House and Mobility: Portuguese Hindus and Brazilians in Lisbon in face of housing constraints

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1. Introduction

1   This article is an outcome of a dialog between two anthropologists on reflections about vulnerability and housing, in two different sets of migration process that took place in the Portuguese capital, Lisbon[1]. These two migration contexts, namely Portuguese Hindu[2] and Brazilian populations, were approached through ethnographic insights that in our perspective allows to relate housing vulnerability and forms of resistance to housing vulnerability in both contexts. Both researches were conducted for a long period. Simone accompanied ethnographically the Brazilian population of a part of Lisbon, and Rita followed the transnational mobility of Portuguese Hindu families that were living in Lisbon outskirts. Data provided in this paper comes precisely from informal interviews, recorded life stories, and other ethnographic data as going along with our interlocutors. We both published about these populations, but this time we decided we should look at them together, for they demonstrate two interesting ways of dealing with housing vulnerability. The aim of this joint reflection is then to explore how housing strategies and experiences were constituted along the mobility processes of both communities, and what were the constraint experiences that could qualify these two experiences that have been emerging, namely, vulnerability and resistance in the diverse context of housing policies.

2   While discussing about the experiences of the strategies of dwelling, and the possible political movements around it, we perceived two very different process of "settling". On the one hand, both communities had to face constraints regarding the constitution

of a place (in a multidimensional way) in the country they arrived, and housing was one main vulnerability implied on this course. In contexts where mobility is a central mechanism, processes of dwelling involve housing as a material and emotional making of a home. On the other hand, the ways of facing such constraints were different, especially regarding their expectations in the migratory process; while one community directed their necessities as demands to State, asking for housing policies, the other relied mostly on networks of contacts within the community in order to adjust the ways of living, as we will demonstrate along the paper.

3   The comparison between these two different ways of experiencing housing led us to suggest that the different outcomes are due to two determinants. First, many aspects that structure migratory mobility – such as the construction of an imaginary of settling, the expectations around the country of arrival, or the previous conditions and arrangements of the migrants before arriving – outline the forms in which migrants act upon the way of pursuing a home, the level of social engagement within the groups and the interaction with State institutions. Second, temporality is a central key to understand these processes, and it needs to be seen by both tracking the path each migrant group built to arrive in Portugal and considering the changes through the time of stay in the country of arrival. In other words, the differences between them regard the temporality of the migratory trajectories, the possibility of accessing and getting to know housing policies and the settlement strategies that are connected with the migratory project.

4   It is also important to observe that such findings, generated through the confrontation of both ethnographic examples, were made more visible particularly through to our long-term ethnographic approach (e.g. Colson *et al*. 1976; Taggart, Sandstrom 2011). If our ethnographic fieldworks were short in time, we probably wouldn't notice changes on the experiences of settling, neither new forms of agency in the neighbourhood, including public forms of resistance. Since we had the chance to do so, by bringing these long-term threads together and confronting them, relations with State politics, the length and changes on migratory projects and the quality of these different types of vulnerability, we could envisage such interesting insights.

5   Therefore, this article proposes to write about these particular findings we obtained by comparing two ethnographic instances, hoping to show how tackling housing vulnerability is constituted along the own experience of mobility. In the first part of the article, we will give a brief overview on the approaches of housing and migration in the literature in urban anthropology. This will be followed by the description of the two ethnographic contexts, the Portuguese Hindu and Brazilian migrants. Finally, we conclude with brief suggestions for the further reflections.

2. Ways of dwelling within migratory processes

6   In contexts of transnational mobility, making home is a continuous process of settling, in places marked by economic and social constraints for migrants, and in face of possible disruptions and difficulties they face regarding temporary contracts, migration projects that can eventually break, insecurities, demotivation and challenges. Housing, therefore, is a permanent ongoing process, that can be seen as the primary search for an ontological security, in both material and emotional dimensions. Registration of feelings, expectations to make home a continuation of the previous

home in the place of origin, or the possible reconstruction meanings of home have taken an important place in the field of migration studies.

