

GLOBAL GENTRIFICATIONS

Uneven development and displacement

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Slum gentrification in Lisbon, Portugal: displacement and the imagined futures of an informal settlement

Eduardo Ascensão

Introduction

When Lisbon is presented in touristic and official discourses, it is often the city's post-imperial culture that comes to the forefront. The city and its monuments are associated with the history of its Navigators and with the Portuguese Empire, and many elements are presented as 'remnants of empire'. The city centre contains different historical layers (such as a 13th-century Moor neighbourhood, elements of the 16th-century maritime world or late-18th-century rationalist urban design; see França, 2008) but the one thing linking five centuries of history together is the reference to empire. Heroic navigation, scientific expeditions, settlement colonialism and miscegenation, all are summoned to describe the undercurrent of the nation's and of the city's history.

Today, several parts of the city centre are undergoing a rapid process of regeneration and/or gentrification, and these historical themes are often deployed in narrations that legitimate the city's *embourgeoisement*. In the central areas of Avenida da Liberdade, Chiado and Príncipe Real, transnational property-led developer gentrification is flourishing – windows are awash with CB Richard Ellis and Sotheby's real estate agents' billboards in both the residential and commercial areas – and is directed at the (national and foreign) affluent populations that, in the past three decades, have fled to the better-off suburbs along the Cascais train line. This is academically referred to as nobilisation (*nobilitação*), in a way, a nuance of the label gentrification given that these areas have always been the more aristocratic ones. Since 2011, this process has been accelerated with the forced 'devaluation of everything' (salaries, labour rights, rent controls, tenant rights) except for the currency (the Euro), under the structural adjustment programme signed with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the European Commission and the European Central Bank. The recession-inducing remedies (poison) of irrational one-direction austerity (strict conditionality for countries; unconditionality for the finance sector) have created the perfect storm for a revanchist takeover by the upper-middle and upper classes of Lisbon's historical centre.

Even in the face of this, housing and urban studies academics in Portugal tend to minimise the relevance of the concept of gentrification for the case of Lisbon – implying that it belongs exclusively to the repertoire of the Anglo-American city. Exceptions go back to the early 1990s, but were mostly student dissertations (eg Branco, 1992). During the late 1990s and early 2000s, the functional regional planning literature (eg Costa, 2007) aligned itself with the ‘creative industries’ discourse being proposed by local governments and, oblivious to its critique by, for example, Peck (2005), still suggested that gentrification was benign urban change. For both groups, gentrification simply meant the arrival of pioneer gentrifiers and artists into disused areas or, at most, the marketing of a historical neighbourhood as a nightlife or cultural district. The issues of displacement and the right to the city were put aside. In any case, up until very recently, the number of academic publications on gentrification was miniscule.

Lately, other authors have started to address more seriously the social and spatial implications of gentrification (Rodrigues, 2010; Malheiros et al, 2012; Mendes, 2012), with empirical evidence from the private-led gentrification of the nightlife district of Bairro Alto (Mendes, 2006) or the local government-led initiative revitalising the old ‘Moor’ quarter, Mouraria (Malheiros et al, 2012). The latter investigated the importance of ‘marginal (pioneer) gentrifiers’ but also argued that the gentrifiers’ social relations were detached from the ageing urban poor who already lived there and the poor immigrants (from Bangladesh, Pakistan, Senegal and China) who had settled there over the past 15 years. They suggest a process that Butler and Robson (2003) term ‘tectonic social relations’, but, as stated earlier, in this case as well as in others, a domesticated idea of post-colonial multiculturalism serves a strong gentrification agenda (Oliveira, 2013).

These imaginations brand Lisbon’s city centre as post-colonial and cosmopolitan in order to appeal to a ‘back to the city’ movement for the more affluent segments of society, but what they fail to acknowledge is that Lisbon’s most relevant post-imperial or post-colonial characteristic in the last three decades has been its relationship with the post-colonial immigrants that settled in informal settlements on the outskirts of the city after the fall of Salazar and Caetano’s fascist dictatorship in 1974, and the independence of former colonies such as Angola, Mozambique, Cape Verde or Guinea-Bissau.

Post-colonial migration and the geography of informal settlements in Lisbon

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Lisbon’s urban expansion was peppered with the informal settlements that these migrants – priced out of the housing market and ineligible for the scarce pool of public housing stock (to this day, the national pool of publically owned dwellings is not bigger than 120,000 dwellings [Carreiras et al, 2011; based on INE, 2001; IHRU, 2007]) – built. These settlements were located in places with a proximity to jobs (Salgueiro, 1977) and, just as importantly, with a certain administrative invisibility that allowed for the illegal occupation and

development of medium-sized plots of land that, by then, were neither profitable for agriculture nor likely – at the time – to be legally developed into urban space (Rodrigues, 1989). As a result, a sort of invisible infra-city with infra-citizens left to their own devices grew during this period; at its peak in the late 1980s, the scattered pockets of slums and shanty towns were estimated to be inhabited by 150,000 to 200,000 people (Númena, 2003, p 143).¹

