

THE 'URBAN VILLAGE' VERSUS THE 'CITY FOR PROFIT': QUERYING NIMBY THROUGH  
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF *TOURISTIFICATION* IN LISBON AND MADRID  
LA 'ALDEA URBANA' FRENTE A LA 'CIUDAD DEL LUCRO': CUESTIONANDO EL CONCEPTO DE 'NIMBY'  
MEDIANTE UN ANÁLISIS COMPARATIVO DE LA *TURISTIFICACIÓN* EN LISBOA Y MADRID

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**Abstract**

Southern European cities face the challenges associated with the recent emergence of the formal and informal economies of the 'Tourist City' and are the scenario for diverse social tensions. Local protests against these changes, sometimes discredited as NIMBY –Not In My Backyard– have led to conflicts with visitors and local public administrations. However, fuzzy definitions of the groups organising these protests are often found in the literature, as well as regarding the previous urban conditions for and the impacts of their actions. This paper presents a comparative analysis of the protests in the Portuguese neighbourhood of *Bairro Alto* (Lisbon) and the Spanish neighbourhood of *La Latina* (Madrid), in order to explore how moral ownership and 'belonging narratives' around places are variously put into play to legitimise and/or contest urban changes. We also reflect on the benefits and perils of building strong local identities versus the contemporary global tourism that flows into Southern European cities.

**Keywords:** Tourism; protest; Nimby; Southern Europe; belonging narratives.

**Resumen**

Las ciudades del sur de Europa se enfrentan a los retos asociados a la reciente aparición de las economías formales e informales de la "ciudad turística" y son escenario de diversas tensiones sociales. Las protestas locales contra estos cambios, a veces desacreditadas como NIMBY –Not In My Backyard– han provocado conflictos con los visitantes y las administraciones públicas locales. Sin embargo, en la literatura se encuentran a menudo definiciones difusas de los grupos que organizan estas protestas, así como de las condiciones urbanas previas para sus acciones y de los impactos de las mismas. Este artículo presenta un análisis comparativo de las protestas en el barrio portugués de *Bairro Alto* (Lisboa) y en el barrio español de *La Latina* (Madrid), con el fin de explorar cómo la apropiación moral y las "narrativas de pertenencia" en torno a los lugares se ponen en juego de forma diversa para legitimar y/o impugnar los cambios urbanos. También reflexionamos sobre los beneficios y los peligros de construir identidades locales fuertes frente al turismo global contemporáneo que llega a las ciudades del sur de Europa.

**Palabras clave:** Turismo; protesta; Nimby; Europa del Sur; narrativas de pertenencia.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This paper is a comparative study of protests in two neighbourhoods: *Bairro Alto* in Lisbon, Portugal, and *La Latina* in Madrid, Spain. These neighbourhoods witnessed similar changes – night-time economy and organised protests by residents – before the boom of urban tourism in both cities. Although the two protests described here were not initially against *touristification* itself, they allow us to explore some of the previous urban and social conditions that prompted broader and more diverse mobilisation against the ‘Tourist City’ (Colomb & Novy, 2017; Sequera & Nofre, 2018, 2019) in Lisbon and in Madrid. This may help to understand how tourism contributes to motivating protest in other spheres of the urban space, as well as to ‘exacerbating or mitigating existing or latent urban conflicts’ (Colomb & Novy, 2017; p. 18). Therefore, our aim is to shed light on how other, earlier, urban change processes facilitated later *touristification* processes and on which discursive legacies can be traced in current protests and mobilisation against tourism-oriented changes arising from these previously organised collective actions, such as those related to the moral ownership of places and belonging narratives. Through this, we also aim to enrich some of the current debates on the conflicting relationship between tourism and other processes of urban change, such as national or transnational gentrification (Sequera & Nofre, 2018; Cocola-Gant & Lopez-Gay, 2020; Malet, 2017).

In the first section of the paper, we address some of the tensions experienced in recent years on a local scale in Southern European cities, through the increase in urban changes that set the stage for more acute urban changes brought by global urban tourism and the ‘visitor economy’. By paying attention to ‘belonging narratives’ and to the potential benefits and perils of the creation of strong local or parochial attachment to places (Tomaney, 2013; Devine-Wright, Smith & Batel, 2019) as opposed to ‘global senses of place’ (Massey, 1994, 2009), we explore how local tensions might be productive of and produced by broader socio-political processes on a global scale.

In the second section, we explore some of the recent debates on the definition and use of the ‘NIMBY’ concept in academia, in politics and in the media. Specifically, we analyse how suspicions around ‘who they are’ and ‘what they hide’ have been used in order to

delegitimise very diverse opposition to urban changes from local actors.

In the third section, we use the previous discussions to ask ourselves how these different sets of arguments were applied in each of the cases examined here – *Bairro Alto* in Lisbon and *La Latina* in Madrid. Based on our previous research findings on these two cases, in this section we aim to offer a more in-depth analysis of which collective identities were productive of and produced by each protest. Our attention is directed towards the construction of ‘social identity, social differences and power relations’ (Gregson & Rose, 1999, p. 434; see also Lees, 2004) arising from these two protests, taken as sample cases for other protests against urban changes that are currently taking place in numerous Southern European cities. Through ethnographic fieldwork and semi-structured interviews with protesters and unorganised neighbours, representatives of the public administrations and local urban planners, as well as an analysis of secondary sources, our methodological approach allows us to ‘go beyond the text’ and to consider what the ‘speech act’ actually says about the social construction of individuals around urban space and protest. Hence, we propose to change the classic questions in debates on *Nimbyism*, based on a *a priori* enquiry about ‘who the protesters are’ and ‘what the motivation for their actions is’. Instead, we ask ourselves ‘how protesters are built around the protest in both the physical and imagined urban and social space’ and ‘how they negotiate the legitimacy of their motives with the surrounding environment’ in order to better understand the urban impacts of these two different protests. Finally, in the last part of the article, we explore alternative approaches for urban planners and policymakers when facing the challenges arising from protests against tourism in large metropolises in Southern Europe.