7   However, another important part of migration studies associated with housing is linked to the housing access that different migrant populations experience in their host societies. Often, this mobility happens not only on the national level but also through change between cities, to densified urban contexts, cities that are economically advantageous for populations that seek for better life conditions. In this sense, we find important references that give us good clues to debate housing access by migrant populations.

8   One of the most important variables has been inequality of access to goods and services in the host society by migrant populations. The difficulty of understanding the rules to access health, school, housing services is one of the main conditions of inequality when migrants try to get access to basic rights (Herzfeld 1992; Laguerre 1994), and someway housing has been the most difficult right to get (Torgerson 1987).

9   Arrivals to big cities and access to housing has not been the greatest centre of attention by migration scholars. Nevertheless, housing is an inescapable variable in the process of migrants settling in a new urban context. Classically, one of the most cited works in Anthropology, «Kalela Dance» by Clyde Mitchell (1956) refers to the long housing lists that migrants had to wait for. Also, with the influence of the Chicago School, other ethnographers gave attention to housing, sometimes as a specific focus to understand migrants living conditions in cities that were growing exponentially. This is the case of Foote-Whyte (1943) and of Herbert Gans (1962, 1968) who, while working about Italian populations, dedicate themselves to understand housing conditions and housing access, especially Gans. Ulf Hannerz in his «Soulside» (1969) had to understand housing conditions of the black ghetto. Later, Anthony Leeds about Rio de Janeiro's favelas (1978). So, in many ways, housing and migrations have been linked and awakened the attention of scholars, for the differentiated level of getting the housing right, and what that means considering the access and right to the city (Lefebvre 1968; Wacquant 2000).

3. The case of Hindus in Lisbon

10   To approach the first population under scope in this dialogue we are sharing about ways of dealing with housing vulnerability, a little of context is mandatory to understand the field. Studies about South Asian migrations were until recently concentrated in the United Kingdom for obvious reasons. Millions of south Asian families went to the United Kingdom, especially after the independencies of British colonies. Since the mid-1960s a group of British cities are dwelt by high percentages of South Asian populations, from different origins (either Indian regions or African countries) and from a variety of religious traditions. Hindus make an important part of this plural population, namely the Hindus from Gujarati origin, with a long history of migrations to East African countries (Pearson 2001). Focusing only on the families that have links with Mozambique and with Portugal, considering the population at stake in this paper, most of the families that migrated to the United Kingdom concentrate in London (Wembley and Southall), Leicester, and more recently, Reading (Cachado 2014). One of the most studied cities is Leicester that, in the beginning of the 2000s had more than 80 associations managed by the Gujarati population (temples, social support centres, and other associations) (Andrews 1995: 77). As in other British cities, Leicester

went through heavy racist waves, but the city came to be considered a good example of multicultural coexistence (Singh 1992). Considering the housing right, it is noteworthy that the city grew with the arrival of south Asian families, who tend to live in new centralities, new neighbourhoods with services, markets, and cultural specific offers. After migrating to England, many Hindu families dealt with bad housing conditions – high costs for proper heating, overcrowding (a whole household living in the same room) – but also dealt with effective social services, that guaranteed access to social housing in a short period of time. Hence, the first periods of migration to the United Kingdom is represented as difficult, but the symbolic capital hold by the UK for Gujarati populations helps surpassing difficulties (Bastos 2005), and offers a set of living conditions such as work, housing, education and community services.

11　The presence of families with south Asian origins in Portugal has its own story. The population I concentrated on are the Portuguese Hindu Gujaratis that migrated from India to Mozambique and from there to Portugal. Part of this settled population in Portugal also migrated a fourth time, or remigrated (Dias 2009), to the United Kingdom. The majority of the population arrived in Portugal in the early 1980s. An important part of this populations had weak economic conditions at the time of their arrival. Many families built their own house in spontaneous neighbourhoods, shanties where previously white Portuguese families from rural areas settled in the 1960s. With the arrival of migrants from the former Portuguese colonies, these neighbourhoods in the fringes of Lisbon became densified.

