Repositório ISCTE-IUL

Lisbon, the Portuguese Erasmus city? Mis-match between representation in urban policies and international student experiences

ABSTRACT

This article looks at the mis-match between official discursive representations aimed at promoting Lisbon, the Portuguese capital city, as an international student hub and international students' experiences. At a theoretical level, our work builds on the idea that re-branding a city's image in terms of creativity, innovation and new technologies with a view to attract international students can foster less positive urban changes linked to gentrification, pushing overseas students away rather than attracting greater numbers. Discussion includes consideration of the success of policies at municipal level that have aimed to use international students as a means to re-brand the city as a centre for creativity and innovation; part of the wider strategy of putting Lisbon on the map as a global learning destination. Analysis includes assessment of publicity materials advertising the city's appeal to international students, juxtaposed with findings from interviews conducted with incoming students at the city's universities during 2020. This material illustrates some of the most prominent contradictions, and arguably, a number of shortcomings, in the city's imagological strategy, particularly in regard to concerns with Lisbon's housing market.

Introduction

Research on international students has explored various aspects of their geographical circulation, largely focusing on accounts of their own mobility and the contribution being made to personal and professional development (see, e.g., Murphy-Lejeune, 2002; King and Raghuram, 2013). Other long-standing concerns include the use of international students to create and sustain a culture of internationalization at certain universities (Altbach and Teichler, 2001; Brooks and Waters, 2011), as well as their engagement with civil society and local economies in cosmopolitan neighbourhoods (Mitchell, 2012; Malet-Calvo, 2018). Within the European Union, the contribution of platforms such as the Erasmus programme in its various iterations to strengthening social and political ties between citizens of different member states has also been extensively discussed (see, e.g., Feyen and Krzaklewska, 2013; Cairns, 2017). Building on this extensive groundwork, in this article we aim to look at student mobility from a different perspective, focusing on how policies aimed at attracting international students are used to re-cast the image of a city, focusing on the Portuguese context. In this sense, we view the development of student mobility in the capital city of Lisbon as a means of putting the municipality on the map of global learning destinations, also noting that the policies pursued have followed a neoliberal approach to urban development in place since the 2008 financial crisis. One aim has been to capitalize on Lisbon's real estate through expanded tourism, lifestyle migration and international student mobility, the latter being our focus in this text.

In what follows, we explore the contrasting ways a host city promotes its image, seeking to profit from the popularity of platforms such as Erasmus, the potential for free movement within the European Union and incoming students' desire to enjoy a cosmopolitan learning experience. Therefore, while prior literature has documented how a peripatetic tertiary educated

cohort have sought to enhance their educational profiles, and how universities and host communities have sought to profit from expanded levels of circulation, we will argue that alongside these processes, international student mobility can be linked to urban changes, and in particular, to the idea of re-branding a city's image in terms of creativity, innovation and new technologies.

In regard to research context, Lisbon is as a relevant case study as its recent experience draws attention to how place representations can be mobilized to favour consumption among groups such as international students, as well as serving to generate profit for private interests through a reimaging of urban space. In more theoretical terms, and building on city-branding and creative class literature, we argue that to put Lisbon on the map of global destinations, municipal policies targeting tourists, lifestyle migrants and international students have promoted an idealized image of Lisbon that hides reality. Furthermore, our paper engages with the growing debate on the place of international student mobility in urban economies, considering the integration of a study culture in the city-branding strategy (Inshc and Sun, 2013), and the use of imaginative geographies to shape students' decisions about where to study (Beech, 2014). We argue that re-branding a city's image in terms of creativity, innovation and new technologies to promote the attraction over international students, as future members of the 'creative class', can foster less positive urban changes linked to gentrification, which negatively affects the local population, hampers the city's unique appeal and, conversely, pushes the 'creative class' away, while making the urban landscape increasingly homogeneous. Following a qualitative approach, evidence draws on discursive analysis of policies used to promote the Lisbon municipality as an international learning destination, effectively re-branding the city as an innovation hub. As a necessary counterpoint, interviews with international students were conducted, looking at incoming students' own

perspectives including issues arising at ground level that threaten the viability of the strategy, most prominently, a strong critique of their housing conditions.

City-branding and the creative class

Urban processes need to be analysed taking into account space in order to achieve an appropriate understand of the phenomenon (Harvey, 2006). Hence, to perceive how Lisbon became a trendy European capital, it is important to look at some of the initiatives performed by the main social actors – policymakers, academics, business people – involved in fostering its new image and selling it worldwide. In connection with this idea, studies on city-branding and the marketization of cities point out the power of symbolic representation in places and the capacity to renew images of destination in a post-industrial scenario (Kavaratzis, 2004; Balakrishnan, 2009). In the context of globalization, cities start to compete with each other to attract foreign visitors, 'creative classes' (Florida, 2002) and financial assets, as means of boosting their relevance in the global market of cities. From the perspective of marketing theories, city-branding aims at generating expectations through communication strategies and promotional activities (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2009), attracting these new populations and investors which presumably, from a neoliberal rationality, led to improvement of local and national economy (Hernandez-Garcia, 2013).

Other authors have noted that cities are historically-grounded living entities, with a socio-cultural complexity that means they cannot be treated as just another commodity in the marketplace (Muratovski, 2012; Boland, 2013). In this sense, branding and marketing has been regarded as superficial, producing promotional attributes for places disconnected from the complexity of urban realities, but transforming local culture, architecture and even economic crises and social inequalities into stereotypical images for consumption in the global market of cities

(Dinardi, 2017; Vanolo, 2015). Therefore, placemaking processes such as the branding of cities not only opens the way to neoliberal urban planning (highly dependent on tourism and real estate development, and leading to gentrification) but fuels social inequalities and asymmetrical political processes (Sihlongonyane, 2015; Bonakdar and Audirac, 2020).