Shanties coexisted with a different type of housing stock, *clandestinos* – today referred to by an acronym, *AUGI* (*Áreas Urbanas de Génese Ilegal; Urban Areas of Illegal Genesis*) – which consist of ‘canonical’ housing typologies, usually the single-family detached house or the two-storey building, built without planning permission on legally owned agricultural land. *Clandestinos* share many features with other illegal typologies in Southern Europe, such as *viviendas marginales* in Spain, *borghetti* in Italy or *afthereta* in Greece (eg Leontidou, 1990, p 20). Because of the inability of the state to provide housing in sufficient numbers, *clandestinos* as well as *barracas* (shanties) were in effect tacitly accepted by the state (Gaspar, 1989, p 82). This brief mention of *clandestinos* is crucial in understanding how ‘slums’ began. In fact, if to oversimplify a little, many shanty towns in Lisbon started out as *clandestinos*, but whereas some of the latter were subsequently legalised and provided with infrastructure and municipal services such as rubbish removal, others began to deteriorate into slums. Where land was owned by its inhabitants and illegally built upon, political trade-offs between local authorities and populations with a view to legalisation *a posteriori* could occur. Where land was not owned by inhabitants, nor was it public, it was subject to predatory urban capital, which, because the city was expanding, bought individual plots and consolidated them into larger areas with a view to building new residential developments.² Land tenure, class, race and the ability to bargain with local politicians were the key factors in this division between improving and deteriorating neighbourhoods. This evidence supports Roy’s (2005, p 149) argument that:

[urban] informality must be understood not as the object of state regulation but rather as produced by the state itself.... The planning and legal apparatus of the state has the power ... to determine what is informal and what is not, and to determine which forms of informality will thrive and which will disappear.

Mutatis mutandis, in Lisbon, the settlements with the worst conditions did not disappear, they continued and expanded exponentially in the 1980s with post-colonial immigrants.³ It was this second layer of illegal settlement that formed the constellation of shanty towns mentioned earlier, and this relation between post-colonial migration and settlements of shanty-like dwellings is what makes them somewhat unique, in Europe and worldwide. In terms of historical comparison, the relevance of migration waves immediately after decolonisation becoming integral to the urban growth of ‘post-imperial’ cities, as is the case in Lisbon, can be accurately compared to Algerian or other Maghreb immigrants settling

in Paris's *bidonvilles* in the 1950s–60s (Sayad and Dupuy, 1995), which curiously were to integrate many poor Portuguese immigrants into France in the 1960s (Volovitch-Tavares, 1995). However, in terms of architectural form, for the past 40 years, informality in Europe has tended not to translate into shanty-like dwellings (at least not of a permanent nature).

In 1993, the Portuguese state devised a Special Relhousing Programme (*Plano Especial de Realojamento*; from now on, PER) to rehouse these populations. It involved a substantial financial effort from the state – between at least €1.2 billion, consisting of €600 million in direct subsidies and €600 million in credit lines for municipalities recorded for the period 1994–2004 (IHRU, 2007, pp 142–5), and the more recent figure of €3 billion (Lusa, 2013) – to demolish the 30,000 shanties (*barracas*) surveyed at the time (AML, 1997, p 15) and build public housing estates for its inhabitants. The political rationale for the enactment of the programme was connected to the fact that: when Portugal held the European Economic Community (EEC) presidency for the first time in 1992, Lisbon was the only European capital with slums; the city was also going to be the European Capital of Culture in 1994; and it would host the World Fair (Expo 98) in 1998. However, the programme also responded to the long process of internal and post-colonial migration that had happened hand in hand with informal urbanisation.

The programme involved both *in situ* rehousing, with new buildings either on site or in the immediate vicinities of the previous informal settlements – for instance Casal Ventoso (Chaves, 1999) or Curraleira in the Lisbon municipality; Quinta da Vitória in Loures (Cachado, 2012) – or more complex options, such as the *in situ* upgrading of the illegal concrete dwellings of Cova da Moura in Amadora (Ascensão, 2013a), and clearance and rehousing in far-away, underserved areas (without commerce, transport, etc) in municipalities' hinterlands. Examples of the latter include: the transfer of people from the Fontainhas shanty town to the Casal da Boba estate; from Azinhaga dos Besouros to Casal da Mira in the Amadora municipality; from Pedreira dos Húngaros to the Moínho das Rolas estate in Porto Salvo, municipality of Oeiras; or from Marianas to the Adroana estate in Cascais. All four shanty towns were relatively well located, with great views, proximity to jobs and adjacent to middle-class areas; all four estates are amid agricultural land, isolated and completely segregated. The programme was part of a contradictory class project because, while acknowledging the need to provide decent housing for slum dwellers, in the latter cases, it further segregated them, as if trying to solve a problem by hiding it. Clearance and rehousing was opted for because: the land on which the slums were located increased in value; there was a lack of public land nearby, as was forewarned by Pereira (1993); and local governments were reluctant to expropriate the land from its private owners – who had initially left it vacant and disused but were now looking to make considerable profit from the implementation of the programme, in a type of speculation by absence.