12　For many years I worked among this populations (not in a classical way living with them, but visiting them often, twice or three times a week between 2000 and 2008 and monthly after that until 2013) in the specific neighbourhood of Quinta da Vitória. Presently, a part of the population is living in social housing, both nearby and far from the neighbourhood. Not all the families were included in the rehousing plan, so they had to find other housing solutions. This process deserves detail to understand housing vulnerability. A census was made to this neighbourhood in the early 1990s, because then, the Portuguese state developed a social housing policy, the Special Rehousing Program (PER) to rehouse populations that were living in shanty towns and withhold them from a certain social isolation. Since then, the population residing there waited for the moment of being rehoused in a social housing neighbourhood, preferably not far. The neighbourhood was then inhabited by 50% of Hindu families (most of them with Portuguese nationality, but with strong roots in Mozambique and in India, Gujarat), 25% of white Portuguese of rural origin, and another 25% of populations from diverse African countries that were Portuguese colonies until their independences in the mid-1970s (Cape Verde, Angola, San Tomé and Guinea). The neighbourhood was distinguished among other shanties for its Hindu population, for having an informal temple, the Jai Ambe Mandir that was built in 1983 and demolished during the rehousing process in 2004, and for its multiple religious' activities throughout the year. The Hindu inhabitants were characterized for their high intra-ethnic solidarity – women organized themselves to take care of children while other women were working, mostly in cleaning jobs; the temple functioned also as an aggregator of sociability; the neighbourhood was punctuated by Hindu elements, such as door signalling that it was a Hindu house; public rituals in the streets; ultimately, a strong Hindu ambiance, in a way that a foreigner would think that most of the neighbourhood was inhabited by *Indian*[3] families.

13   The rehousing process was never total and did not came early. In the year 2000, from a total of 450 households, about 60 were rehoused and, in 2002, one hundred more. Since then, there were no bigger rehousing operations. In sum, half of the households went through (i) particular rehousing processes (one house at a time, every time a dwelling in a social housing neighbourhood became empty); (ii) recompense for those who did not accept to be rehoused far away from their daily lives; (iii) particular familiar solutions, from living with relatives in Greater Lisbon, to renting a house, and remigration, mostly to the UK where, as told before, the Gujarati population presence is strong. In 2006, when a group of municipalities decided to demolish the houses in shanty towns despite the absence of social alternatives for the families, the population reacted, with the help of a Right to Housing association that was then in formation. After some months of tension, the authorities gave up demolishing and the neighbourhood continued until 2013.

14   Trying to answer the question our paper brings, Hindus from Quinta da Vitória, initially, after arriving in Lisbon in the early 1980s, saw themselves in a housing situation they weren't expecting from the former colonizer country, and they were forced to build their houses in that spontaneous neighbourhood. Without funds to invest in private houses, many families informally rent or bought a piece of land in Quinta da Vitória to build their houses. About a decade later, a hope arises – the Portuguese state launches the PER program to «end up with the stalls» as it is written in the law text (DL 63/93, May 7). The rehousing process, as told before, was slow and unsystematic.

15   The state, through social workers, told the families that they had the right to be rehoused if they were living in the shanties in the year of the law, 1993. So, when in 2006 there was the information about the demolitions, these families already had acquired two things: the habit of waiting, and the embodiment of their right to be rehoused. If, when they arrived, they had to adapt to the socioeconomic reality, including the need to build their houses in a shanty town without light, water and basic infrastructures until the end of the 1990s, the promise of the State, based on the need to offer housing conditions and, therefore, to improve living conditions of thousands of families, a promise that was never fully accomplished, this population found itself in the need to resist the demolishing process in 2006, precisely because the right of housing was repeated so often in the years before that.

16   There is an interesting phrasing in English that refers to the fact that people are kept awaiting, *sine die*, for the implementation of a certain policy, which is being in a "twilight zone". In this case, it refers to the embodiment of a status, a status of waiting for a new social dwelling because these families were told they would be rehoused. In the years that Hindu families of Quinta da Vitória neighbourhood kept waiting for rehousing, mainly after the first rehousing processes (2000 and 2002), it was rare to see them painting their houses, considering that before they would paint them once a year. The house arrangements became also rare, which was strange, considering that most of the men were precisely working in construction. The neighbourhood, looking as an Indian village until the early 2000s, slightly became a degraded area, where beyond the lack of services, we could see demolished areas, but often not removed, causing the presence of rodent and cockroach plagues, along with the domestic offal that became a danger to children that insisted playing in the streets.

