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Articulating urban change in Southern Europe. Gentrification, touristification and financialisation in Mouraria, Lisbon

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Abstract

The global or planetary reach of gentrification has become a mainstream in critical urban studies. And yet, the ‘travels’ of a concept originated in specific places and times have often brought about a loss of explanatory and strategic power. In this article, we argue that another concept, that of articulation developed by Laclau and Mouffe, is particularly adequate to help gentrification, touristification and financialisation to travel among places and levels of abstraction. In order to make this argument, we focus on Southern Europe, whose cities had long been considered scarcely gentrifiable and where, more recently, critical urban scholarship has made large use of gentrification, touristification and financialisation to

explain the impacts of crisis, austerity, and afterwards economic rebound driven by real estate and tourism. We explore in multi-scalar perspective the trajectory of Mouraria, a historical neighbourhood in Lisbon – and particularly the dimensions of housing and local politics. We show how Mouraria, during the last decade, shifted from being a ‘deviant’ case – capable of taking advantage of neoliberal regeneration policies in order to keep its social diversity and most of its long-term residents – toward one ‘paradigmatic’ of urbanisation-as-accumulation and contentious urban politics. We explain this shift by focusing on its multi-scalar determinants; concluding that present urban change in many Southern European cities should be understood as the articulation of various processes, which include gentrification, touristification and financialisation.

Keywords:

Articulation; urban regeneration; neoliberal urban policy; housing; public participation; social movements.

1. Introduction

In the aftermaths of the global financial crisis and deep national austerity policies – often under request of international lenders (Tulumello et al. 2020) –, Southern European cities are ongoing turbulent changes: they have become ‘battlegrounds’ (Cocola-Gant 2015) of investment, speculation and displacement. Three concepts generated in other contexts – gentrification, touristification and financialisation – have become linchpins of Southern European critical urban studies, often with scarce attentiveness to their contextual specificities (see Section 2). In this article, we question the use of these concepts, taking steps

from Thomas Maloutas' critique of the travel of concepts that are 'highly dependent on contextual causality' (2012: 34); and Sequera and Nofre's argument (2018) against the conflation of touristification and gentrification. On the one hand, we will provide further evidence of the limits of the concept of gentrification *per se* to explain current processes in Southern European cities. On the other, however, we will argue, contra Sequera and Nofre's suggestion (2018) to 'de-link' touristification and gentrification, for an epistemological approach based on the study of the articulation (cf. Laclau and Mouffe 1985) of these two concepts, plus that of financialisation. This approach, we will show, helps explaining current transformations, increasing the analytical and strategic power of the concepts of gentrification, touristification and financialisation. In doing so, we contribute more widely to the development of global urban studies (cf. Robinson 2016), by bringing fresh theoretical insights from a context, Southern Europe – and specifically Lisbon – that have long remained at the 'borderlands' of urban theorisation (Baptista 2013) and can help us further our understanding of how concepts travel and are stretched.

Our epistemological strategy is exploring a case-study in multi-scalar and longitudinal perspective. We focus on the neighbourhood of Mouraria in Lisbon, a city that has lost almost a half of its population since the 1980s, where regeneration policies have been around for some three decades, bringing mixed results and, in some neighbourhoods, displacement (e.g., Mendes 2013). Mouraria has been, since 2007, at the core of urban regeneration efforts by the municipality – themselves crucial to the municipal anti-crisis strategy. During the years in which Portugal was undergoing crisis and austerity (circa 2009-2014), Mouraria managed to take advantage of policies that elsewhere caused displacement (see Section 3). As of the end of 2019, four years into the economic recovery of Portugal, the panorama was radically changed. While austerity was said to be over, and Lisbon to be thriving thanks to tourism and

real estate (see Section 4), Mouraria was experiencing a radical restructuring of its socio-spatial fabric (see Section 5): on the one hand, processes described by critical urban scholars as gentrification, touristification or ‘tourism gentrification’; and, on the other, a transformation of local politics, with a shift from public participation toward contentious politics.

Keeping our theoretical goals in mind, we question the trajectory of change of Mouraria – focusing on the intersection between housing and local politics – looking at two periods that we characterise as the ‘crisis’ (2008-2014) and ‘post-crisis’ (2015-2019). Our methodological approach is longitudinal case study analysis: we focus on two periods close in time to foreground the factors of change – see Tulumello (2016a) on how this strategy allows to ‘control’ for the context, allowing theorisation on multi-scalar causal determinants. Following Flyvbjerg’s insights (2006) on case selection, we will show how Mouraria has changed from being a ‘deviant’ to a ‘paradigmatic’ case. Deviant cases, where outputs of processes are different from those expected, are particularly useful to problematise grand theories: Mouraria, up until 2014, was deviant because regeneration policies did not produce the same patterns of gentrification described in other neighbourhoods of Lisbon. Paradigmatic cases, instead, ‘highlight more general characteristics of the societies in question’ (Flyvbjerg 2006: 232): we will show how Mouraria has lately become paradigmatic of wider processes that are transforming cities throughout Southern Europe.

In operational terms, we take stock of, and repeat, a study carried out in Mouraria during the ‘crisis’ period (Tulumello 2016b) and based on Ley and Dobson’s systematisation (2008) of the (spatial, socio-political and policy) factors capable of halting gentrification. We adopt this strategy for three reasons. First, by repeating the same exercise for the ‘post-crisis’ period and questioning why was Mouraria suddenly not capable of resisting external pressures (see

Section 6), we focus our attention on the determinants for such a change. Second, Ley and Dobson's framework helps overcoming the long-held divide among supply and demand causes of gentrification (see Hamnett 1991); and, in so doing, opening up to questioning the conceptual reach and explanatory power of the concept in and of itself. Third, this also allows us to put into the picture the political and institutional dimensions that variegate global processes in local contexts, therefore overcoming the problem, emphasised by Maloutas (2012; 2018), of fetishising gentrification and similar processes.

Methodology

Our reconstruction of the 'crisis' period is based on a previous work based on data collected until December 2014 (Tulumello 2016b). That article used case study research – using evidences from policy document analysis, interviews with policymakers and descriptive statistical analyses (mostly from census data) – to analyse urban regeneration policies and their effects in Mouraria. We integrate Tulumello's findings with systematic literature review (see below).