The idea of using strategic forms of migration in urban development has other theoretical precedents, influential in many different contexts. Based on the idea of a knowledge economy, the work of Richard Florida (2002) has argued that cities and regions should develop policies that attract the so-called 'creative class' to foster economic success. As well as being international, the members of this class are imagined as young professionals, working and studying mostly in IT, architecture, media, gastronomy, the arts and design; people who value urban culture and look for a balance between leisure and personal development opportunities. Moreover, they are looking for 'creative cities' stimulating, tolerant and 'bohemian' locations, that provide immediate acceptance of new incomers and original lifestyles (Florida, 2002; Houston at al., 2008). These 'creatives' hence look for cities they see as appealing in this manner (Renggli and Riaño, 2017), while city councils anticipate attracting 'creatives' who in the future, they imagine, will boost the local economy through success in areas such as design, software development and high tech industry.

In the EU context, Florida's 'creative cities' resemble idealized versions of Favell's (2008) 'Eurocities.' Affluent European hubs offering exciting, free and cosmopolitan lifestyles. The ideal sought-after destination by the 'Eurostars;' the young educated and ambitious Western Europeans who circulate within regional cultural, political and economic hubs looking for better career opportunities, freedom and self-development. Eurostars take advantage of legal and social opportunities linked to the ease of moving, to settle in attractive Eurocities, looking for an idyllic multicultural urban lifestyle, boosting their networks and 'escalating' their professional paths. In

a similar vein, work on the British middle class in Paris argues that the cultural agency of the world cities play a key role 'in attracting and retaining this group of cultural/lifestyle migrants' (Scott, 2006: 1121). The success of 'creative cities' and the dynamic potential of a creative class are now however being questioned. According to Peck (2005), rather than stimulate new creativity, Florida's model may lead to the commodification of cities' existing artistic and cultural artefacts, promoting them as competitive assets, recognized only in terms of their crude economic value. This approach hence fosters a competitive logic in which cities are always looking for the next big 'creative' trait to explore, or exploit, in order to attract more private investment and greater numbers of 'creatives.' This competitive dynamic may help explain why a neoliberal rhetoric of entrepreneurship has its limitations in urban development (Kratkë, 2010; Martin-Brelot et al., 2010), and can actually become harmful for certain cities and communities due to the alienating potential of 'creativity' driven gentrification processes (Slater, 2006; Colomb, 2016).[1]

Traditionally, international students have not been recognized as members of the 'creative class'. However, we argue that not only do they tick many boxes - as 'cosmopolitan', 'urban consumers' and 'bohemians' etc. - the 'city-branding' discursive practices targeting this cohort are potential booster of urban changes linked to gentrification, which may however negatively affect local populations, undermining the city's unique appeal and, conversely, pushing the 'creative class', including international students themselves, away. In this sense, we can advance Morell's (2018) discussion on the commodifying of urban space by looking at how policies aimed at attracting international students through making a city a 'creative destination' fosters urban homogenization, reducing diversity and impoverishing local sociocultural manifestations over time. Hence, we are able to contribute to debate on processes of gentrification, exclusion and diversity loss in the context of neoliberal urban planning (Slater, 2006; Lees, 2008).

Cosmopolitanism, the 'creative class' and urban development in Lisbon

The idea of Lisbon as a young, cosmopolitan and dynamic city has been under construction since the 2008 economic crisis, driven by the city council together with service industries, although as noted in a previous article, antecedents can be traced back to the previous decade and the time of Expo98 (Malet-Calvo and Ramos, 2018). However, in response to the 2008 crisis, deliberate investments started to be made by the city council in the form of incentive programmes for tourist-linked and real-estate activities with a view to promoting Lisbon's image, which had been severely tarnished by the crisis, not to mention seeking to address the damage endured by the local economy at this time.

This image-centred approach is consistent with Harvey's (1989b, 270) view that political and economic crises tend to stimulate the 'exploration of product differentiation,' which can include embedding urban environments with symbolic capital, as we noted above regarding the role of city-branding in times of crisis. The strategy can be seen as having some success in reaching its objectives, and a city that has emerged from the crisis as a popular destination for tourists, lifestyle migrants and, as we shall argue in this article, international students.

Apparent success comes at the cost of boosting gentrification and touristifcation, forcing displacement of lifelong lower-income residents (Sequera and Nofre, 2019). Taking advantage of this neoliberal momentum, the next step for the city has been to consolidate Lisbon's new image and push towards reinvigorating its dynamic skilled labour market and financial sector, promoting the idea of the city as a centre for a knowledge and creativity, driven by entrepreneurship, start-ups, technology companies, and now, student mobility. In the aftermath of the 2008 economic crisis, the affordable property prices in the historical centre boosted Lisbon's place in the

international residential property investment market (Montezuma and McGarrigle, 2019). In this context, the city has also profited from national policies in aimed at heightening its appeal to the "creative class", investors and other lifestyle migrant cohorts. In 2009, to compensate for the country's low wages, and to recruit skilled foreigner workers with key competences in specific areas, Portugal launched a generous 20 per cent "expat" tax break, the Non-Habitual Resident (NHR) regime (Rauhut and Laine, 2020). Two years later, in 2012, aiming at attracting people from non-EU countries, Portugal granted special residence in exchange for an investment in the host country. There are, however, some notable negative consequences of this shift, especially for the local population in relation to housing within established neighbourhoods, a subject that has now started to attract considerable consternation within the city (see, e.g., Cócola-Gant et al., 2020).

