential, public space often comes in danger of privatisation and often becomes a space for new uses, cultural practices, a target in gentrification visions, and hence – an object of negotiation, so Edward W. Soja notes that a public place in the city is the only place that can still be contested (Soja 2010). According to Soja:

> [E]very square inch of space in every market-based economy has been commodified and commercialised into parcels of valued land, that are owned by individuals, corporations (usually considered as individuals according to the law), or by the state (considered to be representative of the public at large) (ibid.: 44).

There is a lack of public spaces in Šančiai, such as parks or squares with seated areas that would be inviting places to hang out. There are only empty or abandoned lots of land and even those spaces have become symbolic battle fields. Soja explains, that battles for public spaces can be considered an aim for spatial justice:

> For some the essential starting point in the search for spatial justice is the vigilant defence of public space against the forces of commodification, privatisation, and state interference. <...> public space has been rapidly eroding in contemporary cities, as neoliberal policies of deregulation remove the microspatial structures that maintained our 'civil liberties' in place, literally and figuratively (ibid.: 45).

This research examines a ritual-like performance of the Šančiai 'Chair' parade. The term "ritual-like activities" is defined by Catherine Bell and also used by Ronald L. Grimes in analysing activities that are readily thought to have "ritual-like" qualities but are not quite ritual by cultural definition, though they can be analysed in ritual characteristics, such as formalism, rule-governance or sacral symbolism (Bell 1997: 91, 138; Grimes 2013: 131). According to Dominic Bryan, a researcher of orange parades in North Ireland, a ritual can be analysed as both an action and an expression, as something that is done and something which is said. It requires active participation; it entails individuals doing something – although they may not know why they do it – and yet, it also seems to contain meaning.

He also emphasises, citing Alfred R. Radcliffe-Brown, the importance of a ritual to improve community cohesion (Bryan 2010: 17). Bell discusses how political rites define power in a two-dimensional way:

> [F]irst, they use symbols and symbolic action to depict a group of people as a coherent and ordered community, based on shared values and goals; second, they demonstrate the legitimacy of these values and goals by establishing their iconicity with the perceived values and the order of the cosmos (Bell 1997: 129).

In the case of this research, the 'Chair' parade is analysed as a ritual-like activity, focusing more on the creation of ritual-like action, to claim the public space of the main street in the Šančiai neighbourhood and to mark territory. Ritual-like behaviour demonstrates the importance of the body and its way of moving in space and time (ibid.: 139). Grimes notes the difficulty and, sometimes, the impossibility to classify rituals, and therefore proposes to analyse ritual-like behaviour by modes, which should be seen as layers of the ritualistic actions (Grimes 2013). He distinguishes six modes: ritualisation, decorum, ceremony, magic, liturgy, and celebration, and adds different layers of those modes and ethoses (moods and motivations) (ibid.: 204). Grimes accentuates that there could be more or fewer modes for rituals, and there is no good taxonomy. Many rituals or ritual-like behaviours would find no pigeonhole in the scheme, but the modes, adding layers and ethoses, can help understanding and analysing ritual-like processes in layers (ibid.: 203–205).

ŠANČIAI AS A GENTRIFIED NEIGHBOURHOOD

The Šančiai neighbourhood is located close to the city centre – approximately two kilometres from the very centre of Kaunas, which takes only six minutes by car and no more than half an hour by foot. This inner-city location is now being advertised by real estate agents as a 'comfortable, within an arm's reach' location in the city. Neighbourhoods which are affected by gentrification are usually inner-city areas, mostly close to the city centre, and the nearby centre is one of the anchors or signifiers of gentrification.

Being caught up in rapid urban change, the neighbourhood of Šančiai is an arena for different developmental visions. Even before the fieldwork, slightly varied and conflicting visions for the direction of change could be noticed and identified. Local government, mass media, educational institutions, the private sector and communities connect to the neighbourhood differently and envision the development variably as well. The historical background of the neighbourhood

of Šančiai also contributes immensely to the perception and development of the gentrification process and, as discussed above, the disadvantages of a city as a growth machine approach, especially considering the soviet occupation period, which delivered a different kind of urban modernism development. Thus this approach can only partly be tailored for the research of gentrification and the resistance to it in Šančiai.