We similarly reconstructed the 'post-crisis' period using case study research and triangulating mixed methods and sources of evidence, collected for ongoing projects on housing and participatory policies in Mouraria and Lisbon (see funding details):

- Descriptive analysis of statistic data to account for real estate and demographic processes. A systematic comparison with data available for the 'crisis' period was impossible. While previous studies could rely on the 2011 national census, the next one will be carried out in 2021. Though some data at the civil parish level (sub-municipal) are made available by

the National Institute for Statistics, the administrative reform approved in 2012 has included Mouraria in a wider parish (Santa Maria Maior), which includes several other neighbourhoods (e.g. Baixa, Chiado, Castelo and Alfama). The real-estate and demographic trajectories of the latter neighbourhoods are quite different from those of Mouraria, as processes described as gentrification and touristification predate those we analyse in this article – this being the main reason that made Mouraria a ‘deviant case’ as of late 2014 (Tulumello 2016b). Data about the Santa Maria Maior parish cannot therefore be used as a proxy for Mouraria. Hence, we employed statistical data (collected through other sources, including reports and grey literature) that refer to the area of pre-reform parish of Socorro, which roughly corresponds to the perimeter of Mouraria.

- Media and journalistic sources, and particularly: generalist newspapers (e.g. *Público*, *Diário de Notícias*, *Expresso*) to support the reconstruction of planning and urban development; and neighbourhood magazine *Rosa Maria* (founded in 2010 by local associations, discontinued in 2016 and then relaunched in December 2018) to deepen our understanding of the perception of the neighbourhood by local non-profit and social entrepreneur sector.
- Participant observation during mobilisations for the right to the city,¹ useful to complement the understanding of political trends and community organisation.
- Finally, we carried out a systematic literature review² on scientific texts about Mouraria published during the ‘post-crisis’ period (2015-2019). We collected 42 works, characterised by a significant internal variety.³ As 21 works use data collected during the ‘post-crisis’ period, while 21 use data collected during the ‘crisis’ period only (Table 1),

¹ With Habita – Association for the Right to Housing and to the City (www.habita.info/).

² During January 2020, we interrogated Google Scholar, Web of Science and Scopus with terms referring to the neighbourhood and its main public spaces (‘Mouraria’, ‘Intendente’, ‘Martim Moniz’); afterward tracking each text’s references and citations on Google Scholar to look for other relevant works.

³ Five languages (Portuguese, English, French, Spanish and German) and several typologies: 20 articles, 12 masters’ dissertations, 1 PhD thesis, 4 book chapters, 1 monograph and 4 conference papers

we were able to compare the two groups of works to question whether our peers had noticed the changes we describe. Beyond carrying out a qualitative thematic analysis, we performed a text analysis over the titles and keywords of the two groups: findings are represented in Figures 1 and 2, which show the network of terms co-occurring in the same text (bigger nodes are recurrent words, and darker nodes means that the word has connections with several other words).

Table 1. Works on Mouraria published between 2015 and 2019

| <i>Based on data from 'crisis' period (2008-2014)</i> | <i>Use data from 'post-crisis' period (2015-2019)</i> |
|---|---|
| Bettencourt and Castro 2015 | Almeida 2016 |
| Carmo and Estevens 2017 | Bernardo 2016 |
| Corte-Real 2015a | Cardoso TB 2017 |
| Corte-Real 2016 | Corte-Real 2015b |
| Corte-Real and Gomes 2017 | Ferreira 2016 |
| Estevens 2018 | Galhardo 2018 |
| Estevens et al. 2019 | Gomes 2020* |
| Galhardo 2015 | Hortas 2016 |
| Galhardo 2019 | Krähmer 2017 |
| Matias 2015 | Lopes 2017 |
| Mendes, Padilla, and Azevedo 2016 | Mandoux 2019 |
| Menezes 2015 | Moya 2019 |
| Menezes 2019 | Moya and Batista 2016 |
| Oliveira 2015 | Muselaers 2017 |
| Oliveira and Padilla 2017 | Oliveira 2019 |
| Padilla 2015 | Pellitero 2017 |
| Padilla and Gallardo 2015 | Ribeiro 2016 |
| Sanchez 2015 | Santos, Ramalhete, and Soares 2017 |
| Sanchez 2017 | Santos et al. 2016 |
| Silva and Maia 2017 | Santos et al. 2017 |
| Xavier and Almeida 2017 | Viana 2017 |

* Included in the review because published ahead of print on 10 January 2019.

FIGURES 1 AND 2 ABOUT HERE

Figure 1: Text analysis over titles and keywords of works on Mouraria based on data from ‘crisis’ period, 2008-2014 (our elaboration).

Figure 2. Text analysis over titles and keywords of works on Mouraria that use also data from the ‘post-crisis’ period, 2015-2019 (our elaboration).

2. From travelling concepts to articulation

Gentrification is a ‘travelling concept’ (Maloutas 2018). Originally developed to explain influx of gentries and displacement of working classes in late 20th century British and North-American cities, gentrification has been, in the new century, used in critical accounts of urban change worldwide. Some argue it is an inter-contextual, global or planetary, concept (e.g. Atkinson and Bridge 2005; Lees et al. 2016).

While its global nature was becoming mainstream in critical urban studies, Maloutas argued that gentrification is a typical example of mid-range concepts, which are ‘highly dependent on contextual causality. [...] Looking for gentrification in increasingly varied contexts displaces emphasis from causal mechanisms and processes to similarities in outcomes across contexts and leads to a loss of analytical rigour’ (2012: 34). Contextual problems can be overcome, Maloutas added (2018), only by adopting minimalistic definitions – e.g. the compresence of capital investment, inflow of wealthier groups and expulsion of lower classes (see Clark 2005) –, therefore glossing over the social, spatial and policy characters that shaped gentrification in cities like London, Chicago or New York. This brings the risk of falling into the ‘theoretical banality’ (Maloutas 2018: 255) of concluding that, in capitalist societies, wealthier groups have more power to decide where they want to

live. This conclusion, beyond lacking explanatory power, has scarce strategic use, as it erases those contextual characters that have slowed down, or even halted, gentrification in several places, including Southern European cities (Maloutas 2018).