The presence of these two new wealthy cohorts in the city's urban landscape contributed to deepening the housing market crises. According to the Deutch Bank (2019) World Prices report, in 2018, comparing the average effort rates in the property rental market in 18 European capitals, Lisbon occupies the first position (51%), ahead of Paris (47%) and London (41%). Despite this obvious concern, Lisbon and many other cities like Barcelona, Berlin and Baltimore have nevertheless tried to follow the magic recipe of Richard Florida. In regard to initiatives started by Lisbon City Council to attract high-tech activities and events within its municipality (Oliveira et al., 2015), in 2011, the council created an Economy and Innovation Department. It was aimed at organizing and internationally promoting an urban network of business incubators and start-ups, through the joint efforts of other local partners, universities and technical institutes (Helm, 2016). In the technology and start-up context, in 2015, Lisbon City Council was able to attract the Web Summit to the city, and in 2018, guaranteed that Lisbon will continue to host it for further 10 years

(CML, 2018). Its positioning in Lisbon defines the city as a hub-destination for those interested in tech-industries, and in making contacts to start their own businesses and start-ups, enhancing its reputation as a modern and technological city. The summit has also become a source of local pride and an icon of place identity for Lisbon, consumed by locals and visitors, contributing to a discourse of modernity linked to a taste for technologically-engaged urban places.

In Portugal, the Department the Economy and Innovation has also sought to position international students as important actors in Lisbon's urban development strategy, along with other mobile population cohorts. For example, in 2013, the department implemented and developed a project entitled 'Lisbon Erasmus City', which looked towards 'the attraction and retention not only of international students, but also of researchers, aiming to affirm Lisbon as a centre of knowledge and research excellence' (CML, 2013). In this context, many initiatives were carried out, among them the creation of a 'Study in Lisbon' platform, launched in 2014 by the city council, involving universities, student associations, start-up incubators and partners in the tourism sector.

A prominent example of this process in the private sector is Uniplaces, a start-up based in Lisbon that works as an on-line marketplace for booking student accommodation à la AirBnB. Founded in 2012 in the Portuguese capital by three former international students who had met in London, Uniplaces provides a means for students to directly book their accommodation in Lisbon with property owners. Its success is predicated upon meeting a gap in the student housing marketplace: in 2017, Uniplaces had on offer around 5,300 rooms in a city where public universities only provide places for 1,800 students. Addressing an obvious shortfall has clearly been pivotal in the success of the start-up. However, considering its consistency with municipal policy aims it is not surprising that the city council sees Uniplaces as an example of Lisbon's innovative, challenging and creative atmosphere (Helm, 2016). In following what might be termed

an AirBnB dynamic, however, Uniplaces has in reality contributed to the city's housing crisis, effectively removing many apartments from the regular rental market and prompting increases in housing prices (Cócola-Gant and Gago, 2019), although this less positive aspect is not mentioned by the city council in its publicity materials. Nor for that matter is the fact that the success of the platform is dependent on a continued lack of investment from Lisbon's universities in student accommodation, or that this development might be interpreted as profiting from the vulnerability of students, international and domestic, many of whom are being over-charged for sub-standard housing and deprived of basic rights due to the lack of formal contracts.

Methodological approach

The structure of this article encompasses two lines of enquiry that aim to examine the tensions between policies at municipal level in Lisbon aimed at attracting international students and the consequences of these policies for these students. This explains why we look first at the discursive level of urban development in Lisbon, followed by a discussion of evidence from interviews conducted with international students in the city, with our analysis informed by recent debates on creative and knowledge-based urban economies that follow the post-industrial trend of reimagining cities in terms of attractiveness to 'creative classes,' often following the ideas of Richard Florida (2002). Our initial impression is that Florida's guidelines have been uncritically accepted in Lisbon as justification for the municipality's strategy of seeking to attract greater numbers of Eurostars and lifestyle migrants (Favell, 2008), including international students, signalling a move away (or a complementary asset) from the city's established reputation as a low cost holiday destination for hedonistic young people and families.

This explains why the first part of our analysis takes a critical look at Lisbon's re-branding processes, in the light of Florida's ideas. In doing so, we take a qualitative approach, examining some of the strategies implemented by the Lisbon municipality to boost its image as an international student hub. Influenced by Critical Discourse Analyse (CDA) (Dijk, 2001), we interpret the official discourse presented in one of its main documents, the brochure 'All you need to know to study in Lisbon,' as an action that reciprocally shapes social interactions, with the analytical timeframe starts in 2013, with the launch of the 'Lisbon, Erasmus City' project, as we will see below.

To explore this issue at ground level, we have conducted semi-structure interviews with 21 international students, all of whom were studying at university faculties across Lisbon. They were carried out by the authors, during February and March 2020. This material provides us with the opportunity to learn about these protagonists' subjective experiences, including their level of satisfaction with the city, especially their housing conditions. While not a representative sample, a maximum diversity principle was followed to ensure representation from a wide range of nationalities and academic disciplines, retaining balance for gender and socio-economic background, with all material used anonymized for the purpose of publication. These students were largely recruited through visits to different university faculties. In other cases, first contact was made via e-mail, Facebook or WhatsApp, with an explanation of the study, followed by an in-person interview. Prior to taking place, all participants were informed about the research objectives, only starting once consent had been obtained.

Interviews were transcribed entirely by the authors, offering the possibility to take into account the circumstance of the interview during a first analysis of the material, including the interviewee's current life stage and position on an academic or career trajectory (Daymon and

Holloway, 2011). Afterwards, a reading of all the transcriptions took place with the purpose of making sense of the entire dataset. Next, a first list of thematic codes based on both deductively and inductively procedures was created, and subsequently, repeatedly readings of the transcriptions were carried out aimed at tuning the codes to our analytical framework, which were then placed into our key categories: housing crisis, city preparedness towards international students and prospects for settlement.

The choice of Lisbon: consumption-based logics of place-attraction

Underpinning the developments discussed in this article is the idea of free movement for students within the EU. Within the field of tertiary education, the Bologna Process helped place the 'knowledge economy' hypothesis at the centre of development agendas, encouraging states to recruit international talent and improve their national scientific networks in order to be able to compete with one another in the global arena (Archibugi and Coco, 2005; Fairclough and Wodak, 2008). In this sense, the city of Lisbon is taking advantage of developments at a geopolitical level. International students have also been recognized by local authorities as an ideal type of transnational urban consumer due to the impact they are thought to make on local economies: as consumers of housing, food, international bank transfers, culture, nightlife and services, often paying premium prices, in excess of what domestic students might contribute (Malet-Calvo, 2018). Further consequences include making the urban space of the city itself part of the educational experience, in the mission to attract the right kind of international student (Cubillo et al., 2006). This helps explain the attempt to harness the economic potential of city's cultural characteristics and lifestyles; to appeal to incoming student consumers as well as regular tourists and lifestyle migrants.