## 2. GLOBAL TOURISM IN LARGE SOUTHERN EUROPEAN CITIES: UNDERSTANDING THE TENSIONS OF GLOCALISATION

New opportunities for consumption and leisure have emerged in the post-industrial ‘Ludic City’ (Baptista, 2005) or ‘Fantasy City’ (Hannigan, 1998). Based on public-private partnerships, several authors point to the ‘entertainment machine’ as a key factor in the urban growth of the post-industrial era (Clark, 2004;

Lloyd and Clark, 2001). Indeed, the processes of change leading towards the *glocalisation* (Swyngedouw & Kaïka, 2003) of certain territories, initiated more than three decades ago in Europe, have generated kaleidoscopic societies where different models of cities coexist and compete in the same time-space. Thus, the post-industrial 'entertainment city' strongly competes with the closer realities of the modern 'urban villages' (Gans, 1962; Zukin, 2011) – characterised by local, intimate and close relationships between neighbours built over time – that continue to exist in many neighbourhoods, both in the cities themselves and in European metropolitan peripheries. In this sense, (post-)modernization has “redrawn the time-space of everyday life and re-articulated the local and the global” in many cities, (Swyngedouw & Kaïka, 2003, p. 6), fertilising new tensions between the tendency towards global cultural homogenisation and local/regional resistances against it. In 'two-speed Europe', this gap is especially evident in the south, where countries such as Spain and Portugal have suffered more intensely from the impact of the economic crisis and the austerity policies initiated in 2008, which were followed by intense promotion of mass tourism in an attempt to mitigate these.

The opportunities, contradictions and controversies that arise in the local territories as a result of their insertion into the global entertainment economy are complex. Pro-growth discourses appeal to the benefits derived from tourism, such as the growth of the city, the generation of employment and the rehabilitation of historic centres and heritage – the so-called resurgence/renewal – and these are especially attractive for countries coming out of or still struggling with the 2008 economic crisis. Through branding and thematisation strategies, post-Fordist tourism makes use of the particularities and idiosyncrasies, both material and symbolic, of the local territories as a call for investment and global consumption. This 'double-edged affair' of global elites announcing a new world order, while forcing the inevitable 'decline' of some urban communities (Swyngedouw, & Kaïka, 2003, p. 12-13) leads to serious contradictions for urban social justice. Indeed, the concerns of the local populations, self-perceived at times as 'props' for the transformation of the place for tourist recreation, poses serious challenges for urban planning, community conviviality and everyday life in these places. Also, the frequent opposition from the

long-term inhabitants, sometimes called 'traditional residents' (Quagliari & Russo, 2010), has been linked to different kinds of urban transformation, which raises serious questions as to who has the right to define the meanings and uses of the place.

Countries such as Spain, Italy, Portugal and Greece already have a long history in terms of domestic and international tourism, partly due to their heavy investment in tourist economies and institutional heritagisation. However, strategies to promote the tourist economy have changed over the last three decades, depending on the country. For example, in Spain since the 1990s, the 'beach tourism' promoted between the 1960s and the mid-1970s has begun to give way to urban tourism oriented progressively around the cities, creating other forms of spectacularisation (Debord, 1967[1994]) and urban reflexivity (Martínez-Gutiérrez, 2018). In Portugal, this process was similar to the Spanish case, even though it came slightly later, with beach tourism to the Algarve being followed by the creation of the *Allgarve* Brand in 2007, to promote more cultural tourism in the region (Mendes, Valle & Guerreiro, 2011; Martins, 2014); and with the urban tourism trend in Porto and Lisbon, where, albeit with their own particular differences, a concerted strategy was used to begin promoting tourism in the mid-2000s, peaking in around 2015 (Banco de Portugal, 2016).

This complex scenario has generated a lot of tension in local urban territories in relation to their meanings and uses due to their progressive transformation as places for tourist recreation. The continuing tertiarisation of cities, sometimes accompanied by gentrification processes (Janoschka, Sequera y Salinas, 2014), has generated resistance and specific tensions between local populations and local administrations (Colomb & Novy, 2017; Sequera & Nofre, 2019). Among these, one of its more controversial manifestations has been the concerns expressed by some social actors, usually long-term residents, who challenge the changes, whether gradual or abrupt, in what they consider *their* territory. Yet the relationship between gentrification processes and strategies to promote the visitor economy through touristification has given rise to some recent debate in academic literature. Whether both processes coexist (Sequera & Nofre, 2018), co-ally (Cocola-Gant & Lopez-Gay, 2020) or even confront each other in the form of the proliferation of low-cost nocturnal tourism (Aramayona & García-García, 2019) is still a matter of

debate and scientific enquiry. Some of the underlying questions behind these debates are not minor and they are directly related to the topic of 'resistance' or opposition to neoliberal urban production from below: in framing local actors as tourists or visitors, as (resident) gentrifiers or traditional residents, as 'newcomers' or 'old/long-term' inhabitants, we are building an *a priori* framework around the underlying legitimacy that might be invoked to negotiate the meanings of place. That is, we are dealing with their legitimacy to shape the territory and its uses or, as Sharon Zukin (2011) puts it, who demands (or should demand) the appropriation of the 'moral ownership' of a place with centuries of history.

At the heart of these debates, *who* the 'newcomers' are and *how* their social practices impact the place pose critical questions for protests in territories facing urban change due to gentrification (upscaling) or tourism-oriented processes. In the scope of people-place relations, 'global senses of place' represented by new social actors appearing in traditional neighbourhoods might be beneficial in order to avoid 'exclusive', sometimes 'reactionary', politics (Massey, 1994, 2009) in endogamic places. At the same time, this approach has been criticised as it does not take into account the benefits of creating strong place attachments and belonging at a local scale, or 'parochialism' (Tomaney, 2013), more characteristic of the so-called 'traditional residents' (Quagliari & Russo, 2010). Hence, arguing 'unequivocally for open spaces and open places may leave the less powerful places and groups (the space of the domestic, the places of indigenous culture) open to indiscriminate invasion and disruption' (Massey, 1996, p. 123), as has often been the case with many neighbourhoods and communities in different cities around the world. At the same time, it is important to consider the complex set of alliances between old and new local actors sharing diverse cultural, social and relational capitals (Hubbard, 2009), sometimes engaging in common actions to defend territories under the threat of global urban neoliberalism, and 'positive parochialism' has been proposed as a potential alternative to parochialism and a global sense of place (Devine-Wright *et al.*, 2019).