Southern Europe is an interesting case to further this discussion: its cities, where gentrification was once considered to be marginal or absent (e.g. Malheiros et al. 2013; Tulumello 2016b), have become central to critical literature on gentrification in the aftermath of the economic crisis and during the following economic rebound (e.g. Sequera and Janoschka 2015; Annunziata and Lees 2016; Alexandri, 2018). Concurrently, once at the ‘borderlands’ of urban theory (Baptista 2013; Tulumello 2016b), Southern Europe has become a context of theoretical development. Observing that tourism-induced change (above all, the flipping of residential into short-term rental units) often had a bigger role than the substitution of lower for higher classes, some Southern European scholars have stretched the concept, suggesting that tourism is a new ‘battleground’ (Cocola-Gant 2016) or stage for ‘symbolic violence’ (Mansilla, 2018) of gentrification. In his research in Lisbon, Mendes (2017) adopted, and extended, the concept of ‘tourism gentrification’ coined by Kevin Fox Gotham in New Orleans (2005). Mendes defined tourism gentrification as:

the transformation of working-class and historical neighbourhoods of the urban centre into places for consumption and tourism, by way of expansion of the functions of amusement, leisure and touristic rental (including, e.g., holiday and short-term rentals), which progressively replace the traditional functions of residential housing, long-term rental and proximity retail, thus worsening [processes of] displacement and residential segregation, emptying neighbourhood of their original populations or making it impossible to low-income groups accessing housing in those areas (2017: 491; our translation).

Mendes further widened gentrification by stripping Clark's definition of the inflow of wealthier groups. This simplification has gone hand in hand with the conflation with yet another concept, financialisation (see Mendes and Jara 2018), already applied in 'semi-peripheral' Southern European contexts (Rodrigues et al. 2016) and imported into urban studies during the last decade or so (see Aalbers 2019a for a review). Defined as the use of real estate as asset through various financial instruments, financialisation is a more abstract concept than gentrification. Scholars like Loretta Lees and colleagues (2008) or Aalbers (2019b) have attempted at uniting gentrification and financialisation, by arguing that the latter explains the investment dimension in so-called fourth and fifth waves,⁴ which deepened and expanded gentrification through new instruments (e.g. platform economy).

These conceptual gestures have contributed to show how local processes are increasingly embedded in global (financial) flows: Maloutas himself and his colleagues have recently suggested that short-term rental platforms may be making gentrifiable the once ungentrifiable Athens (Balampanidis et al. 2019: 14-15). And yet, conflating concepts with such different nature (some context-bound, some more abstract) reproduces the problems previously highlighted by Maloutas. Once stripped of the gentry, as in touristification and urban change driven by financialisation, what is left of gentrification? This problem was explicitly, if paradoxically, acknowledged in recent studies from Lisbon that described a 'gentrification without gentry' (Krähmer 2017; Krähmer and Santangelo 2018). And yet, what is the point

⁴ Hackworth and Smith (2001) discussed three historical 'waves' of gentrification in Anglophone countries, characterised by changing patterns and modes – from sporadic gentrification, to its anchoring, and then its return, with increasing role of large-scale capital and state policies. The fourth wave, theorised by Lees and her colleagues (2008), is characterised by a deepening of financialisation and pro-gentrification policies. Finally, in the fifth wave finance has become the central actor, replacing the state in the process (Aalbers 2019b: 2).

of using gentrification in absence of gentry, when the concepts of investment (for tourism, speculation or whatnot) and displacement are at hand?

Sequera and Nofre (2018) contributed to this debate by theoretically criticising the incorporation of touristification within the gentrification framework. Gentrification and touristification entail different processes: different groups are displaced (working classes vs. cross-class displacement), demographic trends are quite opposite (replacement vs. depopulation); the property structure is different (homeownership vs. real estate investment); and the actors involved in the two businesses often have conflictual interests (e.g. early ‘gentrifiers’ often become anti-touristification activists). Sequera and Nofre therefore advocated ‘de-linking’ touristification and gentrification. Thus they did in a follow-up article (Sequera and Nofre 2019) based on research made in historical Alfama neighbourhood in Lisbon: there, touristification – accelerated by short-term rental since 2016/2017 – interrupted pre-existing processes of marginal gentrification and studentification. Different are the results of Lopez-Gay and his colleagues’ study (2020) on Barcelona made from the perspective of international mobility. There, ‘floating’ European and North-American populations have created territorial enclaves in the touristified centre of Barcelona, showing that touristification and – specific forms of – gentrification can coexist in (Southern European) historical centres.

Notwithstanding the empirical specificities that partially explain these different conclusions – Lisbon and Barcelona are in very different stages of the processes here described –, these studies provide us with important, complementary conceptual reminders: Sequera and Nofre (2018; 2019) are convincing in their critique of the conceptual unification of gentrification and touristification; while Lopez-Gay and colleagues (2020), by showing a

case of coexistence, warn us that we cannot ultimately de-link them. How to get out of this (apparent) paradox?

Since the problem is with levels of abstraction and conceptual travel (see above), Stuart Hall's discussion (1986: 7) of modes of conceptualisation in Gramscian Marxism can help us. Hall reminded us that 'concepts can operate at very different levels of abstraction', but that levels of abstraction should not be 'misread' for one another. As we have seen, concepts like gentrification and touristification – born as quite concrete ones – have been forced to take higher level of abstraction to fit to a variety of different contexts. In the process they have been extremely simplified; and, when used at the local level, their (now higher) level of abstraction has often been misread, making them ultimately less analytically (and strategically) powerful. The challenge is to make these concepts travel without giving up their concreteness. Our proposal is to use them through the lenses of articulation, as it was developed in Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory (1985). Articulation is 'any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified' (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 105). Developed to explain the construction of (discursive) forms of hegemony, articulation allows to take 'a middle position between structure and agency' (De Cleen and Stavrakakis 2017, 305), thus helping mediating between multi-scalar determinants of change like transnational capital flows and local politics.

