

68 Gentrification and Public Policies

Art and culture in urban transformation within the European context

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ABSTRACT

The process of deindustrialization has led to a change in the economic system, and consequently to a demographic crisis. The effect on cities' urban fabric was a discontinuous and fragmented territory that encouraged episodes of social marginalization and created the conditions for speculation to operate, originating from an uncontrolled real estate market. At the same time, creativity has assumed a fundamental role in the production system, increasingly attentive to the development of goods and services related to the cultural industry. Art integration in public policies as a catalyst for urban development is adopted by the political power in order to attract investments that can contribute to the increase of capital through the revitalization of parts of the city. In this scenario, this paper aims to systematize chronologically the information inherent to the relationship between gentrification, art and public policies in order to outline bottom-up strategies encouraged by the political power that determine a sustainable transformation of urban territory. A digital cartography in a timeline format will allow to highlight the consequential interconnections between theories, practices and historical events, showing the ambivalence of the performing arts as a promoter or moderator of gentrification, and the role of politics in the evolution of this socio-economic dynamic since its first establishment in 1964 until today. This draft is part of the investigation work on the PhD thesis in Architecture of Contemporary Metropolitan Territories, which aims to elaborate guidelines for public policies that, considering art and culture as fundamental parts of the metropolises' citizens identity construction, may define a new role for industrial areas that have been abandoned after deindustrialization. The results of this thesis are essential to amplify the research on urban regeneration of territory, cities and built spaces, one of the guiding axes of the thematic agenda to investigate and innovate Portuguese architecture.

Keywords: participation, urban regeneration, deindustrialization, metropolis.

1. Introduction

Gentrification is a phenomenon that has stood out in scientific studies since 1964, the year in which sociologist Ruth Glass, observing some popular neighbourhoods in London, described how they were seen as object of interest by the middle class, that, buying houses at a lower price, determined a change in the social fabric of the urban area. Successive researches removed the spontaneity character previously attributed to the phenomenon, pointing the responsibility to property developers who seek economic opportunities in those stigmatized urban areas that have high soil value.

Contemporary investigations, therefore, denote the instrumental use of some urban practices that are encouraged by the government to increase the value of degraded neighbourhoods and to be able to attract private investments in order to implement top-down urban regeneration operations.

In this sense, authors like Rose, in 1984 observing the Anglo-Saxon context, and Mendes in more recent times, investigating the phenomenon of gentrification in Portuguese territory, show the existence of “marginal gentrifiers” (1984, p.68), that is, “individuals of the middle class with a high cultural level who continue to give preference to central areas of the city to take up residence [...] presumably attracted by the non-conformist lifestyle and the socially and ethnically mixed and tolerant urban environment of the downtown neighbourhoods” (Mendes, 2015, p.20).

Recent researches show that individuals, involved in underground art and culture, peculiar to contemporary metropolises, are attracted by places with buildings and structures of industrial origin to install their own activity. Ana Estevens (2019), observing the phenomenon of gentrification in Lisbon’s territory, notes how artists and the population in general whose activity and interests are linked to art and culture are attracted by the deindustrialized neighbourhoods, by their decadent aspect and by the authentically urban experience that they can provide.

The present investigation starts from the analysis of the relationship that exists between public power, gentrification and cultural and artistic activities. Although this theme is central to several scientific works, there is still a lack of proposals which promote debate on public policies, based on art and culture, as cautionary actions against gentrification. The research, therefore, sets the objective of delineating examples in the European context of public policies that, encouraging artistic activity as a propellant of sustainable urban regeneration strategies, are opposed to the displacement (Smith, 1996) that involves the estrangement of artistic entities which have contributed to requalify the given area.

From a critical literature review on gentrification and the interconnected themes of artistic activity and public policies, it will be possible to structure a digital

cartography, in the shape of a timeline, that can present the most current guidelines for the implementation of public policies for urban regeneration that discourage the gentrification phenomenon.

2. State of the Art

The word gentrification is derived from the noun “gentry”, a word used by Ruth Glass (1964) to indicate a social group of the late ‘800 that managed to take advantage of the low costs of working-class housing to settle in more economically advantageous neighbourhoods.

Since this first observation and definition of the phenomenon, different authors have been able to ascertain the different circumstances, causes and effects of its expression in the urban context of said time. A first approach was presented by Neil Smith (1979) who attributes as a cause of gentrification the difference of value between the current rent and the potential rent of a given property and its area. The capital investment in these buildings, which aims to improve the conditions of the area, has the effect of increasing its value, as well as rents and prices in general.