Discourses on 'good and bad' participation, 'welcome and unwelcome' participation, or as Gibson (2005) proposes, 'rational and civic participation vs irrational and self-interested participation' are also

at the heart of the construction of social and public legitimacy around local protests against urban changes. Distinctions have been made by the media and public (neoliberal) administrations to separate those residents legitimised to give their voice from those who should be silenced (see also McClymont & O'Hare, 2008). The groups whose participation is 'bad, unwelcome and self-interested' are usually delegitimised as 'Nimbys'. However, there seems to be an important gap in the characterisation of these groups (Dear, 1992; DeVerteuil, 2013), especially when applied to tourism-related protests. In the following section we give a more detailed description of the type of debates that have arisen around the use of NIMBY.

### 3. EXERCISING THE RIGHT TO PLACE: BEYOND NIMBY

The NIMBY (Not In My Backyard) concept is generally used to refer to local protests against new developments perceived as 'negative externalities' (Hubbard, 2009) and explained as based only on irrational, selfish and ignorant claims (Freudenberg & Pastor, 1992; Burningham, 2000). However, the use of the term NIMBY has been the subject of diverse and conflicting interest among scholars over the last two decades. Often denounced as giving a lax and oversimplified view, there have been different interpretations of it when it comes to understanding: (1) who the protesters or *Nimbys* are; (2) what the motives of the protesters are and, as a result, the degree of legitimacy of their complaints or concerns; and (3) what the effects and impact of their opposition practices are.

The conventional interpretation of NIMBY is often based on 'pro-growth' arguments, assuming, in an urban context, the inexorability of the real estate sector and housing construction as the main engine of economic growth in modern societies. This line has permeated much of the mass media and popular discourse when understanding some protests against new developments. Along these lines, Richard Florida recently published an article in *citylab.com*<sup>1</sup> mentioning the need to understand *Nimbyism* as part of a broader framework of regulation and policymaking which favours 'private ownership'. Under this approach,

1 <https://www.citylab.com/equity/2017/02/california-land-use-housing-affordability/517320/>

the framework in which *Nimby* participation in and opposition to changes is perceived is usually based on 'overcoming' NIMBY (Dear, 1992) or 'fighting' (Florida, 2017) the phenomenon of *Nimbyism*. However, the need to 'unmask' the 'real motives' behind some of the complaints or concerns of local protesters remains a matter of debate (Bell, Gray & Haggett, 2005). Much of the scientific literature on the subject understands that the 'hidden' motives of protesters are related to the loss of economic value of their homes, especially when the new developments are seen as 'unsightly' (Hubbard, 2009) in the neighbourhood environment. According to this perspective, 'sophisticated' arguments (Dear, 1992), such as the impact on community health and well-being or the impact on the local natural environment, are often seen as masking private interests such as property values and lifestyles (for critiques, see Hubbard, 2009; Pol *et al.*, 2006; Batel & Castro, 2015). Hence, the fundamental conflict, according to Hubbard (2009), revolves around the confrontation between 'local/private and national/public interests' and the recognition that new development has a 'national [or even global] (social) interest'.

Critical interpretations of the use of NIMBY point out that it has been used too loosely, sometimes in the absence of a comprehensive analysis of who the protesters are and what their motives are. Wolsink (2006) goes further and states that the concept is used by urban planners to delegitimise any type of protest. In the same vein, authors such as Gibson (2005) or Kemp (1990) add that the concept of NIMBY 'disguises a more fundamental range of technical, environmental and socioeconomic concerns' (Kemp, 1990, see also Burningham, 2000). However, authors such as Deverteuil (2013) are committed to a recovery of the concept, especially in relation to the conflicts arising around the attempted appropriation of urban centrality. Other authors point out the need to stick to an analysis of social class and private property in order to understand the NIMBY phenomenon (Dear and Taylor, 1982; Dear and Wolch, 1992, seen in Deverteuil, 2013.). This approach, more in line with a neo-Marxist interpretation, implies a description of the protesters in structural terms. These authors understand that characterising the protesters can help to clarify their 'real' reasons and to make a judgment about the legitimacy of their complaints. In fact, conventional definitions of NIMBY often

associate protesters with a privileged population. For example, gentrifiers who want to leave their 'brand' in place (Deverteuil, 2013), white people hiding an anti-black discourse (Pulido, 1996) and white middle class urban-to-rural migrants wanting to protect an idyllic rural landscape suitable for their aesthetic consumption (Phillips, Fish & Agg, 2001).

However, these studies tend to forget the local struggles composed of 'class alliances' in disadvantaged places (Hubbard, 2009), as well as the complex relationship of interests from the perspective of 'actor-network spaces', with synergies that traverse the local, the national and the global; and the fact that, in the new networked, global world, people who might be privileged in a certain conflict are not privileged in another (Batel & Devine-Wright, 2017). In this sense, contrary to what Dear (1992) proposes, conflict often overcomes the limitations of a local scale and the protests and associated claims should be understood as something more than the concerns of people who live in a place where a new, negatively perceived development is expected. Therefore, several authors have pointed out that the fuzzy 'box' representing the NIMBY category hides the diversity of the groups that are the protagonists of the protests (Burningham, 2000, Halstead *et al.*, 1993, Pol *et al.*, 2006). Precisely because we are concerned with the worrying implications that certain reactionary mobilisations against local developments, perceived as 'external', mean in a context of increasing racist and right-wing discourses in Southern Europe and globally – such as the protests against mosques (Astor, 2012) or the 'racialization of need' (Wilton, 2010) – we urge for a deep complexification of the concept of "Nimby" to understand the benefits and perils of its use as a notion to understand protest. As such, here we examine NIMBY based on recent scholarship that has been proposing that local protests that are often deemed as NIMBY should be increasingly reconsidered as related with social and environmental justice demands, either to contest injustices (e.g., Anguelovski, 2016; Sebastien, 2017; Batel & Devine-Wright, 2020; Rice, Long & Levenda, 2021) or to reproduce and accentuate them (Hubbard, 2005; Checker, 2011). Within this perspective, local protests discursively manage and negotiate place identities, belonging narratives and stigmatizations and related social and environmental injustices. The key assumption behind this is to, instead of deeming individuals as only self-interested,

irrational and ignorant – as per the NIMBY definition –, considering how lack of justice – recognition, distributive, procedural (Walker, 2009) – and how the way certain groups and issues are socio- spatially constructed and shaped by structural power relations, promote and shape so called NIMBY protests. The ‘Nimby effect’ should then be contextualised through a place-based framework of different power relations and identities, and in a context of contemporary global socio-environmental crisis; thus, concepts such as “NOPE” (NOt in the Planet Earth) should take further consideration to prevent institutional and media narratives from stigmatisation and simplification of protests.