Historically, gentrification was considered as mostly fuelled by the private sector but recent studies reveal that gentrification has become a global phenomenon and a neoliberal state is not the regulating power, but the one that encourages the market (Lees, Slayter, Wyly 2008: 163). The complex and layered network of gentrification agents complicates the process of distinguishing major discourse leaders, because the state or the municipality in the Šančiai neighbourhood often represent the interests of the private sector. In Šančiai, the private sector interests corresponded with the local government's interests – to redevelop and refurbish the neighbourhood.

For gentrifiers to come to a neighbourhood and take part in the redevelopment, there must be free or potential places to settle in. Abandoned military encampments and empty factory buildings offer great opportunities. The first military building complex was privatised from the Centralised Public Property Management in 2004 and its visible renovation works began in 2008, followed by publications in the local and national press, and in 2009 the major reconstruction of the main street in the Šančiai neighbourhood began. The reconstruction of military buildings, that became symbolic to the neighbourhood's cityscape, created an abundance of new space for newcomers, especially emphasising the history, culture, and interesting architecture of Šančiai, marking the forgotten neighbourhood as a hidden gem in Kaunas.

Hamnett emphasises the cultural choice to live in an inner-city area and not in the suburbs, and to exhaust the opportunity to settle in a low-cost city area, which is located near the city centre. Fran Tonkiss discusses that the inner-city has a special hold on the modern urban imagination – the shadow of downtown promises to tell the real secrets of the city (Tonkiss 2005: 82). Similarly, the inner-city locations of the bus and railway stations (which in Kaunas belong to the Šančiai territory) are constantly moving and changing, therefore staying interesting, mysterious and dangerous, and, as well, a sensitive and problem-generating space for the local government.

The term of gentrification often has a negative connotation and, therefore, it is usually avoided in the public discourse or the city planning documents. Instead, terms like 'urban renaissance', 'urban regeneration', and 'urban sustainability' are used in its place (Lees, Slayter, Wyly 2008: preface). It is difficult to be against revitalisation, regeneration, or renaissance, but much easier to be against gentrification (ibid.: 155). The Šančiai neighbourhood in the last decade was and still is often labelled as 'recovering', 'a neighbourhood in its renaissance', 'rising from the ashes'.

Approaches to gentrification have often split between those, who emphasise the role of class, capital and changes in the material production of the economic space in the city, as against those, who stress culture, lifestyle and patterns of production (Tonkiss 2005: 82).

> The theoretical divisions between production and consumption explanations have been overdrawn and most gentrification researchers now accept, that production and consumption, supply and demand, economic and cultural, and structure and agency explanations are all a part of 'the elephant of gentrification' (Lees, Slayter, Wyly 2008: 24).

Whereas the community or people living in Šančiai depend on different resources, in influencing the gentrification paths, they must consolidate their power and resources and try to swing the local government or portray their vision through media channels. The LŠC is rather limited in ways by which it can affect decision making and even spotting the upcoming urban change. The LŠC agree that their 'agency is political, because being in public is political on its own', therefore the author can conclude that the agency of the community is purposely linked to the establishment of power, and they aim to be heard. The power of the community is being expressed by utilising the power of presence in annual festivities, such as the parade.

The recognition encourages cities to prepare for upcoming period of serving as European Capital of Culture originally and differently, and the Kaunas municipality is intensely carrying out these projects and improving the infrastructure. The people living in Šančiai are happy about the attention and care for the previously derelict and forgotten neighbourhood, though, at the same time, the ungovernable and impossible to influence process is worrying. As the infrastructural changes due to upcoming European Capital of Culture in 2022 are a positive transformation – newly fixed streets, reformed previously abandoned and dangerous buildings – and people appreciate the change, the community (institutionalised and otherwise) does not take part in this change and only the government and business corporations participate in the actual decision making and construction of the discourse of urban change.

THE ŠANČIAI 'CHAIR' PARADE AS A COLLECTIVE RITUAL OF EMPOWERMENT

As previously discussed by Soja, public space in a city remains the only space where people can express their political views, establish their presence and belonging. That is the reason why most of the community festivals, events and spectacles are organised and performed in public places. Due to the lack of public places in Šančiai, the main street – Juozapavičius street, which crosses the entire neighbourhood and

connects Šančiai with the city centre – became a perfect public place to perform a community parade. The parade marked the climax of the annual Šančiai festival 'Šančinės'. The first festival took place in 2015, right after the institutionalisation of the LŠC. The festival grew every year and community activists tried to organise a bigger event every year, aiming to attract more participants and attention, emphasising that the local people 'will expect more and more each year'. The parade had several audiences and multiple aims. The LŠC had been preparing for the parade for half a year, the organisers tried many approaches, also inviting many artists (local and not) and local companies. The process of organisation and preparation was very disciplined, 'by the book', obtaining all the necessary permits from the local municipality and police, in order to perform the parade on the road and to guarantee the safety of all participants. The public event of such extent, that lasted for two hours without interruption, was not an improvised spectacle, but rather a well organised and thought-through performance, which required a significant amount of manpower and communication.