As implementation developed, another facet of the programme started to emerge: the issue of governmentality. One of the programme's principal tenets was

that everyone would be rehoused but that no more shanties would be tolerated. This was operationalised through, first, census-like surveying (assessing how many people inhabited these settlements) and, second, categorisation (assessing who was eligible for the programmes). In the process, these slum populations were rendered increasingly visible to the state, becoming part of numeric governmentality (Porter, 1995; Scott, 1998). However, the state encountered many problems. The slum surveys had a 'fixed' date in 1993 and the programme's slow implementation did not factor well with the high turnover of residents in each settlement. Then, using the classic procedures of displacement/gentrification, that is, an un-negotiated administrative notice posted on house doors stating 'Your house will be razed by the government on date x. Please move' (for such a procedure as the mark of gentrification, see Anderson, 1964, cited in Lees et al, 2010, p 318), did not set a good platform for engagement with the slum dwellers. Furthermore, the displacement was in many cases a result of the municipality's financial frailties, which meant that they were open to being captured by predatory urban capital. Finally, the displacement was hidden by the local government and mainstream media's discursive manipulations, which Crozat (2003) described in the case of the settlement of Pedreira dos Húngaros.⁴

So, what we have had in Lisbon over the past decade and a half is a situation of dual gentrification: the gentrification of the city centre, as mentioned earlier, and that of some of the sites where informal settlements once stood. In this chapter, I focus on the gentrification of one informal settlement in particular, the neighbourhood of Quinta da Serra. Drawing on ethnographic research as well as on the excavation of municipal intermediate archives,⁵ I discuss the complex intersection of post-coloniality, informality and displacement-gentrification present in the PER programme. The protracted implementation at PER site #44, unjust and disheartening to residents, allowed for the examination of the 'scaffolding' of the production of urban space along class and race lines (Ascensão, 2013b). I begin this case study through the eyes of the residents of the settlement as it was undergoing demolition – when I also engage in 'heterodox comparisons' with the similar experiences of slum dwellers in the Global South – and only then do I look in detail at the institutional imaginings and political economy of the relocation process. I end by describing what is 'actually existing' on the site today, which is a type of low-fi survival that followed the interruption of these institutional imaginings.

In this chapter, I argue that this process involved gentrification through a mechanism not unlike gentrification by ground rent dispossession (López-Morales, 2011; see also Shin, 2008, 2009), state-led but private-profit-protecting. We could label it as 'area gentrification' (akin to urban renewal) in the strict sense of the word 'area', that is, the gentrification of a privileged location (and respective land rights), in an area cleared and earmarked for residential development for white Portuguese middle-class populations by way of a public programme and the state's more forceful instruments that carry out demolitions and evictions, which displaced an incumbent population of mainly black post-colonial poor

immigrants who were rehoused in a scattered way to sites much further away, or simply evicted and left homeless if they were found not to be eligible for the programme.

The case I show, exemplary but not unique in Lisbon, thus sits between slum clearance, displacement and evictions – a situation that over the past few decades has mostly been associated with cities of the Global South and their urban poor (eg Mukhija, 2003; Du Plessis, 2006). However, here, it is located in a European capital, revealing a process of gentrification usually associated with the displacement of incumbent populations from either dilapidated central areas or from supposedly obsolete but well-located public housing estates in the Global North (eg Lees, 2014), but here related to a previously disused (thus, squatted) agricultural location, which was then re-zoned and more recently appreciated following the infrastructural investments related to urban mega-events and urban renewal initiatives.

Gentrification and displacement in Quinta da Serra

Quinta da Serra was a small informal settlement built on private land in the late 1970s–early 1980s, located in the Parish Council of Prior Velho in the municipality of Loures, in Lisbon. From a population of around 100 people in the late 1970s (FFH, 1975), mostly white Portuguese rural migrants, it expanded in the late 1980s to between 3,000 and 4,000 people, the majority of whom were immigrants from Portuguese-speaking African countries (PALOPs). Its population declined after that to around 1,500 people during the 2000s. When I conducted research there in 2008, around 50% were Cape Verdean or of Cape Verdean descent, 30% to 35% were from Guinea-Bissau, around 10% were from Angola and São Tomé and Príncipe, and the few White Portuguese and Gypsies still living there made up 5% (for more, see CML, 2005).

The population of Quinta da Serra was relocated/resettled in the period 2008–12. Different schemes within the PER programme either rehoused eligible households to council housing within the Loures municipality (to estates such as *Apelação*, viewed as problematic or violent by many inhabitants of Quinta da Serra) or, through the PER *Famílias* update, subsidised homeownership for them in any part of the country (but with the property price limit set well below market value for the area).⁶ However, 35% to 40% of the 1,500 inhabitants were not registered in the 1993 housing programme survey that served as the eligibility document for this resettlement. These residents were simply evicted, as I show later.⁷ The neighbourhood underwent a slow process of clearance and will be replaced by upper-middle-class residential buildings within the next two to three years.⁸

During my fieldwork in the neighbourhood, the threat of demolition was ever-present for individual households, and a number of irregular situations arose. For example, since 1993, some PER-eligible individuals had illegally sold their shack upon relocation to other places (either when rehoused by the state or when they moved out by their own means). Selling their shack was possible

when the structure was not immediately demolished; indeed, this was a common mistake by the state in the early days of the PER programme. The seller often led the buyer (newly arrived and in need of shelter) to believe that their residence would lead him/her to get a new house in the future too. This was, of course, false and misleading. Shacks had been numbered and granted 'administrative existence' but they were not the (formal, legal or actual) recipient of state help. That recipient had always been the household living inside the shack. However, as is easily imaginable, newly arrived migrants often *preferred* to believe the version they were told even if they suspected it to be false, they accepted the illusion of a better future in order to cope with the present.