In line with the proposals from Devertueil (2013) and some other authors in relation to urban tourism-related changes (Colomb & Novy, 2017), we believe that the recovery of theories on *Nimbyism* is necessary in order to understand some of the urban conflicts at local level, without underestimating, as Burningham proposes (2000), ‘the diversity and complexity of local concerns and interests’ (p. 56) under this label. Our perspective aims to combine a structural approach based on property and exclusion models common to neoliberal globalisation and using a place-based, cultural approach constructed on the complexities of the historical, cultural and political characteristics of each place. This is one of the tasks that we propose to address in the following sections, based on a comparative analysis of two neighbourhoods in two different Southern European capitals (Lisbon and Madrid) with their own geographical and cultural temperaments, but united by a common history within the Southern European Mediterranean context, as well as their recent and complex insertion into global capital flows and the austerity policies endured since 2008.

#### 4. URBAN COMPARATIVISM, CASE STUDIES AND METHODOLOGY

##### 4.1. Contextual background: the protests in *Bairro Alto* (Lisbon) and *La Latina* (Madrid)

During the 1970-90s, *Bairro Alto* in Lisbon witnessed an influx of new businesses, with the opening of small restaurants, shops, antique shops, bars and clubs (Calado & Ferreira, 1992). This process was accompanied by the development of alternative cultures in the neighbourhood, associated with post-modern

consumption trends, mainly from the 1980s onwards. In 1989, an office for the urban rehabilitation of the neighbourhood was created – the BA Office – with the aim of preserving and renewing the architectural and social heritage of the neighbourhood, as well as encouraging more local involvement in local matters (Lisbon Municipal Council, 2008). This included what was quite a slow urban renewal process in the historic centre of Lisbon during the 1990s and 2000s, which tried to counteract the migration of the population to suburban areas due to the poor condition of the housing infrastructures. The so-called ‘first wave’ of gentrification in *Bairro Alto* took place during the mid-1990s, at the same time that young gentrifiers with alternative lifestyles appeared in the area as a result of their rejection of the ‘normative’ lifestyles represented by suburbanisation and in search of a freer, more ‘tolerant’ environment (Mendes, 2006).

In August 2004, a Portuguese newspaper (*A Capital*, 16/08/2004) drew attention to the fact that the residents of *Bairro Alto* intended to resist the architectural project approved for the 17th century *Inglesinhos* Convent to be converted into a luxury residential gated community. They contested the project and also claimed the right to participate in the decision-making processes taking place in their community, but were represented as NIMBY by the BA Office (see Batel & Castro, 2015). Apart from organising public debate sessions and using an internet forum, the group also took legal action to obtain an injunction based on public utility in order to halt the project. The BA Office had approved the conversion without public consultation. In 2008, the old convent was finally remodelled as a luxury gated community, which attracted new upper middle class residents, part of an upscaling process already taking place in the area. At the same time, the trend towards commoditisation and commercialisation of the previous alternative nightlife in *Bairro Alto* attracted new visitors, mostly national and transnational tourists and students (Malet, Nofre & Geraldés, 2016; Malet, 2017; Nofre *et al.*, 2017b). Over the years, protests by some inhabitants of *Bairro Alto* have continued against an economy mainly based on extensive night-time activities (TSF, 2015). More recently, protests and local resistances, including through newly formed collectives such as ‘Habita’ and ‘Stop Despejos’ [‘Stop Evictions’], started to increasingly focus on and contest touristification and its effects on local residents’ physical and psychological

displacements and on the neighbourhoods themselves, their 'Disneyfication' (Sequera & Nofre, 2020) – as Pavel (2019) puts it, already during the Covid-19 pandemic “if the properties listed in the Airbnb platforms regarding the parishes in the centre of Lisbon were all occupied at their maximum capacity, there would be more visitors than residents” (p.204).

Similar to *Bairro Alto*, the *La Latina* neighbourhood has been popularly known as a historical, 'socially mixed' area in central Madrid. The area also witnessed different rehabilitation processes, most of them financed with European funds during the late 1980s and early 1990s (see Aramayona *et al.*, 2019). Although the sociodemographic composition of *La Latina* has basically consisted of middle class residents since the 1990s, there are still a few lower-income areas (Spanish National Institute of Statistics, 2018), with differences of up to 25,000 euros per family per year from one block to the next. Since 2006, there has been a boom in the night-time economy and, by 2017<sup>2</sup>, there were 450 businesses offering night-time activities in the area, making the neighbourhood 'the best place for beer and drinks', according to TripAdvisor (2016). Nowadays, *La Latina* is one of the most famous areas for 'partying' both for international and Spanish visitors alike, the latter mostly coming from the working and middle class outskirts of the city. The neighbourhood reaction followed hard on the heels of the boom in the night-time economy. In 2006, a Neighbourhood Association was formed, made up mainly of elderly, long-term residents, against 'low-cost nocturnal tourism' and the so-called 'alcohol-fuelled neighbourhood', as we described in previous work (Aramayona *et al.*, 2019; Aramayona & García, 2020). Protests in *La Latina* were especially intense during 2008-2012 and, with relatively poor visible results, the Association maintains a tense relationship with the local administration, both the previous conservative right-wing local governments of the last 30 years and the left-wing local government which represented '*Ahora Madrid*'. In the following years, Madrid became a more attractive city for tourism, now receiving around 8.5 million visitors per year, which represents a 25% increase since 2005

(Local Council Report, 2017), adding to the concerns of *La Latina* residents. At the same time, since around 2016, different social mobilisation campaigns against the 'Tourist City' have been held in the city (see Sequera & Nofre, 2019) and the *La Latina* residents' association has joined some of the new civic protests, leading to new forms of political engagement for these groups.