A second approach, elaborated by David Ley (1980), points out the way that the change in the production system is reflected on a different demand in the labour market, which has started to urge for qualified professionals in service production instead of goods production. This change in the economic system, announced by the phase of deindustrialization in contemporary cities, was reflected in the working middle class. This is seen as a cause for gentrification due to the greater ability to spend money compared to the past, as well as the higher interest in consuming products that respond not only to primary needs, but also aesthetic and recreational ones.

Zukin in 1982 presents a theory that shows a correlation between these two approaches, demonstrating how both causes of gentrification indicated by the previous authors create the circumstances that give rise to this socio-economic phenomenon. The author stresses the way in which the use of culture can be addressed to attract capital in the built environment.

In this context, Rose (1984) focuses on the detailed study of the part of society considered responsible for gentrification: the middle class, diversifying it into various groups, including students, artists, intellectuals, all provided with the same cultural dimension. The author uses the term “marginal gentrifiers” to “refer to young people with low economic capital, but with high social and cultural capital, who tend to settle in decadent neighbourhoods in the early stages of the gentrification process, attracted by the low costs of rent, the proximity to the workplace, its social networks and unconventional lifestyles” (Estevens, 2019, p.11).

In 1988 the observation of the phenomenon in the urban context shows that the circumscription to large centres is no longer the sole place of gentrification, as evidenced by several studies carried out in small cities, such as that of Swedish geographer Eric Clark in Malmo, which aims to verify Smith's theory of the rent gap. At the same time, Hackworth and Smith (2001) described the gentrification of the '90s, noting the expansion of the phenomenon in non-central areas, the decay of forms of resistance and the involvement of the state in the activation of the process.

Bourne (1993) highlights the way in which the previous definitions exclude cases of gentrification caused by the construction of new residential buildings or by the reuse of industrial buildings, re-functionalized in terms of housing.

Savage and Ward (1993) identify the presence of four conditions: "1. a reorganization of the social geography of the city, with the replacement, in the central areas, of a social group by another of a higher status; 2. a spatial regrouping of individuals with similar lifestyles and cultural characteristics; 3. a transformation of the built environment and the urban landscape, with the creation of new services and a residential requalification that foresees important architectural improvements; 4. lastly, a change in the land order, which, in most cases, determines the rise in land values and an increase in the number of dwellings per property" (Mendes, 2008, p.6).

In the contemporary era, therefore, the authors show the way in which the phenomenon of gentrification can be described through a complex system that involves dynamics from different scientific spheres, social, economic and urban. In this point of view, we must consider the variable of the political power's action, that is more and more often implementing "urban regeneration policies led by art and culture, with the goal of attracting new residents, middle class users and tourists" (Estevens, 2019, p.10) thus promoting a process of revitalization of the area that in the long term causes the replacement of the original population and the activities that have contributed to dynamize the place.

3. Methodology

The methodology consists of a bibliographic research and literature review on the subject of gentrification and its links with the topics of public policies and performing art, with the aim of underlining in the European context good practices of co-government in the regeneration of territories that involve people related to art and culture.

The collected information was categorized to build a digital cartography in a timeline conformation. For this purpose, Timeline JS was used - a tool that collects data and phenomena described from a chronological point of view and presents it in a graphically incisive way. This instrument is a product of Northwestern University Knight Lab which describes itself as a "community of designers,

creators, students and educators working on experiences designed to push journalism into new spaces" (<https://knightlab.northwestern.edu/about/>).

Timeline JS is an open-source tool, which means it is of free access. This attribute, along with the ease of use promoted by an intuitive interface makes this tool accessible to anyone who has little technical experience. Therefore, it can be used in investigations in various disciplinary areas, such as journalism, geography, sociology and urbanism. At the same time, better qualified users can, through JSON's own capabilities, customize the results by coding data structures.

This possibility alludes to the cybernetic community of the contemporary era, made up of programmers and users of the network who share their own projects through the GitHub source code hosting platform. In this sense, Lange and Waal (2019) compare the concept of a web platform to the that of the city, because of their potential to interconnect individuals, organizations, open-source projects and software through the digital space.

The choice of organizing theoretical and practical knowledge on the subject of gentrification in a timeline shape was adopted by Hackworth and Smith (2001, p.467) to structure and illustrate the various phases of the phenomenon in New York. The authors observe how these stages also appear in other urban contexts, but at different historical moments, depending on similar economic and political processes.