We argue that articulation is particularly adequate to connect local dynamics of change with mid-range concepts like gentrification and touristification, and the relations between the latter and an intermediate concept like financialisation. In what follows, we will provide empirical substance to this claim by focusing on the case of Mouraria, its multi-scalar links with Southern European phenomena, and these latter context's wider transformations.

3. Regeneration and local development: when Mouraria was a ‘deviant’ case

Mouraria is a historical neighbourhood in central Lisbon, characterised by significant social diversity. Its spatial fabric, typical of Arabic urbanism, is a maze of narrow alleys on the slopes of two hills, with generous public spaces (Almirante Reis avenue and Martim Moniz square) located on its western fringe. The neighbourhood has long been a frontier-land, in-between the touristic neighbourhoods of Baixa and Castelo, and the residential Anjos and Graça. Mouraria was one of those neighbourhoods that abound in Southern European centres, where migrant populations could find a ‘backdoor to the city’ (Malheiros 2010); decades of institutional disinvestment have gone hand in hand with discourses about ‘decay’; and, recently, regeneration discourses and policies abounded.

In 2008, the socialist municipal government made Mouraria the flagship of its regeneration strategy, mobilising a number of programmes (Tulumello 2016b: Table A2). Requirements for refurbishment were simplified, municipally-owned dwellings were sold to boost private real estate and construction investment. The strategy for local development was shaped around three pillars: public space refurbishment; stimulus to entrepreneurship and tourism; and improvement of services for vulnerable populations. While the economic crisis hit Portugal (in 2009) and the country requested a financial bailout (in 2011), negotiating deep austerity measures, the regeneration agenda became, together with the attraction of tourism and international investment, the central feature of local anti-crisis policies (Seixas et al. 2016), further increasing the symbolic importance of Mouraria for the municipal government. According to several authors (e.g. Corte-Real 2015; Tulumello 2016b; Carmo and Estevens 2017), the regeneration strategy was typical of neoliberal policymaking: disproportionate investment on entrepreneurship and tourism when compared to social

cohesion policies; absence of public housing policies; focus on concepts like capacity building, activation, partnership, participation and empowerment – on neoliberal co-optation of the participation agenda, see Miraftab (2004) and Falanga (2018); and branding of cultural activities (especially Fado music).

And yet, while regeneration policies were fostering gentrification and touristification in other neighbourhoods in central Lisbon (Mendes 2013; Nofre 2013), Mouraria walked a different path. Up until late 2014, real estate prices were not growing, or were growing slower than in other parts of central Lisbon (Tulumello 2016b: 129-132); and the influx of young households with relatively low economic and relatively high cultural capital was not causing displacement – rather, new and old residents were creating networks crucial for local development (Malheiros et al. 2013; Tulumello 2016b). Indeed, studies about the ‘crisis’ period (see Figure 1) are dominated by discussions about Mouraria’s ‘super-diversity’, heritage and culture, and their role in urban change and development (e.g. Bettencourt and Castro 2015; Galhardo 2015, 2019; Menezes 2015; Oliveira 2015; Padilla 2015; Padilla and Gallardo 2015; Mendes, Padilla, and Azevedo 2016; Oliveira and Padilla 2017).

Mouraria was interpreted as a space of negotiation and conflict between, on the one hand, an institutional action driven by neoliberal ideas, and, on the other, a ‘dense’ social fabric capable of organising on the grounds of its own socio-cultural diversity (Tulumello 2016b; see also Carmo and Esteves 2017): the latter, Tulumello argued (2016b), was being able to take advantage of the contradictions and ambiguities of neoliberal urban policies to undergo a path of local development. However, the question remained open ‘whether current trends [would] consolidate in local development, increased diversity, and social cohesion – or turn toward advanced stages of gentrification’ (2016b: 132).

Granted, signals existed of the ambiguity of ongoing processes, as exemplified by an episode in 2012, when the president of the republic visited the regeneration works in Mouraria. Activists from cultural alternative centre da Barbuda denounced that local drug dealers cooperated with the presidential security detail to maintain order; and afterwards threatened the activists, who had organised a protest (Largo da Severa N8 2012). The end of the activities of the collective – described by politicians and tourist guides as ‘a bunch of anarchists’ (Ropio 2012) – and the eviction, in May 2012, of another squat (Casa de S. Lázaro), together with the clearance of graffiti and other ‘signs of dissent’, somehow anticipated the future path of the neighbourhood. While leaving the place, the collectives wrote a premonitory letter, arguing that ‘the people that are now expelling us [the drug dealers and long-term residents more generally] are likely to be those that will be expelled in turn by the process of “city cleansing”’ (Largo da Severa N8, 2012). But things would only accelerate once processes starting in different places abruptly changed the context, in Portugal and Lisbon – and to those processes we shall now turn.

4. ‘Post-austerity’ in Portugal and Lisbon?

2015 was a year of sea changes for Portugal. Despite the conclusion of the bailout and the return to economic growth, the social impacts of austerity had eroded the support to the centre-right government. November 2015 elections brought to power an unprecedented coalition made up of the centre-left Socialist Party, and left-wing Communist Party and Left Block, in support of a socialist government. The new majority’s discourse was straightforward: it was time to turn the page of austerity. Some of the measures approved during previous years, including cuts to wages of public employees, tax increases and cuts to

allowances, have been reverted (Fernandes et al. 2018); and the minimum-wage was repeatedly increased. Amid a favourable external environment, economic growth was driven by exportations, especially tourism, and then by the stimulus to domestic consumption due to the easing of austerity measures (Teles 2018). This also proved positive for national finances, with deficit plummeting. Soon, progressive commentators found in Portugal the proof that an ‘alternative to austerity’ existed (Jones 2017; Alderman 2018), while a global hype was building around Lisbon, now described as the ‘coolest capital in Europe’ (Dunlop 2017).