A more altruistic logic can be exemplified by the case of an elderly woman who sublet rooms to three young men. She was PER-eligible and they were not. At the time of my fieldwork, she was very reluctant to join any of the relocation schemes because, on the one hand, she would lose income from the rents they paid and, on the other, because she felt responsible for them, in the sense that they would lose a place to live when she moved out (interview, September 2008). The seemingly contradictory terms of, one, pecuniary self-interest and, two, honest feelings of responsibility towards her 'tenants' joined up to explain her reluctance. This is a common feature in complex situations like this, what a city council worker referred to as *negócios de pobreza* (transactions of poverty) (interview, June 2007). Behind the illegal and exploitative practices lay complex individual decisions, in the words of a different city council official:

'This is happening American-style now. You have an area in decay, a real estate fund comes in, pushes people out ... but that problem will resurface somewhere else ... So what you have is people jumping from a shanty into a brick wall slum. Spaces under stairs are being rented, and so on.' (Interview, October 2008)

Frail resistance: the power of not leaving

For a different resident, it was the PER-eligibility mismatch between him (who is eligible) and his two older sons (who are not PER-eligible because they were over 18 years old when they arrived in 1994) that made him refuse to accept a quick solution after a visit from the landowner's legal representative:

'I will only move out once my two sons' situation is resolved. What do they think? I would sign [the compensation agreement] on a Tuesday, on Wednesday they would say "the money is in your account", by Thursday or Friday the shacks would go down. That I don't want ... I will go back home, but only after their situation is secured. [My sons] are not going from here to another piece of rubbish.' (Interview, January 2008)

In the penultimate sentence, he was referring to the option of straight compensation for the shack and moving back to Cape Verde. He preferred this option as his working career was over, he thought that rehousing in *Apelação* would be a nightmare and a move under the PER-Famílias did not suit his wishes. Whatever he did, however, would have an immediate impact on his sons, who were likely to be left without a home. In addition, he mentioned the implicit value in the choice of compensation over the other options: this way he would 'cost less' to the state – 15% of the average price of a new dwelling, or, indeed, nothing, given that it would be funded by the landowner – so he wanted that goodwill to be, in principle if not in exact value, reverted to his sons. He knew the logic behind this argument was too individualised to be taken on board by the authorities, yet he used it nonetheless. It was a 'family logic': he was willing to move to Cape Verde if that meant his sons could 'collect' something of his housing entitlement. His refusal to leave is a personalised illustration of what Scott (1998) calls the silent resistance to numerical forms of governmentality, and he was using the only power he had left – 'to stay put'. He was familiar with the *Apelação* council estate that constituted his first option as an eligible individual, but disliked the place. Apart from the conflicting relationship between 'Gypsies' and 'Africans', which led to shootings in the summer of 2008, he had other worries about the move:

'It's far away, and ... Here, I can go to a store and people know who I am, if I don't have money, they know I am good for my word. At my age, moving to a place where I know almost no one.' (Interview, January 2008)

There was an anticipated sorrow at the loss of his community network, and his concern over his small credit at local stores was a metaphor for all the aspects of familiarity with a place he had lived in for 26 of his 31 years in Portugal. Finally, this resident's concern about the rapid unfolding of events if he were to sign the compensation papers also exposes the different rhythms of state operations regarding informal settlements. Whereas the provision of makeshift infrastructure or setting up collective solutions for relocation were prolonged processes that took years, once a resident formally entered the scheme, the speed of events increased. Procedures started to happen fast, and with a sense that the state wanted demolition to proceed as quickly as possible. The speed was terrifying to residents.

Disassembling the shack: the rights and duties of the Special Rehousing Programme

'D' was the head of a PER household of a house demolished on 15 January 2008. He had in the previous months been consigned to the category of 'absent', allegedly for moving abroad to France; thus, speedy demolition of his house was required. D was PER-eligible but as he failed to reply to the first official notice, he was taken off the list. He contested the second demolition notice, but by that

time, it was too late. In any case, he was clearly not residing in the house at the time. In his place was a young couple with a child, allegedly related to him. None of them were PER-eligible. The situation appeared to be one where D had moved out some years earlier but had 'kept his shack' with a view to rehousing when the PER rehousing would happen.⁹ In the meantime, he either lent it or sold it to the couple, instructing them to cite a family relationship if asked. Although aware of the scheduled date for demolition, they had not removed their belongings, mostly because they did not have another place to go to. A secondary reason for this was the common hope among residents in similar cases that refusing to leave the house might cancel, suspend or delay demolition.