Another reference that uses TimelineJS to collect and systematize data and information is IndAtlas, a platform developed by an interdisciplinary research group in UFMG, which is based on contributions of a digitally interconnected population and allows multiple readings of the urban transformations observed through interactive cartography gathered in the same web application. Their use of the timeline was one of the digital tools that show information, presented through different graphics, allowing it to constitute a cartographic narrative of the analysed urban territory.

Similarly, the present experience wants to systematize the knowledge about the phenomenon of gentrification through the confrontation between theories, practices and historical milestones. TimelineJS is mediated by a Google spreadsheet, and by filling in the information related to dates, title, text, media, credits and group (publication, public policy guideline, historical landmark and practice) it is possible to obtain an interactive object capable of communicating, through an effective graph, the chronological succession that describes the evolution of the phenomenon.

The gathering of information was made from a search for the keyword "gentrification". The results led to the designing of a first fundamental bibliography that would define the phenomenon ontologically since its first conceptualization.

Starting from reading the most recent and specific studies on Portuguese research, the context of research analysis to which this article is a contribution, it was possible to find the fundamental authors who first defined the phenomenon, relating it to the expansion of artistic and cultural activities. The reading of the texts allowed to verify and ascertain the references previously found.

The authors' observation of gentrification's expansion in different urban contexts allowed to trace common characteristics, which could explain the advance of this phenomenon in contemporary cities in rapid change. The disclosure of the causes of the phenomenon has made it possible to look for those practices and for public policy guidelines that would discourage the gentrification process by acting in the circumstances of its development.

The outlined historical milestones are those that have directly or indirectly influenced the phenomenon of gentrification in contemporary cities, that is, the events that have contributed to the creation of the conditions of displacement, that involves the expulsion of a group of individuals with a certain social and cultural identity from the neighbourhoods where they lived and / or performed their own artistic or cultural activity.

The used images were all found on the internet, saved on the author's personal Flickr page (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/laurapomesano/>), and placed on the spreadsheet by inserting the web address of the same Flickr platform. The proper reference to the source website and the captions were added through the Media Captation field.

The Google spreadsheet, filed in the author's Google Drive, was therefore completed by placing the information as found, without respecting any chronological order, that was instead ensured by the script on the TimelineJS website, which, by placing the link to the published sheet, has formed the visualization that can be found on the following url: <https://bit.ly/3mzieIK>.

4. Results and Discussion

The extension of the phenomenon of gentrification that largely interests the cities covered by deindustrialization required the outlining of an analysis of the various, and sometimes contrasting, theoretical positions.

It is possible to summarise the development of contemporary metropolises through the succession of sociological, political and economic ruptures and transformations. In this scenario, it is easy to understand how the value and production of capital can divide the theses of specialists who approach the investigation of a phenomenon such as gentrification, which is essentially a social-economic dynamic influenced by political power.

There are, therefore, arguments that look at gentrification as a process that brings economic wealth to degraded areas, but as Fitzgerald and Green Leigh (2002, p.26) warn, it is necessary to make a distinction between economic development and capital increase. When, after certain urban transformations, there is an economic enrichment that coincides only with an increase in capital, there may be cases of segregation of communities and groups, a discrepancy in the distribution of this wealth and a decline in the urban quality of the place.

The expected results of the chronological systematization that links gentrification, artistic activity and public policies reflect, therefore, this view that considers the displacement as cause of the fragmentation of the contemporary urban space, favoured by the poorly regulated real estate market that determines speculative appreciation processes (Barata Salgueiro, 1998, p.71).

In the table 1 "Timeline" it is possible to consult the data that generates the interactive timeline.

Table 1 – Timeline.

Year	Headline	Group
1964	First definition of Gentrification	Publication
1979	Production-oriented approach (capital)	Publication
1980	Consumption-oriented approach (culture)	Publication
1982	Correlation between capital and culture	Publication
1984	Marginal gentrifier	Publication
1988	Expansion in urban territory	Publication
1990	The 90's	Publication
1993	Gentrification in the reuse of buildings and new buildings	Publication
1993	Gentrification processes	Publication
1996	Displacement	Publication
2002	The rise of the creative class	Publication
2003	Defense against displacement	Public Policy guideline
2006	The neighborhood dimension	Publication
2006	Gentrification as a "global urban strategy"	Publication
2007	Great Recession	Historical landmark
2009	SEKo 2020	Practice
2011	Marseille: sustainable tourism	Practice
2014	Exploring Anti-Gentrification Practices and policies in Southern European Cities	Practice
2017	Projeto europeu H2020 "ROCK – Regeneration and Optimisation of Cultural heritage in creative and Knowledge cities"	Practice

Source: Own creation.