17   This "twilight zone", for Quinta da Vitória dwellers, made them active citizens, fighting for the housing right. This situation happened by way of a social housing policy that was not effective, but that, in its delay, gave sufficient time to their recipients to claim the right that was once offered. In a way, the PER program contributed ironically to their notion of citizenship, within a program that pretended to improve living conditions.

4. The case of Brazilians in Lisbon

18   Brazilian transnational migration started during the 1980s, but it intensified from the end of the 1990s onwards, initially the United States and Japan. After the rise of immigration restrictions in the USA, a massive flow started to go to Europe (Assis 1999). From the many destination countries, Portugal and United Kingdom were at the top of the list (Frangella 2013). In Portugal many different waves have come since then. Middle-class skilled migrants came in late 1980s and early 1990s to fill jobs in an expanding Portuguese consumer society (Torresan 2004). Soon after that, from the beginning of 2000s, there was a substantial wave of labour migrants (Machado 2010, Frangella 2014); such wave lasted a long time, and it is still in an ongoing movement in the present time, although in a less intense pace.

19   Either because they considered Portugal a door to Europe, or because it was an apparently comfortable destination, as we apparently share the same language and there are many relative ties, the country became one of the main places of arrival from Brazil. Many of the migrants saw Portugal as a way of passage, but a large amount remained in the country and throughout Lisbon. Finally, adding to these dynamics other flows have been arriving since 2013, with very different profiles, as reaction of both changes in economic and political context in Brazil and economical changes in Portugal[4].

20   Studies on Brazilian migration in Europe and Portugal have analysed housing from the perspective of the affective, practical, social arrangements made by Brazilians around the place they live; that is, special attention is being given to the networks that enable them to find a place to stay at arrival, the conflicts that occur within these places, the conditions of living and the imaginary constructed around the house as re-enactment of a Brazilian house (Torresan 2004; Machado, Rosales 2011). Other aspects, such as family and friendship connections, regional differences, and illegal situations are described as dynamic components fundamental in the making of houses in migration contexts (Frangella 2014, Machado 2010, Assis 1999). These works rarely talk about housing as something expected to be available or to be demanded as a social right. They reflect this particular feature of the Brazilian migration movement, where, unlike health and education systems, housing is not seen as a right to be requested as a migrant.

21   The migrants I followed in my research belonged to this flow of labour migrants. Although I was particularly interested on people coming from the state of Goiás the way they constructed their mobility paths, I became soon interested on Brazilians from many regions and the way they lived in the city. They were spread in many different neighbourhoods of Lisbon and Greater Lisbon, and not necessarily in peripheral areas. They did not have specific areas for living, although they had some points of reference of the Brazilian presence, as it was the case of Arroios, in central Lisbon (Frangella

2013). They usually arrive with debts over the plane tickets, very few references where to stay, and the access to job varied according to the period of arrival (initially jobs were guaranteed by employers that needed workforce, with time jobs became less easy to get).

22   In this context, finding a place to live was part of the concerns that constituted their routes. At the beginning of this flow migrants had, upon arrival, safe arrangements of jobs and places to stay. Employers brought them from the airport and provided precarious but assured lodgings, together with other workers. In 2003, an agreement between Brazilian and Portuguese government, known as Lula Agreement, allowed the regularization of a substantial flow of migrants. But with time, the difficulties to enter the country increased, and they had to rely on family and friends' arrangements, or reaching some pensions owned by Brazilians. Both situations meant to be temporary, but lasted a substantial larger period than expected. After this harsh period, the alternative was sharing flats or houses with a bit more space.

23   This first housing experience is an important experience, as it marks the beginning of the adaptation to the new country, being also a test of proximity and trust. To follow the common rules of the houses, to learn how to live "agglomerated", to keep up with the shared payments, all this is narrated as a huge challenge. Sometimes, houses are constituted by people of the same city; in others they are usually all Brazilians. The house serves as a place of preservation of "Brazilian" socio-cultural and the promotion of a "national sociability", besides being a place of transmission of a cultural capital on the destination country (Dias 2010, Frangella 2014).