Following this line of thought, we will now examine some of the key ideas contained in the platform's brochure, 'All you need to know to study in Lisbon' (CML, 2014), which summarizes reasons why students should to choose the city as a study destination. By doing so, we see to understand how the discourse construction of Lisbon as an international student hub, the city's identity and reputation.

10 reasons to study in Lisbon

1. Excellency in Education; 2. Affordable Tuition and Cost of Life; 3. Accommodation and Housing; 4. Sporting Opportunities and Great Climate; 5. Friendly People and a Welcoming City; 6. Culture and Creativity; 7. Safety; 8. A Green City; 9. Leisure and Entertainment; 10. A Cosmopolitan City Open to the World (CML, 2014).

Each of these items are explained in detail in the report, which highlights the advantages Lisbon offers as an international student city. The arguments go beyond advertising its educational appeal; in fact, only the first two points on this list exclusively relate to the academic dimension of student life. The rest relate to attractions of the city in terms of lifestyles, tourism and quality of life, suggesting an integration of student status with lifestyle migration. This approach is consistent with the marketing discourse of tourism, and for that matter, the manner in which many academic institutions seek to attract international students, effectively mixing student mobility and tourism in the process of defining the imaginaries of specific destinations (Harazneh et al., 2018; Matahir and Tang, 2017). The literature has also shown that the motivations and choices about where to study are shape by the extra-curricular experience outside the university's context (Insch and Sun, 2013). This illustrates the logic of place-attraction in cities under post-industrial

capitalism (Harvey, 1989a), with no clear differentiation between youthful tourists, lifestyle migrants, skilled workers, investors and international students, all of whom are thought to be attracted by the same attributes within a product-place (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2009)

Throughout the list, a remarkably diverse range of decidedly non-academic attractions are cited: surfing, golf, hiking, local cuisine, museums, visits to UNESCO heritage sites, music festivals, nightlife, parks, beaches, green spaces and the 'friendly and spontaneous' local inhabitants. In this context, Lisbon is presenting itself as a multi-interest city wherein each incoming student can find their own personal consumer preferences catered for, be this in sports, gastronomy, culture, natural beauty or hospitality. In addition, by presenting Lisbon as more than just a university town through stressing its unique selling points, a subtle step is taken towards helping these students think about the city as a long-term urban resource in their reflexive life-building processes rather than just a temporary place in which to stay for purely educational purposes.

These imaginative geographies, that project attractive notions about a particular destination (see also Beech, 2014), may have been recognized by the international student community even before or without having to make reference to this particular brochure since the image of Lisbon as an international student city exists outside the confines of municipal discourse. Ideas about a certain place can take on a life of their own as they circulate as part of the discourse on international students, but nevertheless, this needs to be recognized not only as artifice but also as an expression of power between sending and receiving countries to the point of constituting a neo-colonial dynamic about educational consumption and imbalances in the value people attribute to different places; following the valuations of the tourism industry rather than academic institutions, a process of production of space that is both real and imaginary (Campbell, 2018). Furthermore, the city

promises to offer an 'urban experience' to international students that does not yet exist; the idea is to see living in Lisbon as experiential and experimental, with the materiality of urban space available for appropriation by international students who are in the personal process of reflexive self-construction, with the city, at the same time, being reconstructed by an accumulation of external subjects' perceptions and experiences (Kim, 2010; França and Cairns, 2020).

Yet, it is worth noting that some of the information presented here is wildly inaccurate, creating a potential for disenchantment among those who have been attracted to the city. For instance, regarding the 'Accommodation' item, universities are mentioned as the main party responsible for providing housing for students. However, due to the high level of demand it is very difficult to find a place in these residencies. Consequently, the majority of incoming students rely upon the private sector, in expensive dormitories or private apartments found via platforms such as Uniplaces.

After introducing reasons to study in Lisbon, 10 reasons to work in the city are presented in the brochure, extolling the importance of retaining talent in the city to boost the local economy and the development of its entrepreneurial soul.

1. Capital and Atlantic City Hub; 2. High Quality of Life and Safety; 3. Ease of Installation in the City; 4. International Airport 10 minutes from City Centre; 5. Digital Connectivity and Mobility; 6. Competitive Cost of Living; 7. High Quality Education System; 8. University City; 9. R and D and Innovation Ecosystem; 10. Cosmopolitan and Creative City (CML, 2014).

As with the previous list, each of the sub-sections describes Lisbon's potentialities as a suitable destination in which to start/develop a career. However, while the '10 reasons to study in Lisbon' section had a rather broad focus, here all the items are strongly oriented towards the professional opportunities the city offers.

The diversity and quality of university provision in the city allows anyone to access quality training in their desired study area. If you want a specialization of the highest level or to get a professional qualification, Lisbon is the ideal location for working and/or building a business base. (CML, 2014).

As we have been arguing in this article, the objectives behind this discursive strategy are to promote both the attraction of international students seeking qualifications and encourage their retention, enlarging the city's labour market pool of skilled workers with young, cosmopolitan and creative individuals. In the case of Erasmus and other short-term mobility students, the campaign hopes to entice them to come back to Lisbon for work in the future, after they complete their degree courses in their home country. Again, this strategy is in accordance with Florida's (2002) idea that advanced technological infrastructure (including major universities and research institutes) promotes the attraction of members of the creative class; in this case, both skilled workers and international students. We can therefore see that a pathway has been opened-up for these students to settle down in Lisbon and develop their post-university careers.