#### 4.2. Urban Comparativism and Methodology

Urban comparative methodological proposals (Robinson, 2011, 2014) have been at the heart of this research. A diverse range of techniques were used for conducting fieldwork in Madrid and Lisbon during different periods of time. This fieldwork was conducted by two different native researchers – the authors of this paper – in *La Latina* and *Bairro Alto*. In the case of Madrid, fieldwork was conducted from 2011 to 2016, using ethnographic methods and participant observation, particularly 'floating observation' (Bartkowiak-Theron y Robin, 2012), shown to be a very useful approach to nocturnal activities in natural contexts (Nofre *et al.*, 2016); and also participant observation until 2018 at the plenary sessions of the Central District (Madrid's Local Council). In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted (median length = 60 minutes) with a sample of (i) long-term residents (n = 15), 5 of them actively participating in the residents' association against urban change and the other 10 non-actively organised; and (ii) 2 semi-structured interviews with Madrid's central district representatives, one during the 2007-2012 period (when the leisure economy increased in the area) and the other with the official representative at the time this research was undertaken (2015-2019).

In Lisbon, fieldwork was conducted from 2004 to 2008, i.e. from the beginning of the protests against the conversion of the convent until the convent was remodelled. No formal participant observation was conducted, but there were informal wanderings and conversations with residents, tourists and bar and restaurant workers during that period. Additionally, the context and gentrification and *touristification*-related controversies in the neighbourhood were described based on a media analysis of three daily Portuguese newspapers (Público, Diário de Notícias and Correio da Manhã) in the 2004-2008 period. Departing from that analysis and contextualisation, (i) 12 semi-structured interviews were conducted with residents of *Bairro Alto*

<sup>2</sup> There was speculation about corruption in this area regarding a network of City Council employees, hoteliers and the municipal police, which was uncovered in 2007, a time when the conservative neoliberal party (Popular Party) ruled the city.

(median length = 30 min); (ii) 3 narrative interviews were conducted with participants in the residents' movement against the conversion of the convent, including with the spokesperson (median length = 2 h); and (iii) 6 narrative interviews were conducted with local administration representatives (made up of architects, planners and historians) from the *Bairro Alto* Office for Urban Rehabilitation, a local government structure, part of the Lisbon Municipal Council.

Taking into account the fact that different periods of time were studied in each case study and that different methods were used, there are some potential limitations that we can consider can constrain the comparative methodology, but that we have taken into account in the analyses of the data and that we also discuss in the final part of this article (see *Conclusions*). The reason behind these different methodological approaches is based on the different personal and temporal relationships that each one of the two authors of this paper had with each place. However, we believe that putting 'a comparative imagination to work' (Robinson, 2014) helped us to generate insights that went beyond the results of each case study; indeed, the intellectual and affective *comparative effort made* through this peer-to-peer dialogue between the authors helped us to generate novel reflections about our own studies, not previously taken into account, and to bring more to the fore the way in which previously identified dimensions of analysis were intrinsically linked to touristification-related processes and practices. In other words, by making this comparison, new aspects of both the *La Latina* and *Bairro Alto* protests emerged, shedding light to our previous conclusions as to what was 'going on' in Madrid and Lisbon. Besides this, taking inspiration from the ideas proposed by 'nethnography' or 'online ethnography', both the research conducted in Madrid and in Lisbon used information collected from internet blogs written by each of the neighbourhood associations / protest movements in Madrid and Lisbon. In our conversations, we discovered that we both used these sources of information for two main reasons: (i) they were useful for collecting data from some informants who might otherwise have been difficult to contact (i.e. municipal representatives, real estate developers and some residents reluctant to participate in academic research); and (ii) they provided us with some useful information on the official discourses of the protest organisations, i.e. how they present themselves in the

public sphere. In the case of *La Latina*: Vecinos hartos del Shoko; Salvemos La Latina (in total: 42 posts and associated comments (N=112)); In the case of *Bairro Alto*: Fórum Cidadania Lisboa [in total: 72 posts and associated comments (N=127)]. Limitations due to the use of these sources are also discussed in the *Conclusions*.

## 5. RESULTS AND ANALYSES

### 5.1. WHO ARE THE PROTESTERS? Performative identities produced around the protests in *Bairro Alto* and *La Latina*

Who the protesters are in terms of their position in the social and economic class structure is a common enquiry in debates around *Nimbyism*. Based on findings from our own research fieldwork, in the cases of *La Latina* and *Bairro Alto*, the narrative around 'the authentic neighbourhood' built by protesters helps us to understand how these groups are performatively constructed around the protests. In general, we find that the arguments concerning the need to defend the 'urban village' (Gans, 1962; Zukin, 2011), the legitimate and genuine identity of the place, are common to both cases. In this sense, some characteristics such as a 'sense of communal living', 'solidarity' among its inhabitants and the eminently local scale of relationships and daily life (for example, small shops instead of franchises, social practices built on a longstanding relationship of trust, such as 'gossip') are used in both cases to talk about 'the neighbourhood that disappears' because of the 'invasion' of change. Interestingly, both groups narratively construct change under this colonialist, almost warlike, metaphor (see also Batel & Devine-Wright, 2017; Aramayona & García-Sánchez, 2019). Although some of the content of their protests is led by physical changes to the environment, e.g. the disappearance of historical monuments, it is the intangible heritage in particular that both groups fear losing. However, there are relevant differences in the construction of neighbourhood genuineness and the content of the 'common heritage' that need to be preserved in each of the cases and that help us understand the implications of each protest.

In *La Latina*, depicted as 'quiet', 'peaceful' and 'familiar' by these neighbours (Interview 4, 2015), the urban changes that raised concerns and brought about the development of an active residents' association were, fundamentally, the increase in night-time

activities in the area. The increase in the number of nightlife businesses, their owners and users ('revellers') is represented as a threat to the tranquillity of the area. The 'noise', 'dirt' and 'disorder' are fundamentally some of the consequences that these neighbours point to as a result of the 'massive saturation' due to visitors and tourists looking for entertainment in urban spaces. As we have described in previous publications (*anonymised source*), in the case of the *La Latina* protesters, the rhetorical use of the 'ennobled' character of the area ('Madrid, the village of the House of Austria', 'the ancient and noble area of Madrid') helps to build a narrative in which the increase in 'low-cost' and 'cheap' nightlife is seen as 'devaluing' the place, enabling the displacement of undesirable local actors (such as informal vendors, young Spaniards coming from the outskirts of Madrid and Anglo Saxon and German tourists celebrating hen and stag parties construed as 'gross', 'uncivilised' and 'distasteful', partying hard and binge drinking). The massification produced by tourism and the growth in the visitor economy – especially at night-time – is then seen as an invasion of their social status by the 'hordes' of people 'coming from outside', who 'lower the tone of the place'.