There are, however, reasons to be sceptical of this narrative: housing is an excellent entry point to expose the ambiguous nature of the ‘post-austerity’ age. During the crisis, the national government approved, under request of international lenders, a number of measures to liberalise housing and real estate: a reform of spatial planning (Law 31/2014 and Decree-Law 80/2015) made real estate operations easier (Tulumello et al. 2020: 77; see EC 2012: 78); a reform of the urban lease regime (Law 31/2012) eased the termination of rental contracts (Cardoso 2019: 85; see EC 2011: 87-88); and an extraordinary regime for refurbishment operations (Decree-Law 53/2014) allowed for exceptions from building regulations (see EC 2011: 88). Additionally, a Golden Visa scheme (Law 29/2012) was approved to grant access to the Schengen area when investing in real estate.⁵ As tourism boomed in Portugal – international arrivals increased 150% between 2009 and 2018⁶ – and in Lisbon, disruptive effects on the real estate market are evident for instance in the boom of

⁵ Though the scheme concedes authorisation of residence for other forms of investment, including capital investment for job creation, 94% of authorisations (7,735 out of 8,207) were conceded to investors in real estate as of 2019 (Agência Lusa 2020).

⁶ World Bank data (see <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/ST.INT.ARVL>).

short-term rentals.⁷ The hype surrounding Lisbon brought in town other groups with purchasing power higher than local residents': European pensioners attracted by Portugal's good weather and fiscal incentives, international students (see JLL and Uniplaces 2019), and 'digital nomads' and startupper – a field in which the municipality has invested heavily.⁸ Investments eased by the reforms and growing international demand have pushed real estate prices to the sky, with double digits yearly growths almost everywhere in the city. As a result, more and more groups are being displaced away from central areas, prompting local critical researchers to use the concepts of gentrification, touristification and financialisation (see Section 2).

This scenario forced housing into the core of the political agenda. As the national government acknowledged the need of policy intervention in 2017, a newly appointed Secretary of State for Housing has worked on a number of measures to stimulate long-term affordable rentals (included in the New Generation of Public Housing).⁹ However, the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State repeatedly claimed that they had no intention to revert the liberalisation of the housing market, and, indeed, none of the measures approved during the austerity years has been abolished or substantially reformed (Tulumello, 2019a). Some mitigation measures have been undertaken: an act providing temporary suspension of evictions of long-term tenants in vulnerable conditions (poor elderly or disabled people; Law 30/2018) and a provision allowing municipalities to put caps on short-term rentals (Law 62/2018; see Section 6 on its weak implementation in Lisbon).

⁷ In Lisbon, 630 short-term rentals had been registered before the approval, in August 2014, of the new legal regime (Decree-Law 128/2014), which liberalised the market by equalising short-term rental to residential use. From that date to the end of 2019, 18,447 more units have been registered, a 30-fold increase. Data Turismo de Portugal, available at <https://registos.turismodeportugal.pt/HomePage.aspx>.

⁸ See www.startuplisboa.com/.

⁹ See www.portaldahabitacao.pt/pt/portal/habitacao/npg.html.

In short, the field of housing gives us good reasons to be sceptical of the trumpeted ‘end’ of austerity. This is confirmed by commentators from quite different backgrounds – in left-wing magazines (Príncipe 2018; Teles 2018) and political science journals alike (Fernandes et al. 2018) – who have argued that not much had changed also in fields such health, education, university, public transport, with investment stagnating or further plummeting. Real estate and tourism have contributed to fostering that very economic growth that allowed the government to revert some austerity measures while keeping a strict monetarism – achieving a *superavit* in 2019 national budget. In this sense, the unwillingness to revert previous liberalisation measures may be due to the fear of killing the ‘goose that laid the golden egg’.

Austerity may have been eased,¹⁰ but this happened at the same time as austerity was becoming even more entrenched into the institutional fabric (Tulumello 2019b). This has been quite clear to social movements for the right to housing, which have been growing in intensity and conflictuality at an unprecedented pace during the years of the ‘post-crisis’ (Di Giovanni 2019; Falanga et al. 2019; Tulumello 2019b; Accornero and Pinto 2020) – and, as we will see below, this is mirrored in political transformations in Mouraria.

5. MourAirBnb: Mouraria becomes ‘paradigmatic’

Rosa Maria understood that things were about to change in 2015. While, until then, the local magazine was following regeneration policies with optimism, emphasising how local associations had been capable of protecting vulnerable actors (see Tulumello 2016b: 129),

¹⁰ We use ‘may’ because the question remains open as to whether skyrocketing housing prices may have counterbalanced the benefits of the fall of unemployment and slight increases of wages.

articles started to raise concerns about gentrification and speculation (Lino 2015; Moura 2015). In what follows, we trace the changes in the field of real estate and housing; and then discuss political dynamics (with focus on the engagement in participatory policies and contentious politics), a crucial dimension of the local capacity to resist gentrification during the ‘crisis’ period (cf. Tulumello 2016b).

Real estate and housing dynamics

Rosa Maria’s concerns were confirmed as the neighbourhood became the target for high-end real estate operations (Pellitero 2017: 3; Quaternaire Portugal 2017: 140-143). Among these, AMouraria, advertised as ‘the only gated community with a huge garden, pool and parking in the historic centre of Lisbon’ (apud Alemão 2017), and characterised by problematic issues, above all the authorisation given to build over an area appointed by planning instruments to be a green public space (Alemão 2017).

Even more than by large operations, the built environment has been reshaped by tourism – which has become a central topic in works about Mouraria during the ‘post-crisis’ period (Figure 2; see especially Krähmer 2017; Lopes 2017; Muselaers 2017; Mandoux 2019) – and particularly short-term rental (Figure 3). Quaternaire Portugal (2017: 144) found that in the area surrounding Olarias street short-term rental units were a few in 2013 and about 60 (or, about 10% of the total stock) as of 2017.¹¹ As of August 2019, we found 454 active rentals in AirBnb and Home Away (386 of which entire homes), and 65 listings on Uniplaces, a

¹¹ Part of this growth may be due to regularisations following the creation of the legal regime of short-term rentals in 2014.

platform for student housing,¹² cumulatively more than 20% of the total stock.¹³ In the same day we performed that search, we were able to find 10 apartments available for rent.¹⁴ Though these data do not provide conclusive evidence on the causal role of short-term on the shrinking of long-term rental – but see Cocola-Gant and Gago (2019a) on this causal nexus in close neighbourhood Alfama –, they are indicative of the status of the real estate market. That intense speculative processes were ongoing is made clear by the fact that 470 apartment transactions were registered between the second quarter of 2018 and the first of 2019,¹⁵ meaning that roughly 20% of the housing stock changed hands in just few months. Unsurprisingly, prices have skyrocketed: while as of late 2014 housing prices were significantly lower than in Lisbon,¹⁶ in the last quarter of 2019 the square meter was sold for a median value of 3,646 euros, that is, 14% more than the municipal average.¹⁷

FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE

Figure 3. Hotels (red) and short-term rental facilities (black) registered in the centre of Lisbon and Mouraria in 2018 (adapted from CML 2018: map 10).