International students' experience and perception of Lisbon

Who then are these dynamic young people being attracted to Lisbon and its universities? To a certain extent, the same people who have always moved there, alongside some new arrivals. Portugal has long been a popular destination for international students from its former colonies: Brazil, Angola, Cape Verde, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea-Equatorial and Saint Tome and Prince (Author, xxxx). In fact, until 2013, a year before Portugal implemented its first legal framework dedicated to regulating the mobility of international students, 33 per cent of international students pursuing a degree in Portugal held a secondary education diploma from one of the African Portuguese-Speaking countries (DGEEC-MEC, 2014). However, the developments discussed in the previous section seem more oriented around attracting students from other countries, mainly from Europe and Asia, particularly during the years of austerity (2011-2014), when cuts in public funding led to universities focusing on attracting a wider range of international students as an alternative revenue stream (Horta, 2010; Heitor and Horta, 2014).

As detailed previously in this article, Portugal has attempted to promote the image of a developed, modern, advanced and cosmopolitan country, capitalizing on its alleged low cost of living, undeniably good weather, a geographical location within the EU, as well as more generic cultural and historic traits. In consequence, Lisbon in particular has profited, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Insert Figure 1 here

This data suggests that Lisbon has indeed become an attractive city for international students, with its popularity greatly increasing during a relatively short period of time. Whether or not these levels of expansion can continue and if an expanded international student population is

sustainable for the city are matters that we will now proceed to consider, looking at students' own perspectives. While there has been success in attracting international students, this does not mean that the strategy is without its weaknesses, or detractors. Of particular concern is the impact on the city's already stretched housing market and a rising cost of living; factors cited as attractors in the publicity materials that have now become negative aspects of life in Lisbon.

International students, the housing crisis and high cost of living

The most prominent finding emerging from our evidence relates to problems associated with moving to a city with a serious but internationally under-reported housing crisis. All the interviewees had concerns about this issue and many were extremely dissatisfied with their housing and the high level of unanticipated expense. Furthermore, they were aware that their presence in the city was feeding the housing crisis (alongside contemporaneous phenomenon such as Airbnb-type letting), putting them in a decidedly uncomfortable position. In some cases, such as with Jacob, a 26-year-old Master's degree student from Germany, there was a perception that housing costs in the city were far beyond comparative prices in cities elsewhere in Europe, implying that Lisbon offers poor value for money. Ana, a 21-year-old Slovenian student, meanwhile, stressed the poor quality of the accommodation, despite the high rental prices:

> Rent prices are horrible, you need to be really lucky to find anything worthy. 350€ (a month) is the norm, hardly anything under it, and the rooms that they offer are most of the time horrible, windowless or closet-less. Live-in landlords do not allow my friends to use heating devices (because it costs more money), they sometimes give curfews and go through their stuff. Sites like Uniplaces are supporting them (landlords) and at the same

time collecting extra sign-up fees. They do not even let you see the place; you need to pay first. Airbnb is destroying this city as well as many others, since apartment owners can get much more money for short-term rentals from rich tourists. In short, sometimes looking for an apartment makes you want to kill yourself. It should not cost you this much to live. (Ana, 21 years old, Slovenia)

We therefore have a direct link being made between a letting agency culture that has effectively been tasked by the city council to house its students and the 'problem' of accommodation, with the 'solution' promoted by the city exacerbating the difficulty of accessing affordable and acceptable housing.

I would say that financial living conditions in Lisbon are similar to the ones in the big cities of Poland, except for the housing, which is very, very expensive. It is not easy to find an affordable place. As a student of my course, is not possible to be able to afford living here by yourself, without financial support. (Andreia, 26 years old, Poland)

I have the Erasmus+ scholarship, but I couldn't live here only with that. The scholarship is 450€ and the rent is 350€ (which is still pretty low compared to my classmates) and I pay 30€ a month for transport. My mum has to send me money every month and I also had some savings for covering the costs of my Erasmus. (Darina, 25 years old, Czech Republic)

The consequences of this situation are evident for our interviewees, affecting not only their quality of life in the city but also their more general well-being and financial independence, as

most end up seeking financial support from their parents to sustain their stays, a situation that was certainly not reported in the brochure we discussed previously.

City preparedness towards international students

Corroborating the official discourse about the city's receptivity, the hospitality of the Portuguese people and the ease of communication in English are two important factors counts in favour of Lisbon when hosting international students, particularly when students have prior experience of living in places where they did not feel welcome. However, our interviewees are aware that the expansion of tourism in the post economic crisis period is fostering some changes in the city.

> I know Lisbon for some years now and clearly things have changed. In my opinion, this has also to do with the massive tourism wave that has increased over the last few years. I can compare my experience with the one I just had in Greece and in this case, I would say that Lisbon is prepared to receive foreign students. Locals are in general very helpful even if you don't speak Portuguese. Many things are accessible in English and as far as I know, events are organized to get to know the local culture. (Carla, 22 years old, France)

Having previously mentioned the 'experiential' and 'experimental' approach to student mobility, it may be that while this is something students can value and appreciate, the overall heightened levels of incomers (aggregating tourists) means the city is being redefined in a manner that is not particularly consistent with the idea of creating a youthful and cosmopolitan sense of place. Instead, the city is acquiring a reputation as generic, placeless and neoliberal market-oriented rather than having a special history and unique culture. Therefore, the 'real Lisbon' may

now be the city that has been taken-over by tourism, meaning that all those seeking anything 'authentic' are going to be disappointed.