That morning, the young couple refused to leave when the demolition team arrived. They alerted D, and friends soon joined them. A very tense stand-off arose between them and the city council surveyors. Riot police (*Polícia de Intervenção*) were called to the scene. On one side were the town surveyor, the landowner's representative, the police forces and the subcontracted team, all trying to carry out the demolition. On the other were D, the young couple and their friends, protesting and refusing at first, but later moving out the belongings (furniture, domestic appliances, etc) so that they were not damaged (see Figures 3.1a, 3.1b and 3.1c).

What this case shows – besides the fact these residents tried to play a game they ultimately lost – is how the categorisation of individuals as either eligible or not eligible for relocation shaped their actions. For individuals on one side of the divide, the PER-eligible, this was a customary part of what agents of the state consider the 'abuses' of the relocation scheme, that is, illegal practices or false statements with a view to personal gain from the scheme when they no longer needed it. In the words of a person present that day, referring to D's loss of PER status, "they know very well their rights, not so much their duties or obligations" (field notes, January 2008). On the other side of the divide, false statements among non-PER individuals (such as the pretence of a family connection in this case) were a common strategy to prevent demolition of their only shelter at the time.

Figure 3.1a: Demolition day. Centre, while the demolition team works, a friend of the non-PER young couple residing there removes a television set



Figure 3.1b: The workings of demolition. It is carefully carried out by workers, monitored by the city council and by the police. On the right, a neighbour makes sure an adjacent wall belonging to another structure is not brought down



Figure 3.1c: The aftermath



Note: Photographs by Eduardo Ascensão.

Here, we see the constitution of a way of living based on duplicity and deception, in the sense of deception as a central strategy of the urban poor. This is a topic that different authors have studied in different city peripheries in developing countries (eg De Boeck and Plissart, 2004; Simone, 2004; see also Robinson, 2011, p 18) but it is not something that the gentrification studies literature has discussed in terms of resistance to or fighting gentrification. Such a heterodox comparison between slum dwellers in Africa and African slum dwellers in a European capital may seem overstretched at first glance, but it is only so if we do not count the latter as part of the slum dwellers worldwide, which they clearly are. In many parts of the world, slum dwellers are faced to varying degrees with problems related to population surveys, land tenure insecurity and its connection to lack of housing entitlements (Du Plessis, 2006; Datta, 2012). People's reactions, resistance and circumvention of such problems tends to place them within a frame of rule-breaking, disobedience and deception – something that is ultimately detrimental

to themselves individually, but often inevitable given the conditions of exclusion and breach of general social trust. Given the new literature emerging on the gentrification of slums in the Global South (for a summary, see Lees, 2014a), it is imperative that these strategies of the urban poor in the face of such processes are attended to.

These problems of deception can only be fully understood in the case of Quinta da Serra if we lift our gaze upwards from the field and towards the institutional agents, the instruments of implementation and the wider political economy of the place, that is, if we examine the institutional arrangements and interests involved in planning and policy for the area and how they have played out over time.

Institutional imaginings and gentrification

Imagined future 1: intransigent infrastructure and profit margins

The situation described in the previous section, one of prolonged precarity, could have been different; it could have been averted. Between 1997 and the early 2000s, plans to redevelop the area into residential medium-rise apartment blocks, with the population rehoused *in situ*, were very nearly set in motion. Following initial work in 1991, by 1997, the revision of the detailed urban plan (*plano de pormenor*) for the Prior Velho Parish Council, in effect since 1972, was ready; complete with official property records (CML and DPU, 1997; see also the masterplan, CML, 1994). Quinta da Serra was categorised as agricultural land in 1972, but by 1997, had been rezoned as residential land. The proposed plan for the area was medium-rise apartment blocks with an estimated residential capacity of 592 dwellings for 1,954 people. The document estimated a 'present population' of 859 people and 232 shacks (CML, 1994, sheet 46). These figures were from 1990 and they underestimated the population, likely in 1990 to be three or four times higher, and in 1997, at least two times.

The masterplan, designed by the city council planning division, made suggestions that the city council acquire the land, either by negotiating with the owners, by using the preferential buying option available to municipalities or by expropriation (CML, 1994, 2/8, p 15). It mentioned the need for sociological surveys in order to develop allocation criteria for the families to be rehoused, as well as the need to 'involve' the population from the early stages of the process, whether in the design of the new neighbourhood or, later, in its management and conservation, so that it could be well 'appropriated' by residents. It was suggested that regulations allowing for the future acquisition of dwellings by tenants could also contribute to this. This was the clear, intelligent and progressive planning assessment for the area.

At this time, the owners of the land were still *pessoas singulares*, that is, individuals not companies – despite some of them being referred to as mandating or being mandated by a third party (CML and DPU, 1997, sheet 5.1). From this date onwards, the public-listed construction company Somague, with many developments in Loures, became interested and bought these plots of land with a

view to future development (Loures Ordnance Survey, 2010).¹⁰ Proximity to the Expo 1998 site then under regeneration, a location allowing for good accessibility to the road system and potential good views of the Tagus River, made it an attractive site. The scheme would be mixed use, with the population rehoused in some of the blocks and the remainder sold on the open market.