The Šančiai 'Chair' parade took place on the 16th of September 2017. The date was selected to coincide with the annual festival of the Šančiai neighbourhood 'Šančinės', which always took place in autumn. The parade, as planned, started at noon and went on for an hour, until the march reached the end of the main Juozapavičius street in Šančiai, going for 1,4 km, and culminated in pre-planned picnic on the bank of the river Nemunas and by the bridge to the Panemunė neighbourhood, the border between the two neighbourhoods. More than two hundred people attended the parade and it had a linear formation, divided into separate segments of participants. The first section of the parade consisted of bikers and their place in front was designated for several reasons – the distinctive roaring of bikes would definitely grab the attention and they also should be detached from the remaining sections of the parade, to not interfere with the planned and prepared performances sound-wise. After the bikes, there came the main centrepiece of the parade – an enormous, three meters in height, yellow and black chair, constructed of many small chairs, which was led by the event organisers, dressed in yellow and carrying yellow flags with a painted symbol of the parade, a chair, from which the parade derives its name. The chair was wheeled on a platform and dictated the slower marching tempo. The centrepiece was followed by a group of drummers – a samba protest group 'Rhythms of Resistance', who played several rhythms for the march and also for the planned performances during the march. Drummers were followed by the group of dancers with improvised cardboard chairs in their hands, dressed in blue, who repeated a previously rehearsed dance with the chairs and chanted 'Šančiai!' along with the rhythm in the beforehand designated stops. After the main organisers and participants followed a chain of parade sections in

clusters of different organisations (profit and non-profit) located in the Šančiai neighbourhood, like local schools, the local library, a circus, local furniture manufacturers, local gym representatives and so on, each of them trying or not trying to correspond with the idea of the parade – a chair. For example, one of the active participants – The Kaunas Disabled Youth Day Centre – wheeled their own design of a chair on a platform, of a similar height to the centrepiece, and made of soft material, in a yellow and black colour palette as well. This centre was also one of the main locations where participants prepared for the parade and rehearsed many performances or brainstormed ideas. One significant segment of participants, that this paper focuses on, was the section of people in the event who were holding 'Kaunas objects!' signs in protest against the urban development in Kaunas, including those, who protested against the cutting of trees in boulevards and parks. The parade also included a finalising performance with the yellow centrepiece chair, made of many smaller cardboard chairs, which was deconstructed in the last stop where the neighbourhood picnic was planned, and these symbolic chairs were handed out to participants.

A moment from the parade, showing a huge chair made of smaller chairs later distributed among participants during the local picnic. *Photographer Akvilė Snarskienė*[1]

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1   Edita Radzevičiūtė. „Šančių parade – nuo žaismingų kaukių iki protestuotojų", *Kauno diena*, 2017.09.16, available from: https://kauno.diena.lt/naujienos/kaunas/miesto-pulsas/sanciu-parade-nuo-zaismingu-kaukiu-iki-protestuotoju-829076?komentarai?full.

The name of the parade in Šančiai – 'Chair' was not a random name and it had several meanings, targeted to different participant groups. During the time of the fieldwork, in the preparation period, the organisers explained several meanings. One of them was communicated clearly in public communication – an invitation to every person living in Šančiai to bring their own chair, sit down in a picnic after the parade, and get to know each other better, become friends and not just neighbours. Another meaning was a critique of the Kaunas municipality's city development and their vision of city growth. The chair was a juxtaposition to the king's throne (in Lithuanian, the word 'sostinė', meaning 'capital', refers to the place of the throne, the place for a king, as well as in Latin *capitalis* means 'of the head'), a contraposition to a single leader and the symbol – the throne. The throne, as a juxtaposition, was chosen in the light of Kaunas – European Capital of Culture, emphasising that the city is a place for people and not for a throne. Bell notices how symbols merge many ideas and emotions under one image and this totalisation generates a loose, but encompassing set of ideas and emotions that readily evoke a collective sense of 'we' – as in 'our' (Bell 1992: 156).