We can therefore see that the problems with hosting international students go beyond housing, and if the city aspires to move beyond being 'just' an international student city, it needs to take into account of diversity in regard to where students originate form and what study programmes they are undertaking. In fact, during the last five years in particular, there have been frequent reports in Portugal racism and xenophobia suffered by migrants (as well as Roma people and local black communities), especially relating to black students from the Portuguese-speaking countries, with police officers often reported as perpetrators (Maeso, 2015). Universities have also suffered from inability to respect diversity. For example, in April 2019, a wooden box with stones was placed in the hallway of a university building in Lisbon, with the following instruction: 'Free rocks if you are going to throw them at a 'zuca' (racist term form Brazilian, derived from 'brazuca') who passed his Master's degree' (Mendes, 2019), and in December 2019, a Cape Verdean student was murdered after a fight in a bar in the northern city of Bragança (Oliveira et al. 2019). Colonial legacies continue to support the production and maintenance of hegemonic ideas about race and racism in Portuguese social dynamics, especially regarding Brazilian and black African immigrants (Araújo, 2013).

Future prospects for settlement

The remarks made by the interviewed students cited above obviously contradict the idea of Lisbon as tolerant and open to diversity, and may even reveal some uncomfortable home truths. But despite all the reported difficulties and adversities, the students we interviewed still appear to

genuinely like the city and would settle in Lisbon if they were able to find good working opportunities.

> I really like living here in Lisbon and living in Portugal. And I would like to stay and live here. But I will have to see what will be the job opportunities in my field in the future when I finish my studies. (Enrico, 28 years old, Italy)

> The city welcomed me in a very good way; Portuguese people are really great, spontaneous, in the ways they help. I really honestly want to stay here after I have finished my Masters, of course if I find a job in Lisbon. (Samir, 25 years old, Tunisia)

Should this retention come to pass, that would help meet the municipality's goal of enlarging its pool of qualified workers, perhaps boosting its 'creative economy,' responding to an innovation agenda. There are precedents, and international students are seen as a well-integrated group, ready to enter local labour markets (Hawthorne, 2008). From these interviews, it is evident that the city is certainly able to attract students and receive them as stated by the city council's official discourse with some level of success. However, there are bottlenecks in this process, such as rising rental prices, and the xenophobic and racist behaviour of some local inhabitants in regard to students from the former colonies. These reflections in turn reveal some of the limitations in relying on policies that are driven by policymakers' dreams and aspirations, and promising students a better or at least a different life, as opposed to investing in and effectively regulating physical infrastructure, particularly in regard to student housing. But despite the evident difficulties, we have been able to demonstrate that there are students who are willing to make the city feel more

'cosmopolitan,' 'young' and 'international,' albeit while being aware that they might be having a negative impact on the city due to the lack of a sustainable plan for managing the expansion of the incoming student population.

Conclusion: The Erasmus city?

This article has looked at some of the contradictions between policies of representation to promote Lisbon as a destination and the experiences of international students living in the city. Using an approach based on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Dijk, 2001), this involved looking at strategies aimed at improving the city's image in different spheres in order to make it more attractive to international students through urban marketing; people who might then be ideally transformed into members of an enlarged creative class of economic multipliers, an approach associated with the work of Florida (2002). We then contrasted this representational campaign, coordinated by the Economy and Innovation Department of the city council, with the actual experiences of 21 international students, which served to reveal the contradiction in this strategy.

To date, Lisbon's city-branding strategy has been fairly successful in terms of expanding its 'creative class' population by targeting greater numbers of incoming students, but the conditions that at least some of them have been enduring in the city are not conducive to generating a deeper attachment to Lisbon, especially in regard to a lack of suitable and affordable housing. Investing in its rebranded image and symbolic representation, the city may then be able to attract a potential pool of skilled workers, but it may not be able to keep them or integrate them into the innovation and creativity industries they are supposed to be feeding, conversely pushing potential new 'creatives' away.

We might also argue that the presentation of an idealized image of the city in what is effectively an online prospectus is self-defeating due to some very obvious inaccuracies in relation to cost of living and quality of life. Concerns hence need to be raised about the viability of the strategy, especially considering that the students the city attracts may be experienced spatial consumers who feel other cities offer them better value for money. A simultaneously enlarged tourist influx, not to mention the expanded international student population itself, does not necessarily help 'sell' the city either, considering the strains such flows place upon urban environments. Gentrification, fuelled by policies aimed at attracting international financial capital, and favouring real estate investors (Cócola-Gant 2018), may even start to push many students (local and international) out of the city of Lisbon, that is, if this exodus has not already started to happen. As mentioned above, international students, together with other 'creatives', may feel disappointed and even deceived in relation to expectations fuelled by a huge marketing campaign directed at attracting them. Gentrification processes and the rising of the cost of living resulting out of neoliberal urban politics pushes away diverse populations, leading to a loss of urban sociocultural diversity and a subsequent homogenization of the city, making it less attractive to the same global audiences looking for the authentic Lisbon.

Additionally, in the Portuguese context, these investments in policies to attract 'creatives' from abroad have been complemented by a lack of concern regarding the educated Portuguese youth. Austerity (2011-2014) increased precaritization and unemployment among higher education graduates in Portugal boosted outward migration within this demographic (Cerdeira et al., 2016).

The increased cost of living in the city, linked to the gentrification process, has also a negative impact on students' autonomy, and independence from their families, as they are forced

to rely on parents' financial support to subsist, a position that is inconsistent with the idea of creatives and entrepreneurs leading the city's development processes. Furthermore, institutions whom we might expect to have planned for the arrival of greater numbers of international students have not done so, especially regarding accommodation in student dormitories, raising questions about universities' role in the unsustainability problem, and indeed, the extent of their own commitment to the strategy. Moreover, while at the time of writing it is much too early to assess the long-term impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, questions will inevitably arise about the continued viability of existing strategies, and indeed, the very future of large scale student circulation and face-to-face higher education in general.

Another important point some interviewees observed relates to the image of Lisbon as a cosmopolitan and tolerant city. This view is challenged by certain non-European students, who instead of receiving a cosmopolitan welcome, experienced discrimination, racism and xenophobia. We therefore have an obvious discursive mismatch, and dichotomy, between truth and reality, making certain aspects of student mobility toxic for the city's urban environment. Therefore, at a time when the viability of international students' mobility needs to be re-imagined in light of the pandemic, we might also wish to see more inclusive, sustainable models of exchange that recognize the rights of all students as opposed to privileging those most willing to act as consumers or potential future wealth generators.