The plan presumed a two- or three-stage operation. The first stage comprised clearance of around half the dwellings and temporary accommodation for the residents affected. The second comprised the building of the medium-rise buildings where the entire population would be rehoused and the relocation concluded. The third would then see the clearance of the remaining area and the building of apartment blocks for the open market. If implemented, it could have led to a later situation of gentrification by stealth (see Bridge et al, 2011), but by the people living in shanties, it was regarded as a good solution. Furthermore, this was a similar operation to one Somague was developing in nearby Quinta do Mocho, another PER informal settlement. The necessary trade-off in both cases was that the developer was given planning permission to build in the remaining land for the open market. Mukhija (2003) argues that this type of extra land value should always revert to the original slum dwellers, but a compromise had to be arrived at, one where such additional land value was to revert to the owner, otherwise the company would not be interested.

It must be noted that although Somague would implement the operation, the scheme would still be substantially, if not fully, financed by public money under the PER – typically, the central government would subsidise 50% of the costs and the local government could access credit lines to cover the remaining 50%. A strong commitment from the National Housing Institute (INH at the time) can be seen by the ‘voluntary mortgage’ Somague put in place on the land at the date at which it became full owner (9 January 2003). The company constituted this mortgage with the INH, not with a banking institution, at the value of €992,946 (Loures Ordnance Survey, 2010).

Somague developed the plans but was to eventually abandon them. What appears to have happened is that the company became increasingly aware that rehousing all of the population (more people than those initially estimated; again, we see problems with surveys) would mean that the scheme would not be profitable. To back away from these plans, the company used ‘technical’ reasons, explaining that the terrain was too steep to allow for the two- or three-stage operation. Furthermore, any earthworks would clash with the power lines that pass through the area, as well as with a main water collector that serves Lisbon. Overcoming these technical obstacles to implement any plans would have required the ‘unbundling’ of relatively stable, ‘fixed’ network infrastructure systems (Graham and Marvin, 2001). An entirely new technical solution would have had to be deployed by the municipality and the water and electricity companies involved, respectively, *Empresa Pública de Águas Livres (EPAL)* (water; 100% publically owned) and *Electricidade de Portugal (EDP)* (electricity; private with state participation until

2011). That would involve massive earthworks, burying overground power lines and ensuring that the water main was not interfered with.

Like in a game of Mikado, things and people would have to be carefully removed in the correct order before any new construction could begin. Infrastructure thus acted as an impediment to the Somague operation, what Collier (2004) describes as ‘intransigent infrastructure’. However, intransigency of the infrastructure was not so significant as to preclude other plans to develop the area some years afterwards, as I show next.

Imagined future 2: eco-imaginations and secretive decision-making

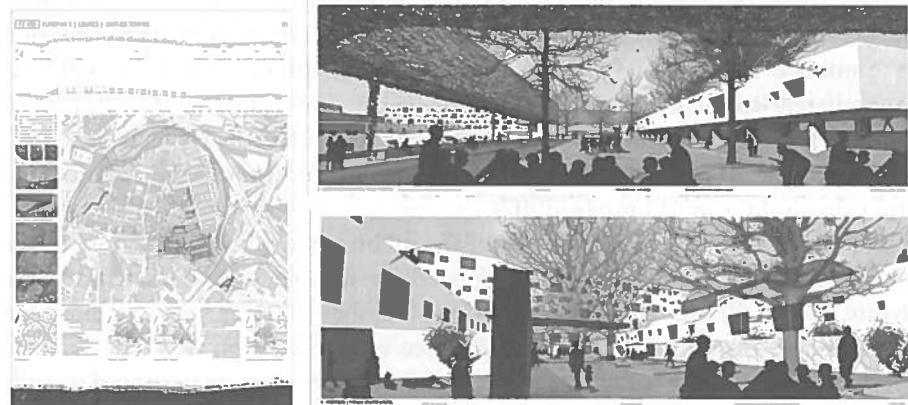
In the following years, cross-participation between Somague and another construction company-developer, Obriverca, saw the latter take on the ownership of the site. In 2007, the city mayor directed the city council’s planning division to nominate the area of Prior Velho, an area with disused industrial buildings immediately south of Quinta da Serra, as a site for European 9, a European competition for young architects and urban design professionals that tries to help ‘cities and developers who have provided sites to find innovative architectural and urban solutions’ (European, 2007).