Grimes discusses the use of modes for ritual research and analysis and offers, as noted previously, six ritual modes as an analytical tool, instead of taxonomies or lists (Grimes 2013: 203–206). The Šančiai 'Chair' parade could be described and analysed in two modes – celebration and ceremony. As Grimes mentions, rituals can have all six or one of the modes and a researcher should treat the modes as possible layers of ritual-like behaviour. Grimes suggests looking for different modes and layers that constitute a ritualistic event like in a palimpsest, where writing has been erased, to make room for another text (ibid.: 204). The parade had the expressive and celebratory layers, combining a joyful and playful celebration of togetherness as residents of a neighbourhood, as well as festive colourful and creative theatrical performances. Bell discusses how important are the performative aspects in ritual-like behaviour: performances communicate on multiple sensory levels, usually involving highly visual imagery, dramatic sounds, and, sometimes, even tactile, olfactory and gustatory stimulation (Bell 1992: 160). The parade in Šančiai was sensory in a visual and audible sense, it utilised the effect of drums for marching throughout the event and during the dancing interjections, and for chanting and exclamations. The parade was also visually captivating, using contrasting colours of black and yellow in the centrepiece, the clothing, the banners and flags, different sections of parade participants utilised different imagery, unifying colours, masks and performances. It was planned, so that the participants and the potential audience in the street would not lose interest and would stay tuned throughout the whole process. According to Bell:

> [T]he performative aspect of ritual-like behaviour has a framing dimension, meaning, that frames not only distinguish a performance as such, they also create a complete and condensed, if somewhat artificial, world – like sacral symbols, a type of microcosmic portrayal of the macrocosmos (ibid.).

In this case, the framing in a celebratory mode was a creation of unity and diversity as a neighbourhood, and in the case of the finalising part of the parade – a performative deconstruction of the 'Chair' centrepiece into many cardboard chairs for the participants to 'come, sit and get to know each other', which helped to create and exaggerate the feeling of unity and community. This could be considered a festival-like aesthetic and a playful celebratory mode of the 'Chair' parade.

Another mode of the parade was ceremonial. Grimes notes several layers, which are indicative of the ceremonial mode of ritual events – intergroup and political layers. Protesters in the Šančiai parade used a banner 'Kaunas objects', which was purposely made to resemble the signs used in places of Kaunas where there is a new construction of a street or a house renovation, organized by the local government. They also carried banners saying 'Stop' and 'Trees are the soul of a city'.

Grimes discusses ritual moods that are usual to ceremonial ritual actions, such as declarative or contentious. The second mode of the parade had political and declarative aspects, it incorporated the neighbourhood's presence and contestation to the Kaunas municipality's urban development actions. As one participant explained, 'let them see that we own Šančiai, that we have something to say to the urban planners <...> we are not invisible and dumb' (Z. 62 years old, August 2017).

As an ethnographer, during my participant observation, I reflected on the 'double-layered' nature of the created event, that is one clearly known for the organisers, and another – to the public, its political stance vs. festive celebration. The second mode of ritual action explains the second layer of the parade: it included the competitive and ostentatious actions, such as symbols, confrontation of hegemonic urban planning visions and actions, throne vs. chair.

The parade had a contentious mood, yet it was played by the book, protesting and resisting the dominant neighbourhood development vision in a hardly tangible way and metaphorically. Making a presence, marking space, and practicing powerful presence are significant ritual actions, according to Grimes (2013: 206). The chosen street for the parade, which cuts through the entire neighbourhood, was a distinctive way to mark space for people, and gathering more than two hundred participants contributed to the power of presence. The parade was very important for its creators and initiators and the need to be noticed and acknowledged was clearly articulated: 'We need and must remind of us' (an organiser, referencing to the community). This clearly, metaphorically, puts things in their proper place by

ritual action organisers, as in emphasising residents' neighbourhood development visions of preserving the 'Šančiai culture', wooden architecture, narrow streets, fewer transportation in comparison to the municipality's plans and actions of urban development, plans of building new block of flats, and building new wide streets for transportation.

The parade became a platform of a political ritual; fieldwork in the community revealed that they consider their agency a political action rather than just an everyday presence or action in a public place. Therefore, a well-thought-of and accurately enacted public community event is a ritualistic spectacle, consolidated by political participation. Clifford Geertz noted that a political ritual is not an attribute of power, but that it rather constructs power (Geertz 1980). Bell discusses that political rituals can be said to comprise those ceremonial practices that specifically construct, display and promote the power of political institutions or the political interests of distinct constituencies and subgroups (Bell 1992: 128). In leading such a big event and grasping national attention, the organisers sought to establish their powerful presence and to become more prominent in urban development decision making.