Notes

1. The promotion and development of arts in particular districts is often followed by severe processes of gentrification, a dynamic that has been very clear in Lisbon's Intendente area for the last 10 years, as we recently investigated (Author, xxxx).

References

Altbach, P. G., & Teichler, U. (2001). Internationalization and exchanges in a globalized university. *Journal of Studies in International Education 5*(1): 5-25.

Araújo, M. 2013. "Challenging Narratives on Diversity and Immigration in Portugal: The (De)Politicization of Colonialism and Racism." In Migrant Marginality: A Transnational Perspective, edited by J. A. Capetillo, G. Jacobs, and P. A. Kretsedemas, 27–46. New York: Routledge Archibugi, D., & Coco, A. (2005). Is Europe becoming the most dynamic knowledge economy in the world? *Journal of Common Market Studies* 43(3): 433-459.

Balakrishnan, M. S. 2009. Strategic Branding of Destinations: A Framework. *European Journal of Marketing* 43(5/6): 611–629.

Beech, S. E. (2014). Why place matters: Imaginative geography and international student mobility. *Area* 46(2): 170-177.

Boland, P. 2013. Sexing up the City in the International Beauty Contest: The Performative Nature of Spatial Planning and the Fictive Spectacle of Place Branding. *The Town Planning Review* 84(2): 251–274.

Bonakdar, A., & Audirac, I. (2020). City branding and the link to urban planning: Theories, practices, and challenges. *Journal of Planning Literature*, 35(2): 147-160.

Brooks, R., & Waters, J. L. (2011). *Student Mobilities, Migration and the Internationalization of Higher Education*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Cairns, D. (2017). The Erasmus undergraduate exchange programme: a highly qualified success story?, *Children's Geographies*, 15:6, 728-740, DOI: 10.1080/14733285.2017.1328485

França, T., & Cairns, D. (2020). South-South Student Migration: Socially Integrating Students from Portuguese Speaking Africa at UNILAB, Brazil. *Globalisation, Societies and Education,* 18 (5): 578–588.

Câmara Municipal de Lisboa. (2013). *Lisboa Cidade Criativa*. Available at: https://issuu.com/camara_municipal_lisboa/docs/lisboa_economia_criativa (Accessed 30 June 2020).

Câmara Municial de Lisboa. (2014). *All you need to know to study in Lisbon*. Available at: http://www.studyinlisbon.pt/ (Accessed 30 June 2020).

Câmara Municipal de Lisboa. (2017a). *Lisbon's application to the 2020 European Green Capital award*. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/europeangreencapital/ (Accessed 30 June 2020).

Câmara Municipal de Lisboa. (2017b). *Programa de governo da cidade de Lisboa 2017-2012*. Lisboa: CML.

Campbell, C. J. (2018). Space, place and scale: Human geography and spatial history in past and present. *Past and Present,* 239(1): e23-e45.

Cerdeira, L., Machado-Taylor, M. de L., Cabrito, B., Patrocínio, T., Brites, R., Gomes, R., Lopes, J. T., Vaz, H., Peixoto, P., Magalhães, D., Silva, S., & Ganga, R. (2016). Brain drain and the disenchantment of being a higher education student in Portugal. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, *38*(1), 68-77.

Cócola-Gant, A., Gago, A., & Jover, J. (2020). Tourism, gentrification and neighbourhood change: An analytical framework. Reflections from southern European cities. In: Oskam, J. (ed.). *The Overtourism Debate. NIMBY, Nuisance, Commodification*. Bingley: Emerald, pp. 121-135.

Cócola-Gant, A., & Gago, A. (2019). Airbnb, buy-to-let investment and tourism-driven displacement: A case study in Lisbon. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 0308518X19869012.

Cócola-Gant, A. (2018). O Capitalismo Imobiliário e a Crise da Habitação em Lisboa. *Le Monde Diplomatique*, February 2018, 10-11.

Colomb, C. (2016). Pushing the urban frontier: Temporary uses of space, city marketing, and the creative city discourse in 2000s Berlin. *Journal of Urban Affairs* 34(2): 131-152.

Daymon, C., & Holloway, I. (2011). *Qualitative Research Methods in Public Relations and Marketing Communications*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Dijk, T. (2001). Multidisciplinary CDA: A plea for diversity. In: Wodak R and Meyer M (eds) *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: Sage, pp. 95-120.

Direção-Geral de Estatística da Educação e Ciência – Ministério da Educação. (2014). *Perfil do Aluno 2013/2014*.

Dinardi, C. (2017). Cities for sale: Contesting city branding and cultural policies in Buenos Aires. *Urban Studies*, *54*(1): 85-101.

Fairclough, N., & Wodak, R. (2008). The Bologna Process and the knowledge-based economy: A critical discourse analysis approach. In: Jessop B, Fairclough N and Wodak R (eds) *Education and the Knowledge-Based Economy in Europe*. New York: Brill Sense, pp. 109-125.

Favell, A. (2008). *Eurostars and Eurocities: Free Movement and Mobility in an Integrating Europe*. John Wiley & Sons.

Feyen, B., & Krzaklewska, E. (eds) (2013). The Erasmus Phenomenon - Symbol of a New European Generation? Frankfurt: Peter Lang.

Florida, R. (2002). *The Rise of the Creative Class*. New York: Basic Books.

Gaspar, S., & Haro, F. A. de. (2020). Buying Citizenship? Chinese Golden Visa Migrants in Portugal. *International Migration*, *58*(3), 58–72. https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12621

Harazneh, I., Al-Tall R. M., Al-Zyoud M. F., & Abubakar, A. M. (2018). Motivational factors for educational tourism: Marketing insights. *Management and Marketing. Challenges for the Knowledge Society,* 13(1): 796-811.

Hawthorne, L. (2008). *The Growing Global Demand for Students as Skilled Migrants.* Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute.