The impact the shanty town had on the architects explains why most of the proposals went beyond the area designated for intervention and included the shanty part – Quinta da Serra (interview, October 2008). The brief indicated a population of 322 inhabitants for the area of intervention (8.67 ha) and no specific figures for the study area (15.02 ha). It stated that the plan should include a small hotel (120 rooms), social facilities and housing rehabilitation (European, 2008b, p 277). In the initial bid to European, the city council had stated the need for ‘an innovative housing framework that addresses both the need to relocate (*relocalizar*)¹¹ the population presently living in precarious housing in the perimeter of the intervention and the establishment of free-market housing’ (CML and DPU, 2006, sheets 35–31, p 5). In other planning documents later circulated to the applicants, this was expressed in more precise terms: for the ‘study area’ (Quinta da Serra), 280 residential units in buildings of up to five storeys, all dedicated to rehouse the population living in *barracas* (CML and DPU, 2006, sheet 20, p 4); for the ‘intervention area’, 248 units, of which 129 were to rehouse the people whose houses had to be demolished (one infers the 322 inhabitants stated in European, 2008a). Finally, an indicative €35 million was given as the total cost of the operation (CML and DPU, 2006, sheet 20, p 8).

The winning proposal by architects Tiago Tomás and Djamila Flor (see Figure 3.2) included a ‘green belt’ of vegetation walls tied to elevated fences to separate Quinta da Serra and Prior Velho from the dense traffic of the A1 motorway and the overpasses that connect it to the inner regional circular, the CRIL (Circular Regional Interna de Lisboa). The proposal placed the hotel and the better-off residential dwellings inside the intervention area, thus sticking to the brief, but proposed the continuation of the scheme into Quinta da Serra.

However, as in 1997, the proposal was not implemented. The primary reason is that when presented with it, the landowner preferred to develop the area according to a 'similar basic program but using its own architectural team' (CML, 2008). Details of the owner's plan are unknown to the public or to the other stakeholders involved, including the municipal planning division. It can therefore only be speculated, but it is likely that these plans included the highest possible density within that 'basic programme', that is, to accommodate as many middle-class residential units as possible while avoiding the onus of rehousing the entire population on the site.

Figure 3.2: The winning proposal of European 9 for the Prior Velho site, by Tiago Tomás and Djamila Flor (Portugal)



Source: Tiago Tomás Architects.

What we see is that the progressive recommendations in the *Plano de pormenor* and in the European bid suggest a strong commitment by planners to the ideals of social justice concerning the population of Quinta da Serra; yet, again and again, they ran into other factors such as the owner's interests or the weak finances of the municipality. Although European-winning projects are usually built, they are still a purely indicative, non-binding instrument. The owner was consequently under no legal obligation to implement the winning project. Notwithstanding, its rejection of the proposals was a surprise to different stakeholders, in particular, the European offices in Lisbon, which had been assured by the city council that the *Plano de pormenor* would take the winning proposals into account (European, 2008c).

High-level bureaucracy and secretive decision-making

Importantly, the municipal division responsible for the application to European was not contacted by the landowner. High-level bureaucracy was at play, whereby negotiations or bargaining between the landowner and the city council happened only with the mayor and town councillors and were not transparently explained

to the departments that were supposed to implement them. Despite the allocation of considerable human resources and money (€32,000 for an abandoned plan), decision-making is mostly secret. The European competition was yet another missed opportunity to solve the housing predicament of Quinta da Serra.¹²

In these two proposals, the local government effectively put itself in the position of the public arm of private interests. Unintentionally or not, the institutional arrangement of relocation has seen 'virtuoso social actors' (Flyvbjerg, 2001) such as the city council instituting a complicated framework and a discursive regime that emphasises the 'impossibility' of just solutions for the population, rather than attempting options that would be less profitable for the owner but fairer for the population.

The gentrification of slum areas is becoming a worldwide phenomenon, sometimes conducted by the state (eg Shin, 2009; López-Morales, 2012), and sometimes by the state being co-opted by the dynamics of urban capitalism, as is the case of Quinta da Serra. In both cases, for slum dwellers, the urban renewal of the sites where they live has more often than not become a process they are excluded from. Even as urban planning paradigms shift towards the idea of the 'negotiated city' (Bourdin, 2009), slum dwellers are left out of negotiation platforms and any potential gains they could make are denied from the onset. Displacement wins because it guarantees that the accentuated processes of urban capital accumulation – here, seen in small detail – are not disrupted, and are, indeed, maximised.

In 2008, as the houses in Quinta da Serra began to be demolished, residents tried to allay the disheartening effect by using the cleared sites for (symbolic) productive use (see Figure 3.3) by setting up individual clothes lines on vacant plots. Given that there was not really a lack of space to hang clothes around their still-standing houses, one wonders if this was not a humble mental strategy to fill in the void left by those already displaced, a consolation.

In 2012, at the very end of the process, some of the individuals who were displaced or simply evicted returned and did urban gardening on the site where

Figure 3.3: October 2008 (left) and June 2012 (right)



Note: Photographs by Eduardo Ascensão.

their shack or house once stood (for the same behaviours, see also Batchelor, 2012, p 27; Lees, 2014b).