These transformations were deeply felt by local residents, in a social fabric characterised by groups with mid to low economic capital: elderlies, low-income households and

¹² Socorro old parish area. Data: Market Minder by AirDna (available at www.airdna.co/); Uniplaces search engine (www.uniplaces.com/).

¹³ In Socorro parish, there were 2,091 flats in 2011 (data national census, available at www.ine.pt). Due to renewals and refurbishments, numbers are likely to be slightly higher at the present day.

¹⁴ We searched available listings on the major websites for housing rental (Imovirtual, Casa Sapo, Idealista and Remax), removing duplicates.

¹⁵ Data National Statistical Institute (see <https://geohab.ine.pt/>).

¹⁶ Rents in Mouraria costed about 83% of the municipal average, while the average expenditure for mortgage payment was about 70% of the municipal average (our elaboration from Tulumello 2016b: Table 2).

¹⁷ Data National Statistical Institute (see <https://geohab.ine.pt/>) referent to 94 sales – and not available before 2018.

immigrants, but also younger newcomers (Tulumello 2016b: Table 1). Though statistical data about evictions and rental contracts not renovated are not produced at the local scale,¹⁸ an ethnographic account has pictured displacement in Mouraria (Muselaers 2017: 41), suggesting that especially younger residents are being forced to leave the neighbourhood, while some elderly households have been protected by specific provisions. Indeed, we know that this is not the case for young households only, as Habita – Association for the Right to Housing, which organises households at risk of displacement, has seen since 2017 an exponential growth of requests for help, including many elderly households from Mouraria.

Although for a complete picture of demographic processes we will have to wait until the 2021 census, real estate trends seem to be implying that the regeneration of the neighbourhood is not bringing about the long-desired repopulation of Mouraria. The best quantitative picture available is provided by the swift acceleration, since 2015, of the long-term loss of registered voters in the old Socorro parish area (Quatenaire Portugal 2017: 67). For a qualitative perspective, we can mention a local activist who noted that many flats have been bought by foreign individuals, who took advantage of the fiscal incentives of the Non-permanent Resident Scheme, but often do not even reside in the neighbourhood for the six months a year they are supposed to: ‘we wanted to rehabilitate to not have an empty neighbourhood and now that we rehabilitate we have an empty neighbourhood all the same’ (interviewed in Krähmer 2017: 54; see also Lança and Paula 2019).

¹⁸ National level data show a steep growth of evictions in 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017, and a decrease in 2018 (Neto 2019).

Local politics, from participatory to contentious politics

Since 2007, Lisbon has been building an ‘incomplete system’ of participation by invitation (Allegretti and Spada 2016).¹⁹ Mouraria – one of Lisbon’s 67 Priority Intervention Areas – has been particularly active in two programmes: the participatory budgeting (PB) and the BIP-ZIP programme.²⁰

In the two periods we are considering, Mouraria’s engagement adapted to the changing context and evolution of the city’s approach. As previously discussed (Section 3), during the years of ‘crisis’ the local community maintained an intense level of participation to the transformations of their neighbourhood. This allowed a neighbourhood hardly representing 0.5% of municipal population to conquer 22.8% of the resources distributed by the PB and 2.3% of the funds provided by BIP-ZIP from 2011 to 2014.²¹ Many proposals, in the ‘crisis’ period, were for ‘hard’ investments (a kindergarten, refurbishment of public spaces and buildings, refurbishment of markets, an escalator), but the winners were often immaterial proposals, aimed at valuing welfare and social cohesion, promoting cultural identity and multiculturalism, or innovation centres for improving access to health and employment, and capacity-building for local organisations. At that time, strategies like street meetings before the voting of PB helped to concentrate local voting on few priorities. Several works in our review agree that the capacity of local actors to organise and attract participatory funds was

¹⁹ The first EU capital to launch a municipal participatory budgeting (PB) with co-decisional nature, Lisbon affected the Portuguese panorama of PBs. With the transition of António Costa from mayor of Lisbon to Prime Minister, Portugal has been among the first countries to experiment PB at national level.

²⁰ The latter – implemented yearly since 2011 – funds with up to 50,000 euros local partnerships between parish governments, informal groups and other stakeholders, to regenerate and improve the quality of life in 67 ‘critical areas’ (see www.bipzip.cm-lisboa.pt). See Falanga (2019) for an overview.

²¹ Our elaboration of municipal data (see www.bipzip.cm-lisboa.pt; www.lisboaparticipa.pt) and Falanga (2019).

crucial for local development during the ‘crisis’ period (Padilla 2015; Tulumello 2016b; Oliveira and Padilla 2017; Silva and Maia 2017; Xavier and Almeida 2017).²²

Institutional changes since 2013 – reduced resources, rules for funding smaller projects in the PB (Allegretti and Antunes 2014; Allegretti, Dias and Antunes 2016), changes in the rules of BIP-ZIP²³ – pushed Mouraria’s inhabitants and actors to change their attitudes, and their expansive contribution to participatory processes left room to a phase of small-scale adjustments. The number of proposals plummeted – 43 were submitted to the two programs until 2014, a dozen from 2015 to 2018 – and started changing, with the domination of green spaces and gardens, fairs, cultural events and street cleaning. In time, the capacity of mobilising locals for conquering funds was reduced, possibly an effect of the displacement of inhabitants and more generally a signal of shrinking social cohesion. At this point, the pocket-money distributed by participatory processes was just a drop in the sea of hard investments on the area, and could cover, at most, small complementary actions for improving the quality of daily routine and the aesthetics of heavily refurbished spaces.²⁴ This possibly explains why, starting in 2014, several organisations based in Mouraria disseminated their presence as partners in 14 BIP-ZIP proposals for other areas, searching for alliances that could look beyond the physical limits of their neighbourhood.