Harvey, D. (1989a). From managerialism to entrepreneurialism: The transformation in urban governance in late capitalism. *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography* 71(1): 3-17.

Harvey, D. (1989b). *The Urban Experience*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Harvey, D. (2006). *Spaces of Global Capitalism*. London: Verso.

Heitor, M., & Horta, H. (2014) Democratizing higher education and access to science: The Portuguese reform 2006-2010. *Higher Education Policy,* 27(2): 239-257.

Helm, I. (2016). *'Creative Cities': A case study on Lisbon*. Available at: https://repositorio-ucp.pre.rcaap.pt/handle/10400.14/20158 (Accessed 30 June 2020)

Hernandez-Garcia, J. (2013). Slum Tourism, City Branding and Social Urbanism: The Case of Medellin, Colombia. *Journal of Place Management and Development,* 6(1): 43–51.

Horta, H. (2010). The role of the state in the internationalization of universities in catching-up countries: An analysis of the Portuguese higher education system. *Higher Education Policy*, 23: 63-81.

Houston. D., Findlay, A., Harrison, R., & Mason, C. (2008). Will attracting the 'creative class' boost economic growth in old industrial regions? A case study of Scotland. *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography,* 90(2): 133-149.

Insch, A., & Sun, B. (2013) University students' needs and satisfaction with their host city. *Journal of Place Management and Development*, 6(3), 178-191.

JLL, & Uniplaces (2019). *Portugal Student Housing 2019 Report*. Lisboa: Uniplaces

Montezuma, J. & McGarrigle, J. (2019.) What motivates international homebuyers? Investor to lifestyle 'migrants' in a tourist city. *Tourism Geographies*, 21(2), 214-234.

Kavaratzis, M., & Ashworth, G. J. (2009). Beyond the Logo: Brand Management for Cities. *Journal of Brand Management,* 16(8): 520-531.

Kavaratzis, M. (2004). From City Marketing to City Branding: Towards a Theoretical Framework for Developing City Brands. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy,* 1(1): 58-73.

Kim, C. (2010). Place promotion and symbolic characterization of New Songdo City, South Korea. *Cities,* 27(1): 13-19.

King, R. & Raghuram, P. (2013). International student migration: Mapping the field and new research agendas. *Population, Space and Place,* 19(2): 127-137.

Krätke, S. (2010). 'Creative Cities' and the rise of the dealer class: A critique of Richard Florida's approach to Urban Theory. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research,* 34(4): 835-853.

Lees, L. (2008). Gentrification and social mixing: towards an inclusive urban renaissance? *Urban Studies*, 45(12), 2449-2470.

Lefebvre, H. (1996). The right to the city. In: Kofman E. and Lebas E. (eds) *Writing on Cities*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 63–240.

Maeso, S. (2015). 'Civilising' the Roma? The depoliticisation of (anti-)racism within the politics of integration. *Identities*, 22(1), 53–70.

Malet-Calvo, D. (2018). Understanding international students beyond studentification: A new class of transnational urban consumers. The example of Erasmus students in Lisbon (Portugal). *Urban Studies*, 55(10): 2142–2158

Malet-Calvo, D., & Ramos, M. (2018). Suddenly last summer: How the tourist tsunami hit Lisbon. *Revista Andaluza De Antropología*, 15, 47– 73. https://doi.org/10.12795/RAA.2018.15.03

Martin-Brelot, M., Grossetti, M., Eckert, D., Gritsai, O., & Kovács, Z. (2010). The spatial mobility of the 'creative class:' A European perspective. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research,* 34(4): 854-870.

Matahir, H., & Tang, C. F. (2017). Educational tourism and its implications on economic growth in Malaysia. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research,* 22(11): 1110-1123.

Mendes, F. (2019). April 19. Xenofobia na Faculdade de Direito indigna estudantes brasileiros, *Público*.

Mitchell, K. (2012). Student mobility and European identity: Erasmus study as a civic experience? *Journal of Contemporary European Research,* 8(4): 491-518.

Moreira, H. (2016). Mobilidade internacional no ensino superior. *Revista de Estudos Demográficos,* 39: 37-67.

Morell, M. (2018). Urban tourism via dispossession of oeuvres: Labor as a common denominator. *Focaal*, *2018*(82), 35-48.

Muratovski, G. (2012). The Role of Architecture and Integrated Design in City Branding. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 8(3): 195-207.

Murphy-Lejeune, E. (2002). *Student Mobility and Narrative in Europe. The New Strangers*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Peck, J. (2005). Struggling with the creative class. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research,* 29: 740-770.

Oliveira, M. Adam, M. & Preira, A. (2020). Cinco jovens detidos por suspeita de homicídio qualificado de Giovani. *Público*.

Rauhut, D., & Laine, J. P. (2020). Swedish Immigrants to Portugal: A Bordering Perspective. *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, *0*(0), 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1080/08865655.2020.1777888

Renggli, C., & Riaño, Y. (2017). Mobilité étudiante internationale: Raisons d'étudier en Suisse, stratégies, expériences et projets d'avenir. *Géo-Regards, revue neuchâteloise de géographie (Les étudiants internationaux),* 10: 71-91.

Scott, D. S. (2006). The Social Morphology of Skilled Migration: The Case of the British Middle Class in Paris. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 32(7): 1105-1129.

Sequera, J., & Nofre, J. (2019). Touristification, transnational gentrification and urban change in Lisbon: The neighbourhood of Alfama. *Urban Studies*, 10.1177/0042098019883734

Sihlongonyane, M. F. (2015). The rhetorical devices for marketing and branding Johannesburg as a city: a critical review. *Environment and Planning A*, 47(10): 2134-2152.

Slater, T., (2006). The eviction of critical perspectives from gentrification research. International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 30(4): 737-757.

Vanolo, A. (2015). The image of the creative city, eight years later: Turin, urban branding and the economic crisis taboo. *Cities*, 46: 1-7.