The place identity revealed by the collective action of the *Bairro Alto* protest is somewhat different. As identified by the middle class artists and intellectuals living there and participants in the protests, *Bairro Alto* was mainly defined based on its older residents with low income and low levels of educational attainment (in all the four parishes that were then administratively part of *Bairro Alto*, 52% to 57% of the population had secondary education or less, as shown in the 2001 Census). The small grocery shops, butchers and cafés still owned by neighbourhood residents, along with the more clandestine activities, such as sex work, were all presented by the protesters as part of *Bairro Alto's* identity. The identity of the neighbourhood was presented as based on its historical character, typical of Lisbon, but also distinctive, with a specific history of narrow streets and buildings testifying to a particular urban heritage (Carita, 1990). Also, there were specific historical monuments, such as the Inglesinhos Convent and the 17<sup>th</sup>-century Cardaes Convent, which withstood the 1755 Lisbon earthquake, that were pointed out as an inherent part of that identity. This architectural and urban heritage was nonetheless presented as being accompanied by the degradation and poor condition

of the built environment of the neighbourhood at the time that this empirical research took place. As one of the residents bluntly put it, '*Bairro Alto* in itself is all run-down' (E2, 2005). This contradicts situations in other Lisbon neighbourhoods, which might explain why the more recent gentrification and touristification wave is often well-received by some groups (mainly the middle to upper classes, able to afford higher housing prices), as it allowed architecturally decaying buildings and neighbourhoods to be renovated. Therefore, both the physical abandonment and the social characteristics of *Bairro Alto* differed from *La Latina* at the time of the protest, given that the urban rehabilitation processes took place much earlier in the latter, where the presence of dilapidated houses and physical deterioration was practically absent at the time of this research. Furthermore, the *La Latina* protesters identified themselves as 'working class' or 'middle class' residents (both expressions used indiscriminately), but, unlike protesters in *Bairro Alto*, they did not present low income groups living in or engaging in clandestine or informal activities in the neighbourhood, such as drug dealing or prostitution, as part of the social heritage of the place. In fact, in the past, *La Latina* was known as a place for prostitution by older women during the 1950s and 1960s, or as a place for fringe gay activities during the 1980s and 1990s. Despite being known, this past 'fringe' history was not rescued as part of the social legacy that builds the narrative about the place.

Therefore, the narrative about the 'disruption' derived from the increase in 'visitors' differs in each of the cases and that narrative helps us to understand how the social characteristics of the 'visitors' are performatively built around each protest by the residents. In the case of *La Latina*, 'good tourists' are characterised as middle class visitors – regardless of their nationality – who engage in civilised behaviour during the daytime, compared to the tasteless visitors who come at night. This 'distinctiveness' (Zukin, 2011) did not appear in the *Bairro Alto* narratives. In the case of *Bairro Alto*, disruption was seen not only as being caused by tourists and by temporary residents who occupy the neighbourhood mainly at night and who come from other places in Lisbon or from suburban areas, but also, and mainly, by permanent wealthier newcomers that came to live in the new buildings that most of the people in the neighbourhood cannot afford. The prominence of the threatened 'price upscaling' in

the context of the *Bairro Alto* protest, as well as the conversion project described as a 'luxury' and 'gated' place for new 'rich' residents, evidences a critical political feature. Unlike the protest in *La Latina*, in *Bairro Alto*, changes were interpreted as a battle against 'rich people' who are 'coming to the community' and who 'will not bring anything to the neighbourhood' [Document 3:37, 42:42PT].

## 5.2. ARE PROTESTERS' MOTIVES LEGITIMATE?:

### Moral ownership of place and the negotiation of protest legitimacy

Dismissing the motives behind the protest as self-interest, irrational and ignorant has been a common argument in the literature on *Nimbyism*. Beyond detecting the 'real' motives behind a protest, what is relevant to us is, firstly, how legitimacy or the 'moral ownership' of place (Zukin, 2011) is constructed and negotiated around the protests; secondly which social actors are implicated; and thirdly, what effects these specific protests had on the following broader processes of urban change and resistance to tourism-oriented development in each city.

Interestingly, although similar narratives around the need to *preserve* the authentic character of the place as a resistant 'urban village' in a global world were used in both collective actions in Madrid and Lisbon – as described in the previous section – these were received very differently by public stakeholders and other 'third parties'. In the case of *Bairro Alto*, the protests were explicitly labelled as NIMBY and there was clear distrust of the 'real motives' behind their complaints, both from the local public administration and other members of the public (see Batel & Castro, 2015). In the case of *La Latina*, neither the press or the local administration used this term, nor were their demands said to be an object of distrust (see Aramayona *et al.*, 2019; Aramayona & García-Sánchez, 2020). In *La Latina*, although there was an underlying elitist narrative behind the complaints about nightlife and its perceived consequences (noise, dirt and 'uncivilised behaviour') as explained in the previous section, local authorities – both the previous conservative and the more recent left-wing governments – tended to understand that the needs of long-term residents were being subjected to annoying effects due to the 'natural' and mostly 'unstoppable' changes in the city. Although public institutional discourses and practices

might not be monolithic – especially in the case of the last progressive local government *Ahora Madrid* – and heterogeneity might be found through a more in-depth analysis of the discourses of these different actors, formal and official discourses about (neoliberal) urban changes and the related residents' protests were in line. Hence, when faced with the complaints from residents, there was a tendency to simply argue that any European city is subject to the processes of change due to 'ludification' as well as growth through the visitor economy. Paradoxically, official discourses also showed solidarity with the residents' situation in Madrid's central quarters. In other words, the 'laissez faire' attitude of Madrid's local municipality towards 'ludification' as a force for local urban growth went hand in hand with strong moral condemnation of the consequences of the growth in the 'visitor economy'. Therefore, we see a complex and even contradictory complicity between local administration and the media against some of the complaints made by conservative residents, which might reflect a common diagnosis of the 'perils' of globalisation and tourism-driven changes, as opposed to the maintenance of the 'civilised' behaviour of the 'national' middle class population, whilst at the same time allowing and even promoting it.