While participatory programmes were becoming less central to local development, increasing city-wide conflictuality in the field of housing reverberated in Mouraria. The most relevant episode was the success of the mobilisation launched during the summer of 2017 in

²² Corte-Real (2015a; 2016) claims that local residents were not involved in the participatory processes, but then admits that ‘new residents’ were involved, a dichotomy that glosses over the importance of new inhabitants in the local development Mouraria experienced during the ‘crisis’ period (see Section 3).

²³ For example, only entities rooted in the neighbourhood could submit bids originally, while lately the programme has been opened to external actors (Ribeiro 2016).

²⁴ In 2018, the three projects presented to the BIP-ZIP programme concerned immaterial investments (youth capacitation, waste management and composting).

defence of 16 households at risk of eviction because their landlord had sold the dwelling, located in Lagares street, to a company that intended to flip it into luxury or short-term rentals.²⁵ The households – and particularly the women – having received a letter informing that their contracts would not be renovated, decided to organise with the support of Habita and other groups and individuals. Taking advantage of the ongoing campaign for the municipal elections, which was building up around housing issues, the mobilisation pressured the municipality to either force the landlords to come to a deal or rehouse the families inside the neighbourhood. A first protest, organised during the festivities of the patron of Lisbon, was participated by a couple hundred persons, with a mix of long-term residents, new residents and activists from groups like Habita or Stop Despejos. Eventually, the municipality stepped in and negotiated with the landlord the renovation of the contract for five years in exchange for expediting the decision on another development (Pincha 2017). Granted, the output was only a temporary halt to the eviction, and in many other cases – which we knew because of our participation in the activities of Habita – residents did not have the possibility or will to organise similar mobilisations. However, this process is worth mentioning for two reasons. First, because it saw the political empowerment of the women that led the struggle (on the gendered dimensions of housing politics in Lisbon, see Hernandez 2018). And, second, considering a multi-scalar perspective, this episode was part and parcel of the building up of wider social movements for the right to housing (see Section 4), for instance in the participation of the women of Lagares street to the Caravan for the Right to Housing, which travelled Portugal in September 2017 to create networks of solidarity among struggles (Falanga et al. 2019).

²⁵ See a short movie by Left Hand Rotation, at <https://vimeo.com/228956761>.

Another relevant case is that of Martim Moniz square, which has been during the last couple of decades repeatedly transformed by the municipality in partnership with private developers (Gomes 2020). The latest project, for a large leisure and retail development, was announced without going through the consultation mechanisms usually in place for transformations of public spaces, generating a wave of protests in early 2019. A coalition of local and non-local actors advocated the construction of a garden to contribute to the well-being of neighbouring areas and the municipal sustainability strategy; and was successful in putting a halt to the project, which is now being reconsidered by the municipality.²⁶

In short, though limited and characterised by relatively fragile networks between residents and activists, these episodes testify the opening of the local social fabric to a more contentious approach to politics and to a wider scale of struggle, city-wide and indeed national.

6. Explaining the change: discussion

We have seen how ‘deviant’ Mouraria suddenly became unable to participate in, and even take advantage of, the neoliberal regeneration policies favoured by the local government – moving to building up resistance to increasing forces of displacement; and that the reasons for this shift are multifactorial and located in processes at several levels – from changing municipal participatory policies, all the way to European pressures for reform under austerity. Consequently, we can now question the factors of change, by repeating the exercise previously carried out to explain why local development in the ‘crisis’ period was not producing displacement (Tulumello 2016b), using the three categories of factors capable of

²⁶ See www.jardimartimoniz.pt.

halting gentrification (spatial, socio-political, policy) systematised by Ley and Dobson (2008).

First, let us consider spatial characteristics and the supply of property that may appeal investors. With Mouraria being located in a perfect location for property development next to many amenities, a limit to gentrification was guaranteed by its Arabic spatial fabric, which reduces room for high-end housing and facilities like parking or green areas. This has changed, in part, as big developments like AMouraria are restructuring the built environment and the municipality has been refurbishing public spaces with the goal of dematerialising the spatial disadvantages of the neighbourhood (see DN/Lusa 2018). Maybe more importantly, tourism has made the spatial disadvantage a competitive advantage: tourists are happy to experience living in a ‘typical’ neighbourhood with narrow and steep streets; and the small apartments of Mouraria are perfect for short-term rental.

Second, Ley and Dobson (2008) consider the social composition and capacity for mobilisation. While in the ‘crisis’ period Mouraria’s diversity and associative fabric had been decisive for a type of social mobilisation capable of taking advantage of existing policies, especially participatory ones; the same actors have found it harder to organise once external capital has become the first driver of urban change. At the same time, the ‘super-diversity’ of the neighbourhood (Padilla and Gallardo 2015; Tulumello 2016b; Oliveira and Padilla 2017) is part and parcel of the recent, if yet far from consolidated, emergence of contentious politics – for instance, the collaboration of Portuguese and Nepalese women with foreign students and Portuguese activists in Lagares street. This topic deserves further exploration, as one could speculate that the recent growth in, and new forms of, mobilisation may be influenced by the influx, in central urban areas, of educated and politicised youths, including from countries, like Germany, Italy and France, with longer tradition of social conflict in the

field of housing – an argument recently, if preliminarily, advanced for Lisbon more generally (Cocola-Gant and Gago 2019b, 23; Accornero and Pinto 2020).²⁷ Though it is early to take definitive conclusions – and in need of specific empirical research –, hints exist of the transformation of the political arena toward growing awareness, among residents, of the insufficiency of institutional participation in the face of global transformations such as the ones that are impacting Mouraria.

Finally, Ley and Dobson consider the role of policy responses to gentrification. It was already obvious, during the ‘crisis’ period, that the absence of robust housing policies was the single most relevant factor that suggested a risk of displacement (Tulumello 2016b). As national policies approved under austerity impacted Mouraria, this became even more evident. The municipality, beyond punctual interventions like in the case of Lagares street, has reacted in 2018, assigning 100 apartments to long-term residents in historical neighbourhoods, and putting some limitations to new licensing of short-term rentals (see CML 2018). ‘Too little, too late’, one is tempted to comment as, for instance, the short-term rental market was probably already saturated in Mouraria. Problematic is also the disconnection between housing and participatory policies,²⁸ the latter having been crucial in shaping social transformations, and more generally the scarce resources allocated to social cohesion in face of the waterfall of investments in real estate and refurbishment.