24   These housing arrangements imply, on the one hand, mutual help practices and vicinity relations that in this transnational circuit are permeable, as the mutual help connections widen beyond the initial network (relatives, friends or colleagues). But these ways of living also involved lack of trust among housemates, threats of deportation by colleagues, facing bad conditions of the houses (Frangella 2014, Martins Junior 2014). The arrangements of their lives corresponded to consequent precarity. Eventually, with time of stay and better economic condition, Brazilian migrants tend in general to look for places with a restricted amount of people, preferably just within the close family. However, for most of them it is almost impossible not to share flats, due to the high prices of rent and the necessity to save money.

25   The strategies of housing for Brazilian labour migrants mean most of the times renting flats. Which can be in some areas of the Greater Lisbon or in central areas of the city, and this intrigued me. The facility to live in the centre at that time (between 2011 and 2013) was possible because those areas were deprived by any State or private housing investment, such as Arroios. Many flats were in bad structural conditions, but were cheap and central, next to services and work. In other words, urban precarity allowed to find a good equation between less expensive and central housing. In other cases, people resided in better flats and newer areas, such as Odivelas, but complained about not being central. Some of the migrants eventually opened their own business and also invested in mortgages to buy houses. However, most of Brazilian migrants still maintained a precarious way of life, being many times incapable of send remittances to the homeland and sustaining life in Lisbon.

26   In trying to perceive the mobility of Brazilian in the city and the possibility of housing choices they had, I wondered which could be the other possibilities. I took in account the fact that these migrants, as much as some other immigrants in Portugal arriving in

the same period (2000 on), faced no housing policies offered to them. Therefore, unlike the Hindus contemplated in his article, Brazilians didn't engage in the struggle for housing organized by social movements. At that time, the PER closed their registration long time before the Brazilians arrived. However, Brazilian migrants have also not engaged in informal settlement or occupations, like other migrant populations in the city.

27 Despite wanting to make a place for themselves in the country of destination, the idea of most of Brazilian migrants was to make a house in Brazil. This was how they initially addressed home. There were the ones that decided to stay in Portugal and make their home. But during my ethnographic work I haven't seen anyone who tried to address housing policies or the right to a house. There were some that bought their own house through mortgage, but most of them continued to rent houses. I realised the main hypotheses is that housing is part of the structural vulnerabilities in economic and social asymmetries, but not necessarily seen as correspondent to a housing policy. Housing policies in Brazil are scarce and bad, and they reflect the huge distrust people have of the State.

28 In this perspective, I sustain that the strategies Brazilian migrants found out to access dwelling are not based on the possibilities of housing as a right. Although they are aware they can rely on health and education public systems (and in the UK on other benefits), housing is still something they didn't envisage as a right to request. And housing vulnerability is one of the evident signs of the thin balance of the transnational movement. In terms of scale, it is a delicate entanglement between the construction of geographical and social path – the migration path – and the uncertain sensations of home.

5. Final considerations

29 This article presents a reflection on two different experiences of housing with migrants in Lisbon, observed in a long-term ethnographic approach, trying to answer two questions that intrigued us: how an experience of vulnerability in housing happens and how do people react to that? Rather than focusing on the forms of integration through housing, or on the ways migrants find their creative ways of answer to the situation of housing deprivation or unsafeness, we decided to look at the ways these paths of arrival and unfolding situations that evolved stressed their vulnerability, their forms of resistance and above all, their relation with the city, marked by a common vulnerability of the migrants of the big cities, related to the incorporation of the culture of poverty.

30 Confronting these two cases was a way of qualifying, in their difference, what we are calling here vulnerability. It is about people who, in their mobility, are put in a continuous situation of social and economic precarity. This is what Hindus and Brazilian migrants who were subjects of the respective researches have in common. However, what they have as a difference is what put them historically and socially in a dynamic interaction with the city. The history and form of mobility, the moments of their arrival and their possibility – or not – of interacting with the State, the expectation of a house as a central right; all these aspects, have been experienced differently. Access to housing in Lisbon (as in other big cities) depends on historical expectations one made about the country of arrival, on the possibilities of dialoguing

with/demanding from state institutions, on how do they handle the "waiting time", and what is the place of housing as a right in the imaginary of the migrant group always nurture by the historical and political conditions of their own countries, and by the state promises received upon arrival and for prolonged times, as stated before.