Quite differently, in the case of the *Bairro Alto* protests, a general suspicious attitude from other actors was evident from the very beginning of the protests, probably due to the protesters' profile and the more 'anti-upscaling' content of the protest. The older residents of *Bairro Alto*, in terms of time of residency in the neighbourhood, with poorer socioeconomic backgrounds, tended to be more concerned about maintaining the everyday characteristics of the neighbourhood, with its safe and comfortable neighbourly relations and the quietness of a rural village. More recent residents, with higher levels of social capital (Blockland & Savage, 2008), who were the ones most involved in the organisation of public protests, also wanted to preserve the architectural and social dimensions of the history of *Bairro Alto*. In fact, as was discussed previously, there is also an underlying tension in these conflicts reflected in the fact that most of the protagonists of protests against the social and physical changes taking place in *Bairro Alto* are not the 'real' *Bairro Alto* residents, but instead white, middle class intellectuals who had moved to the neighbourhood some years before because they could

afford to live in 'good' houses. The suspicious stance in relation to the 'early pioneers' of the gentrification processes in *Bairro Alto*, held by local administration and other citizens of Lisbon alike, might be at the heart of the conflict – similarly to other contexts, that stance was against the defence of other narratives of place associated with socioeconomic diversity, representing the early stages of gentrification and seen as facilitating an upscaling process that was more recently continued and exacerbated by touristification. This tension is evidenced by a few of the people who participated in the discussion taking place on the internet blog *Fórum Cidadania Lx*, who argued that the history of *Bairro Alto* was always made up of the lower and upper classes living together:

*the protesters object against rich people going to Bairro Alto. The logic is 'I was here before and I do not want new money people in my neighbourhood, leave my people alone' (Post 8:50, 25:25PT)*

Given the explicit accusation of self-interest and NIMBY-related motives in the wider public sphere, the motives of the protesters were performatively changed and negotiated throughout the course of the protests. In fact, whereas most of the protests were indeed initiated by mainly local concerns and had a local focus, as the protests and conflicts developed, they exposed related problems which were also criticised along with the initial focus of protests. In the case of the *Bairro Alto* protest, these included the patrimonial and social identity of the place and the quality of life of its 'true' residents, as well as a lack of transparency and democratic practices from the representatives of the government at local level – the BA Office for urban rehabilitation – and from the Lisbon Municipal Council and the central government itself. In the case of *La Latina*, the protests joined the complaints of other – although very ideologically diverse – groups against the touristification of Madrid (Cabrerizo, Sequera & Bachiller, 2017), which amplified their initial local motives into broader urban and metropolitan demands, such as a huge critique of the massive increase in *Airbnb* apartments in the city or the commoditisation of public spaces through the increased number of pavement cafés for monetised consumption outdoors. Hence, the *La Latina* residents' protests against recent urban changes combined the call not to turn the neighbourhood into a *show* for the consumption of visitors, which included

inhabitants as props, and a class-based call for more 'civilised behaviour' in the streets. This, as shown elsewhere (Aramayona & García, 2019), illustrates the complexity of some Spanish middle class protests in central neighbourhoods. At the same time, a much more agile and hostile attitude towards any attempt to ignore the processes of local participation by the residents in the design of *their* neighbourhoods was also enhanced. In this sense, both protests commenced with a strong local vocation regarding the perceived impact on 'my neighbourhood', which later grew into a denunciation of the perversity of relying on the growth in the global 'visitor economy' as the urban fate of a (local) place.

## 6. CONCLUSION AND FINAL REMARKS: THE IMPACTS OF THE BAIRRO ALTO AND LA LATINA PROTESTS

In the cases we have presented, both protests were unsuccessful in achieving their most explicit goals: in 2008, the old convent was replaced by a luxury gated community in *Bairro Alto* and more and more nightlife spots have been licensed in *La Latina* since the protests began in 2006. However, the emergence of and procedures followed by both protests had unexpected effects, even for their own protagonists. They set the conditions for broader mobilisation against the 'Tourist City' in the following years in Southern European cities. At the same time, an in-depth analysis of these two protests, conducted before the 'boom' of tourism as a motive for broader social mobilisation, gives us valuable information about other important preceding factors that might be operating due to current social concerns about the increase in the global visitor economy in these cities. In this sense, a comparison of both experiences helps us to reconsider the complexity and diversity of the protests, both by overcoming their simplification as NIMBY and by identifying the specific conditions that might promote different levels of social legitimacy against the 'visitor economy' in Southern European cities. Hence, in line with DeVerteuil (2013), we are not interested in the 'nimby effect in itself' but how this has become an object of media, political and academic concern and use and its relationship with current protests against tourism-oriented changes. In fact, underlying notions about who the legitimate 'locals', 'newcomers', 'old residents', 'tourists' and 'visitors' are seem to be

at the heart of the construction of the legitimacy of protests and moral ownership of changing central neighbourhoods in Southern European cities, in which tourism and gentrification amalgamate, coexist or nourish each other (Sequera & Nofre, 2018; Cocola-Gant & Lopez-Gay, 2020; Malet, 2017). Therefore, we argue that to go beyond superficial uses of the 'Nimby' concept in relation to protests, four questions should be asked from a critical approach to Nimby studies: (i) how identities are performatively built around the protests and how they are based on and make use of place-related relationships and narratives; (ii) how these place-based identities and narratives are criss-crossed by long-term cultural and historical dimensions and meanings about places (particularly relevant in the case of non-Anglo Saxon contexts, such as the South European region) and how these are contested, negotiated and used to advance or resist specific current changes, or how moral ownership and its legitimacy are at the heart of these conflicts; (iii) what the impacts of their collective actions are in terms of social and spatial justice, participation and redistribution; and (iv) how different actors, the media, academia and public stakeholders use the concept of NIMBY in particular situations and places and what interests that usage might be putting forward in a context of global urban neoliberalism.