The festival in Šančiai, as a form of resistance to gentrification or urban change processes, can be compared to the changes and events that happened in the gentrified neighbourhood of Sternschanze in Hamburg. Laura Naegler conducted an ethnographic research in the Sternschanze neighbourhood, Hamburg, which was undergoing speedy gentrification. Similarly to Šančiai, Sternschanze was considered a dangerous, abandoned, poor neighbourhood that was inhabited only by poor or working-class people. Also, it was popular among alternative subcultures that appreciated less controlled urban territories. Later, the inner-city neighbourhood Sternschanze was intensely gentrified, houses were renovated, the neighbourhood was advertised as a 'place to be' for everyone considering him – or herself – as 'somehow flashy, non-conformist and creative' (Naegler 2012: 9). However, left-wing activists, residents and subcultural actors rioted, squatted buildings, refused to abandon them, set cars on fire and actively fought against urban development and urban control. The parade in Šančiai and other contestations of public spaces can be considered a less articulated and mellow form of resistance and protest. Molotch and Logan noted that urban development interest groups consolidate their power to achieve common goals, which are not necessarily financial. The Šančiai 'Chair' parade, in a similar manner, consolidated different groups of people, interested in Kaunas' urban development and transformations, and declared their position. The parade, however, was not as successful in impact or as well articulated as a resistance stance, or even as the riots in Sternschanze. Besides, not all the participants were

invested in the second or the alternative message of the event, some participated for the joy of neighbourhood festivities and the opportunity to partake in rarely happening urban celebration. Naegler concluded that even such negative or dangerous looking actions as riots or burning cars in the street are swallowed by the same process of gentrification which they resist against (ibid.: 12–13). Therefore, resistance to the neighbourhood's gentrification is also commodified and included into the narrative of Sternschanze as an authentic, exciting and radical life proponent living place. In the same manner, but less articulated and communicated, goals and less heated resistance to the transformation in Šančiai was included in the narrative and representation of Šančiai as an interesting, exotic neighbourhood that attracts 'artsy' people.

Bryan notes that rituals and their associated symbols can give the impression of unity and continuity during periods of change and as such, they provide a resource in relations of power (Bryan 2000: 19). Actions of the participants become materialised – understood, perceived and evaluated. A parade, as a ritualised performance, creates the feeling of ritualistic repetition. And even in the light of urban culture and the never-ending movement of the city, the parade stops everything that normally happens in the street or neighbourhood at the time and becomes a pocket of stilled time in the city. In order to organise the parade to march through the main street of the neighbourhood, which is a major link between the city centre and the Panemunė neighbourhood, traffic had to be stopped for that period of time and most of the cafes and local shops stopped working to participate or observe the parade.

The atmosphere of unity and community cohesion in organising the parade was created during the preparation period, long-lasting physical activities, dance and marching rehearsals, crafting the scenery for the parade, discussing how the parade should be enacted, committing to carrying out the necessary duties on time, being delegated responsibilities to ensure the success of the parade. It created the feeling of common goals, unity, and the importance of the power of the people.

The Šančiai 'Chair' parade, as a ritual, constructed the power of the LŠC and the public space, i.e. the main street of the neighbourhood, as the naturally chosen place for it to happen and likely the only place to ideally and convincingly show and establish the authority and significance of the community and the people. However, it is important to note that the actions by the LŠC were carried out in response to the changes and the uncontrollable transformation of the neighbourhood. Therefore, such events as the parade in Šančiai are more available resources to establish power and to claim public places or attention in the gentrification process.

CONCLUSION

In this paper I have discussed cultural space production practices, which are implemented by the local institutionalised community in the Šančiai neighbourhood, Kaunas. This neighbourhood has been a target of rapid urban development and change. New urban visions have been led and some implemented by the state and private sectors, and supported by media, gentrifying the neighbourhood close to the city centre and revisioning the old industrial working-class neighbourhood into a popular and attractive place for newcomers. Kaunas has been nominated as the European Capital of Culture for the year 2022 and this also greatly contributed to the rushed maintenance of the urban landscape and top-down visions for city public spaces. This rapid, uncontrollable change is hardly influenced by the residents or the community, their voice is not represented, and people who were uncomfortable with changes in the neighbourhood resisted the gentrification processes in their own chosen ways. The author discussed the case study of the community parade that illustrates the strategies, such as presenting local residents' views on the urban development and recognizing the community parade as a fit place to establish the importance of the role of the local residents in shaping the neighbourhood development. Organisers and participants resisted the top-down urban development visions by establishing the power of presence of local community and 'showing, who owns the city' in Šančiai neighbourhood, making sure that participation and interest in the urban development is seen.