31   However, even the differences between these two contexts do not imply that their common vulnerable condition disappears. Among the Hindus, the fight for re-housing, at the same time that it created some political agency in the group, did not lead them to a straightforward process. Time kept in waiting and the eventual failure in re-housing all of them was part of a strong fight for a right still not very consolidated in the city. Likewise, if initial arrangements of temporary flats with an agglomeration of co-nationals – supposed to be just an initial resource for saving money – become the main possibility of housing of Brazilians in vulnerable economic position also reinforce the difficulty to access the city.

32   So, why searching for the differences then? Regarding the relation between the city and the migrants, differences can reveal that, despite the ongoing forms of urban inequality and barriers in the access to goods and services, the right to the city is reinforced through the movements of occupying spaces and reinventing places (Agier 2015), from the margins. Housing policies enacted by the state had an important role in shaping different expectations. As a response to it, by reading the different ways of entering, living and making a house is the possibility how different migrant groups establish their place from their own dialog with the city.

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NOTES

2. Portuguese Hindus is a label for a South Asian transnational population that, in general terms, migrated from Gujarat (Northwest India) to East African former colonial countries, including Mozambique, and from there to Portugal in the early 1980s. It would be wrong to name this population "South Asian" because there are other South Asian populations in Portugal (Bangladeshis, Nepalis, Pakistanis, and Indians, with different migration contexts).

3. "Indians" ("Indianos" in Portuguese), was the name that both Hindu Portuguese and other populations in the neighbourhood used to refer to these families.

4. In the last four years, since 2015, different waves of Brazilian have come to Lisbon, following the political and economic crisis in Brazil and certain agreements between Portugal and Brazil that favour some types of mobilities. We are talking about retired people who benefit for exempt of taxes when living in Portugal; entrepreneurs that found new markets in the country; new flow of students wanting to escape from the critical situations in the university and invest in their curriculum; and the beneficiary of the Gold Visa, which is granted for people who invest more than 5000.000 euros in Portugal. Even being diverse, these populations can be considered population with good quality of life in Brazil. All these groups are now being under various researches, although these ones are very recent.

ABSTRACTS

This paper explores analytically the relation between experiences of vulnerability, regarding housing processes for people in different kinds of mobility in urban settings. Drawing reflections from two ethnographic contexts in which we have been working, the Hindu-Gujarati and the Brazilian populations in Lisbon, we reflect upon the contours of their experiences, recounting their migration process, and different ways of being under housing vulnerability, as well as their responses to excluding urban politics. The lack of places to inhabit, drives people to different housing solutions, and to a constant mobility, through migration and remigration. These conditions are experienced differently according to the temporality of the mobility paths and projects, and to the type of relation/confrontation with housing policies. Hence, the aim is to understand: what are the strategies of settling within a dynamic of constant mobility? How vulnerability is expressed and qualified in these different settings?

L'articolo esplora analiticamente la relazione tra esperienze di vulnerabilità abitativa vissute da persone soggette a differenti forme di mobilità in contesti urbani. A partire da riflessioni formulate in due contesti etnografici – la popolazione indù-gujarati e quella brasiliana a Lisbona – il saggio propone una riflessione sui contorni delle esperienze di queste comunità, raccontando i processi migratori e le diverse forme di vulnerabilità abitativa subite, così come le risposte messe in atto di fronte a politiche urbane escludenti. La mancanza di spazi in cui abitare porta infatti le persone, da un lato, ad adottare diverse soluzioni abitative e, dall'altro, a una costante mobilità, vissuta attraverso migrazioni e migrazioni di ritorno. Queste condizioni vengono esperite in forma eterogenea a seconda della temporalità dei percorsi e dei progetti migratori e della relazione con le politiche abitative. L'obiettivo dunque è quello di rispondere alle seguenti domande: quali sono le strategie di radicamento territoriale all'interno di una dinamica di costante mobilità? Come viene espressa e qualificata la vulnerabilità in questi differenti contesti?

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