Interestingly, we found that the narratives built around the protests in *Bairro Alto* and *La Latina*, at the time they took place, appealed to content that could be seen in different ways on a global/local scale and that these had different, complex and contradictory effects. In both cases, the place identities were appropriated by protesters to promote certain forms of a local or 'parochial' 'sense of being' (Tomaney, 2013), exemplified in these cases around the defence of the 'urban village' (Gans, 1962; Zukin, 2011). This collective sense of losing the previous 'urban village' might be seen as a common psychological impact or a perceived loss of sense of belonging due to the increase in the 'visitor economy' - seen as the metaphor and embodied representation of homogenising forces produced by the insertion of these locales in global consumption patterns, as Erik Swyngedouw, & Maria Kaika (2003) would suggest - as has happened in other cases of protest against the 'Tourist City' (Colomb & Novy, 2017; Sequera & Nofre, 2018, 2019). However, this defence of the 'urban village' and 'sense of loss' has

also been used in very different ways to defend certain 'people-place' relationships (Lewicka, 2005; Devine-Wright, 2013), as well as the inner complexity of the own meaning of 'community' in tourism destination places (García & Hullán, 2019). which could be very important for understanding the impacts and consequences of both protests in their local territories and in processes of resistance against urban changes in the Southern Europe context. Although the use of virtual methods such as nethnology can offer too 'drastic' subjective positionalities - i.e. exaggerating or exacerbating social positions through blogs - the place identity built around places was intensified during protests. In the case of *Bairro Alto*, the early young middle class gentrifiers were reclaiming a narrative about 'popular and working class heritage' that, even if their biographical trajectories did not fully fit in with it in terms of their position in the social structure and in terms of their social and cultural capital, they believed it was worthwhile to defend it as a 'social heritage' shared with other less privileged and less organised older and working class residents against the possible gentrification and price upscaling of the place. Hence, their 'social capital' allowed them to carry out complex forms of 'networked urbanism' (Blockland & Savage, 2008) and new forms of liberty, freedom and political engagement on a local scale, whilst paradoxically and involuntarily contributing to the 'gentrification' of the place as the first 'pioneers' of the ensuing regeneration process. Conversely, in the case of *La Latina*, adult and older middle class homeowners built a common story around the place based on its past, noble and exclusive heritage, which was useful in order to ignore the perceived 'brutalised' use of urban space by nightlife revellers, making the poverty and fringe activities that still inhabited the place in many different ways invisible.

Thus, both protests shared strong local narratives that prompted strong anti-globalisation claims (Tomaney, 2013), such as the defence of non-commoditised uses of public space or the rejection of its 'commoditisation' for the consumption and recreation of the global visitor - something that was common to protests against tourism-oriented changes in both cities in the following years. Nevertheless, the rhetoric of the 'common heritage' was used in very different ways. The very history of the neighbourhoods and associated dimensions were taken up in different ways and used

diversely as political resources to defend certain people-place relations (see also Batel & Devine-Wright, 2020), which seems to be related to the different narratives people have developed in the neighbourhood. This sets the conditions for future re-appropriations of these narratives – such as those proposing romantic idealisations of the 'small town in the city' – by different organised and non-organised social actors, such as the groups against touristification since the 2010s and by Erasmus students who have been key actors in the commoditisation of the place (Nofre *et al.*, 2017a; Malet, Nofre & Geraldès, 2016). These different forms of appropriation around the 'authenticity' of place pose serious questions as to 'who has the right' or 'who is morally legitimised or not' to reclaim the appropriation of a place that holds centuries of history (Zukin, 2011).

Additionally, what we find especially interesting in both cases is how the legitimacy of the protests was collectively built, contested and negotiated in each case by protesters, public administrations and 'third parties' and how it spoke to broader processes of social change and resistance. In the case of *Bairro Alto*, the controversy quickly brought to the fore debates about the legacy left to current, supposedly democratic, practices by the dictatorship (see Batel & Castro, 2015), seen in the lack of voice of the *Bairro Alto* inhabitants regarding the changes taking place in their neighbourhood. In the case of *La Latina*, despite having a common history of an authoritarian regime since the second half of the 20th century, under the dictator, Franco, and even though the protest had a claim against a lack of deep participatory decision-making processes in Madrid, that authoritarian legacy was not seen as part of the protesters' social discomfort. There was instead an underlying paternalistic attitude adopted by the local councils in Madrid and a sense of complicity with the 'reactionary politics' (Massey, 1994, 2009) represented by the demands from the *La Latina* residents regarding the need to defend 'civilised behaviour' in this 'noble' place. To sum up, the issue around the legitimacy of participation in decision-making surrounds a large part of these debates. In other words, we might talk about overcoming the environmental injustice that creates place poverty, as in the constrained access to symbolically meaningful spaces (Devine-Wright, 2009) or spaces with diverse and complex moral ownership (Zukin, 2011).

In summary, the construction of the 'genuineness' and 'authenticity' of the place (Zukin, 2011), depicted by both groups of residents within the metaphor of the resistant 'urban village', was represented as being at risk due to the increase in broader global changes in very different ways in each of the protests presented here. Although both neighbourhoods shared a common heritage in terms of fringe elements and poor backgrounds, the main difference between the *La Latina* and *Bairro Alto* protests was their selective invocation of different historical backgrounds: the former appealing to a *civilised* and noble identity of the place, the latter to its more alternative and popular identity. Although both failed to accomplish their main, original goals, it is interesting to note that the middle class homeowners in *La Latina* often received better treatment from the media and public stakeholders than the more radical left-oriented *Bairro Alto* protests.

In this paper, we went beyond NIMBY simplification to illustrate the diversity of the local groups and their collective actions, as well as their historical-biographical perspectives and the importance of people-place relationships (Devine-Wright, 2013) in order to understand how different complex identities and social positions are performatively built in the 'Us' vs 'Others' dialectic and the impacts of the protests on a long-term scale. A geographically and culturally specific approach, taking into account the cultural and historical trajectories of place and their complex, class-based relations, might be necessary in order to understand both the past and recent struggles of the 'Tourist City' in Southern European cities. Future research might be interested in making a detailed analysis of the extent to which the temporal variations between the cases of Lisbon and Madrid cases affect the content, evolution and impact of each protest in the overall process of city change. Although there was no space to further discuss this in this paper, future lines of research would also benefit from exploring the links between the theoretical frameworks discussing geographical identities produced under the scope of social movements and collective action (Arampatzis & Nicholls, 2012; Nicholls, 2007, 2009) and the frameworks on *Nimbyism* described here, in order to understand the deep implications of how collective identities are produced and performed through protests in Southern European post-recession contexts.

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