In the theoretical research phase, integrated in the group “publication,” it was possible to extrapolate the information that describes the conditions of the gentrification process as a consequence of the interference of political power that favours the increase of activities related to art and culture to promote the requalification of socially marginalized neighbourhoods (Zukin, 1982; Rose, 1984; Hackworth and Smith, 2001; Bain, 2003; Smith, 2006).

In the research phase related to the information inherent to the Practices and Guidelines, those that encourage artistic and cultural activity as a lever for the promotion of public policies for urban regeneration were considered. In view of the difficulty in recovering cases that were relevant to this premise, it was possible to verify that this strategy still does not find many empirical examples in the European urban context, above all comparing it with the diffusion of housing projects that aim to mitigate the gentrification processes that cause the expulsion of former residents of a given urban area. This is explained by considering how the expansion of the creative economy coincided with the conclusion of the process of deindustrialization, dated, depending on the urban context considered, between the '80s and the recent 2000s. In this sense, in 2002 Florida underlines how the increased demand for products and services related to the recent creative activity has guided political choices in the creation of a new economic polarization to replace the industrial one.

The most diffuse public policy initiatives that fight against the gentrification process, as evidenced by the 2014 European project “Exploring Anti-Gentrification Practices and policies in Southern European Cities” (Annunziata, 2017) are more focused on anti-eviction, anti-speculation and anti-privatization, which essentially consider residential gentrification. The authors demarcated the importance of self-organization of artistic and cultural entities in “a social group with a distinctive occupational identity” (Bain, 2003, p.305) that can advance an action in the redefinition of the urban space from which they do not want to be excluded.

The contemporary era is marked by the Great Recession of 2007, that, starting from the United States, caused financial instability worldwide that led to an increase in social inequalities and an investment of capital, by private individuals, in buildings that had suffered a collapse in economic value. In this context, there is a growing awareness of the removal of artists from areas that they have contributed to revitalize.

European projects such as Project H2020 “ROCK - Regeneration and optimization of cultural heritage in creative and knowledge cities” aim to promote strategies for urban regeneration through the conservation and enhancement of the city’s cultural heritage with the involvement of the local population through participatory methods. European cities like Leipzig have made fundamental the role of artistic-cultural activity in the urban development plan itself, in which political power is

in an open position that disagrees with gentrification. In particular, in this significant studio case, it is important to underline the long-term public policies of the urban development plan “SEKo 2020” that have been implemented to allow artists to use, at a low price, unoccupied buildings of industrial origin, with an obligation to maintain or improve the conditions of those buildings.

5. Conclusion

Practices, guidelines and theories underline the need for organization among individuals involved in artistic-cultural activities in order to have a representation and a status within the economic and political processes of the urban context of belonging.

The association, defined in this way, has an obligation to work collaboratively with the rest of the community, involving the population in local initiatives. The role of the arts and culture can be used by the government in regeneration strategies. The entities involved in the artistic and cultural activities generally have a great relationship with the context in which they exercise it and it is, therefore, necessary that the role is not reduced to the production of “cool” places attracting “alternative consumers” (Estevens, 2019, p.7) in underground areas. Co-government through group work between politics, artists and the population, has a potential social value as long as it can activate a dialogue between communities, which can only happen when the residents are also properly involved and not relegated to the role of observers.

Local specificities have to be taken advantage of in order to avoid homologation that may derive from the commercialization of cultural services and products. At the same time, local communities must be involved to discourage any situation of social marginalization. In this scenario, art has to play multiple roles.

The positive success of these strategies can only be achieved through the elaboration of public policies in the long term because “Gentrification is a long-term process” (Garcia-Zamor, 2014, p.100). These strategies, based on the study of possible future scenarios, which depend on the economic, social and political variables, can act effectively on the dynamics at play and resolve the circumstances that cause the phenomenon of displacement. The examples of good practices and public policy guidelines described in-depth in this article promote a sustainable transformation of the urban space, discouraging gentrification processes. This information will be evaluated again in a phase of comparison with the results of the participatory actions promoted on the ongoing research project and with the morphological, social, economic, political and cultural analyses carried out in order to outline possible developments in the urban area and its society.

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