²⁷ Evidence exists of the low involvement of Portuguese in social movements (Accornero 2016). After the mobilisations in the post-revolutionary years (see Santos 2014), organised movements in the field of housing have virtually not existed. Habita, born as a collective around 2005, was the first group explicitly organising around this issue (Di Giovanni 2017). Some scholars are arguing that some of the reasons are to be found in the aging and declining population of central urban areas, and then in the influx of individuals with political and social resources for mobilisation, phenomena observed earlier in cities like Barcelona (Cocola-Gant and Gago 2019b: 23; Accornero and Pinto 2020).

²⁸ Local actors are aware of this, a survey on the BIP-ZIP programme showed (Ribeiro 2016: 145).

7. Conclusions: from (touristic) gentrification to articulating urban change

The *conclusion* of the trajectory of Mouraria is quite familiar: it is the story of urban regeneration policies that, once successful, showed being designed to favour accumulation over local development. And yet, this does not explain the *process*: that there was a phase of local development; and how things changed. We sought to provide explanations by focusing on two distinct, yet close, periods in time – the years of ‘crisis’ (2008-2014) and ‘post-crisis’ (2015-2019) – and linking multi-scalar explanations and phenomena, from neighbourhood politics to national policy changes, and global tourism and speculation flows. The multi-scalar analysis of ‘deviant’ Mouraria become ‘paradigmatic’ offers a number of takeaways to a discussion of urban change.

With urban regeneration discourses and policies becoming one of the hallmarks of the Southern European version of capitalism as instruments of attraction of capital flows, and facing the evidence that its cities are becoming increasingly shaped by global flows (cf. Balampanidis et al. 2019), we intended to reflect on the capacity of concepts like gentrification, touristification and financialisation to explain present trends. In Mouraria, local residents are being replaced only partially by gentries, and above all by temporary users, tourists and the use of real estate as financialised asset – and this prompted critical scholars to use the concepts of ‘tourism gentrification’ (Mendes 2017) and ‘gentrification without gentry’ (Krähmer 2017; Krähmer and Santangelo 2018). Our strategy to contribute to this discussion was that of considering the factors that once halted gentrification in Mouraria and then were suddenly not capable of doing it. If we were expecting that the change had been caused by transformations of the local (spatial, socio-political or policy) factors, we would had been surprised: not much changed locally; instead, powerful exogenous factors pushed

change. During the last decade, Mouraria was capable of halting – even countering, to some extent – *gentrification alone*; and, despite some successful, punctual resistances, was dramatically reshaped when gentrification accumulated with touristification and financial speculation. This story allows us to provide two types of takeaways – respectively with analytical and strategic nature – for research on urban change in Southern Europe and, more broadly, global urban studies.

In analytical terms, the case of Mouraria gives empirical substance to Sequera and Nofre's argument (2018) about the incapacity of gentrification to encompass tourism-driven change. At the same time, however, contra their conclusive argument – and in line with Lopez-Gay and his colleagues' conclusions (2020) –, our case also suggests that gentrification and touristification (and financialisation) cannot be de-linked and analysed as independent variables of urban change. We have therefore resorted to articulation as the lens to frame these processes. In Mouraria, because of significant local resistances, displacement happened once gentrification articulated with touristification and financialisation, in the process losing one of its core characters, the presence of a 'gentry' replacing former residents. To come back to Maloutas' definitional insights (2012; 2018), articulation does not strip these concepts of their contextual characters, warning that some of them will be lost, and replaced by other characters, when they travel. At the same time, this also allows to not reduce gentrification to hyper-simplistic definitions in the process. In other words, we have shown that the high level of abstraction of the concept of articulation allows mid-range concepts like gentrification and touristification, and an intermediate concept like financialisation to have analytical power in contexts different from those where they originated.

Not only do these considerations constitute epistemological instruments crucial to fostering truly global urban studies; but they also help preventing the fetishization (Maloutas

2018) of gentrification. The capacity of articulation to lie in between structure and agency – and therefore to explore the different ways in which these latter interact and conflict at the local level – opens up to the strategic thinking that is crucial to critical urban studies. Coming back to Mouraria’s local politics, we have seen how, although social and cultural ‘density’ (see Tulumello 2016b) can provide local fabrics with the instruments to take advantage of some regeneration policies, our case exemplifies the existence of tipping points beyond which local organisation is not enough – confirming that the structural problem is the way mainstream regeneration policies are biased toward making a commodity of urban space. This brings to two types of considerations – respectively with a more institutional and a more contentious dimension – for the strategic agenda of critical urban studies. First, in line with Maloutas’ suggestion (2012:34) to focus on causal mechanisms, by focusing on those local aspects that have long made life tougher to real estate speculation in central urban areas (e.g., low levels of spatial segregation, diversity of social fabrics and urban planning policies traditionally based on regulation) and how they recently changed, critical urban studies can provide concrete instruments to local policy actors interested in challenging gentrification and touristification.

Second, while historical uneven development patterns, halted by the economic crisis, have been relaunched by austerity (see Hadjimichalis 2011), burgeoning evidences of gentrification, touristification and financialisation show that Southern Europe is moving, from a region at the ‘borderlands’ of urban theory (Baptista 2013; Tulumello 2016b), toward becoming a paradigmatic space of experimentation of new forms of urbanisation-as-accumulation – and, at the same time, of the emergence of new politics and struggles for the right to the city. If, because of the increasingly central role of the circuit of urbanisation for global capitalism, the capacity of the ‘local’ in self-determining its own development path is

increasingly being limited by actors and dynamics at different scales, we have observed that, once again, this can only happen on the ground through specific articulations, which are inevitably characterised by contradictions and fragilities. At the same time, this exercise also warns us of the importance of building international networks and scaling up, both for producing relevant knowledge and for supporting political struggles in cities throughout the world.

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