Šančiai neighbourhood 'Chair' parade, analysed as a ritual-like event, following the method suggested by Grimes (2013), showed a twofold meaning of the event – celebratory and ceremonial, where under the layer of the celebratory, expressive and playful parade, there was a contentious stance and a declaration of an inverted social order, that showed resistance and protest against the dominant urban development actions. The parade not only demonstrated the festive neighbourhood meeting and space sharing, but also attracted groups of people interested in different urban visions and neighbourhood development, such as activists fighting against the overly harsh city greenery thinning process in the name of maintaining the city. This also shows the interest group consolidation aspect in cities that are being gentrified or redeveloped. The research also reflected on the paradox of the mellow resistance process in Šančiai – akin to the one researched by Naegler in Sternschanze, Hamburg – with the danger that all the local, grassroots resistance practices can be adopted by the same process of urban development. Thus, it would exhaust the idea of a different, artsy neighbourhood and commodify it for the vision of urban growth and redevelopment.

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Teritorijos žymėjimas kintančiame rajone: Šančių paradas „Kėdė"

MYKOLĖ LUKOŠIENĖ

Santrauka

Raktažodžiai: miesto transformacija, gentrifikacija, paradas, bendruomenė, ritualas.

Straipsnyje analizuojamas Šančių bendruomenės centro vietos kūrimo procesas gentrifikuo-jamame[2] Kauno Šančių rajone. Analizei pasirinktas 2017 m. rudenį vykęs Šančių paradas „Kėdė" kaip bendruomeninės galios miesto plėtros procese manifestacija. Šančių rajono kaitos procesai nagrinėjami iš gentrifikacijos perspektyvos, siekiant išskirti ją ženklinančius

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2   *Gentrifikacijos* (angl. *gentrification*) terminas žymi socialinę rajono kaitą, kai nugyventas arba darbininkų klasės rajonas, esantis netoli miesto centro, perkuriamas ir atnaujinamas, pritaikomas viduriniosios arba aukštesnės klasės gyventojų bei komerciniams poreikiams (Tonkiss 2005; Lees, Slayter, Wyly 2008).

požymius ir raidą. Tyrime taikoma ir antropologinė prieiga. Šančių bendruomenės veikla organizuojant renginius ir festivalius lyginama su Lauros Naegler (2012) atliktu etnografiniu tyrimu Hamburgo Šternšancės (*Sternschanze*) rajone, kur ji analizavo pasipriešinimo gentrifikacijai veiksmus. Šančių paradas buvo tiriamas kaip ritualinis įvykis, kuriamas kaip bendruomenės galios įtvirtinimas arba, pasinaudojant Ronaldo L. Grimeso (2013) siūlomu rituralo tyrimo metodu, kaip galios įtvirtinimo forma. Tyrimas atskleidė dvi ritualinio įvykio puses – šventišką ir ceremonišką, kai po šventišku, žaidybiniu ir ekspresijos kupinu renginio sluoksniu buvo išlaikoma priešybinė organizatorių pozicija ir kitokios socialinės sandaros deklaracija, atskleidusi pasipriešinimą ir protestą prieš vyraujančius miesto plėtros procesus. Paradas ne tik atskleidė šventiškas ir bendruomenę buriančias iniciatyvas, bet ir sutraukė įvairias žmonių grupes, kurias vienija kitokia nei dominuojanti miesto planavimo vizija. Jis sujungė žmones, susivienijusius prieš miesto žaliųjų zonų naikinimą ar atnaujinimą miestovaizdžio tvarkymo tikslais. Taigi paradas atskleidė ir grupių konsolidacijos mieste aspektus, atsiradusius reaguojant į gentrifikacijos ir plėtros procesus. Nagrinėjamas ramios rezistencijos procesas Šančiuose, panašiai kaip L. Naegler tirtas pasipriešinimas gentrifikuojamame Hamburgo rajone, sparčiame miesto plėtros diskurse gali būti komodifikuojamas ir pasitelkiamas kaip miesto rajoną egzotifikuojantis motyvas, kuris iš dalies taip pat prisideda prie rajono gentrifikacijos kuriant meniško, kitokio rajono viziją.

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