

Aleksander (Alejandro) Aronovich

Student ID 241251

Migration and Transnationalism - Migrating People, Migrating Culture: Optics, Methods, and Impacts

Transnational migration and the social integration of GLBT migrants into western gay capitals

I will be addressing the issue of GLBT (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender) transnational and internal migrants from rural areas or non-western countries into the GLBT communities within western “gay capitals” such as but not necessarily or limited to Berlin, San-Francisco, New-York and London. The final essay will be presented in the form of a qualitative introduction or research proposition for a wider empirical quantitative research, regarding the different motivations of GLBT people to migrate from their home communities and integrate into already existing communities in the western world, which may offer them a better quality of life as well as a sense of belonging to a community. The paper will try to cover the different obstacles of such migration as well as the reasons and causes of it, giving a historical overview of migration of GLBT people to urban centers and creating such communities, in order to understand the different social institutions and benefits which still drive people to migrate into such neighborhoods and communities.

The center topic of the research will not only be the self-identification of those people, but the reasons behind their decision to radically change their life settings in order to satisfy needs which could not be satisfied within their own home environments, such as finding a partner or being able to freely self-express their gender identity or sexual orientation without society’s heteronormative gender dichotomy. The paper will discuss and try to give answers to issues such as self-identification with the GLBT community and personal identity of the GLBT migrant as a whole, the different efforts of the receiving communities to accommodate the needs of newcomers and the social norms within the GLBT community regarding social stigma and approach to newly arrived immigrants into the communities social settings, such as community centers, bars and clubs, social gatherings et.al. The research will try to look into specific groups and organizations of ethnic or social minorities within the GLBT community in order to understand the need for the existence of such subgroups in the broader community and how they participate in communal events and help integrate people into the wider and broader GLBT environment of a gay capital.

The paper will be a literary overview of such topics, and will begin with the historical context of gay migration, the creation of the first “gayborhoods”, and will later explain issues of self-identification and sexual identity in the context of migration and try to give answers to the research topics by presenting study-cases from different gay capitals and regarding GLBT of different backgrounds, all in order to point the similarities and differences of cases which will vary in their socio-geographic and historical settings.

The key themes and ideas in the paper will focus on the understanding of the factors which cause the immigration to big cities of GLBT people within their national borders or to an international gay capital in another country, the understanding of the structure of their self-identification and the examination of cases in order to understand how the social integration of such people happens, either by the help of community institution, the national framework and social services or by norms within the GLBT community itself.

Concepts which will be used in the research will include transnational and national migration, community institutions, social institutions, sexual and gender self-identification, social integration, GLBT neighborhoods and agglomerations, social assimilation and incorporation within a minority group or community, GLBT subgroups, cultural integration, homophobia, transphobia and social stigma.

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