Conclusion

The gentrification of the slum areas in Lisbon's periphery, like Quinta da Serra, is a pebble in the shoe of a history of urban growth that fits into the broader social process of building a modern, European and then multicultural Portugal over the last 35 years. This situation questions the labelling of Lisbon as a post-colonial/post-imperial city since the term contradicts the conditions of access to urban space that the mainly black post-colonial immigrants in these slums had/have. This broad assumption is illustrated by their problematic access to public or private housing, which initially led to them erecting informal settlements, and by the fact that despite the honest efforts of the state, including the latter enactment of the de-segregating PER Famílias update reminiscent of the mixed communities paradigm (see Bridge et al, 2011) but which resulted in what I have labelled 'area gentrification', housing inequalities for these populations persist. This is clearly illustrated by the fact that even with the PER and PER Famílias, migrants from PALOP were still over-represented in slum or overcrowded dwellings in the 2001 Census (INE, 2001; see also Malheiros and Vala, 2004, p 1084; Arbaci and Malheiros, 2010, pp 246–7), and have remained so in the 2011 one (INE, 2012).

Atypical as this case might seem at first – slum clearance and 'area gentrification' on the periphery of a European capital – I would conclude by arguing that it belongs to the same global process described in the following:

Nowadays, *neo-Haussmannization* is a process that ... integrates financial, corporate and state interests, yet tears into the whole globe and seizes land through forcible slum clearance and a handy vehicle for dispossession known as 'eminent domain', wherein the public sector expropriates land and then gives it away for upscale private reappropriation, letting private economic interests cash in on what is legalized looting. (Merrifield, 2013, p 31)

The only difference in the case described, it seems to me, is that the state did not even have to expropriate, it merely sat idle and complicit while urban capital played its game. In the meantime, the population lived (and some still live) under an urban condition of precarity and infra-citizenship, something they unfortunately share with many slum dwellers around the world.

Notes

¹ Initial estimates from 1993 indicated a total of 48,391 dwelling units necessary to rehouse 162,103 people nationwide, with the Lisbon Metropolitan Area (LMA) needing 33,390 dwelling units (Númena, 2003, p 143). In later estimates, this figure was reduced to 29,223 surveyed shacks or slum houses (AML, 1997, p 16), but as I show in the following,

these surveys often failed to count all the residents. In any case, 30,000 dwellings can be conservatively extrapolated to mean around 150,000–180,000 people (five to six inhabitants per dwelling).

² This – the extraction by private developers of the added values allowed by unregulated, unchecked and often corrupt changes in zoning (from agricultural to urban) – was 'the business' in Lisbon for over 20 years. It was fuelled at the macroeconomic level by, again, unregulated and unchecked levels of private credit debt (Bingre, 2011). Of course, this was not a localised event: trans-European economic policy and global financial incentives were also partly responsible for similar stories in Spain and Ireland, only with minor variations.

³ This situation was part of a generalised housing crisis that had developed since the early 1980s, which was not helped by the previous agreement between the IMF and Portugal in 1983, after which the Portuguese government cut public and cooperative housing provision and redirected policy to general supply, leaving large fringes of the population priced out of the market (Ferreira, 1988, p 60; Númena, 2003, p 16).

⁴ Artists, though, paid attention to it, for example: the rehousing process of Fontainhas to the Casal da Boba estate appears in Pedro Costa's celebrated film *Juventude em Marcha* (*Colossal Youth*), from 2006; and the forced evictions of non-PER individuals in Azinhaga dos Besouros (the PER-eligible were rehoused in the Casal da Mira estate) featured in Nathalie Mansoux's *Via de Acesso* (*Access Way*), from 2008.

⁵ The ethnographic research (2007–08) involved 42 interviews, 15 of which were life-story interviews with residents, and several follow-up visits up until 2012. Archives consulted included those of the National Housing Institute (today, the Instituto para a Habitação e Reabilitação Urbana [IHRU]), the Loures City Council and the university research centre CET/ISCTE.

⁶ For instance, a three-bedroom apartment under this option involves a maximum subsidy of €72,543 for a property that cannot exceed 150% of this subsidy (thus, with a maximum price of around €100,000), whereas such a place is currently being transacted at €140,000–€180,000.

⁷ This situation repeated itself in 2013 in the case of the Santa Filomena settlement, where evictions of non-PER individuals were carried out by the Amadora municipality and the police.

⁸ The public organisations involved were the Loures City Council, which oversees all aspects of municipal administration, and the IHRU, which is the governmental body that sets out the overarching procedures for the relocation process. The private owner of the land, real estate investment fund Tavfer (possibly linked to construction company-developer Obriverca; see more later), and its legal representatives pursued bilateral agreements with residents within the relocation framework as a means to speed up the process.

⁹ Clarification of D's history was not possible. He appeared on the morning of demolition and we arranged for an interview at a later date. He then left. The interview never happened as he never answered his telephone subsequently.

¹⁰ National property records only show Somague as provisional owner by 2002 and full owner by 2003, but given these records are based on a morose cycle of information

sharing from different bureaucracies, it is highly likely that the actual negotiations and change of ownership dated to a few years before.

¹¹ *Relocalizar* (relocalise) is different than *relojar* (rehouse, relodge). Whereas the latter verb can encompass *in situ* rehousing, *relocalizar* clearly points to displacement.

¹² In March 2009, Obriverca sold the land to *Tavfer – Fundo de Investimento Imobiliário*, a real estate fund with €37 million of capital and a mortgage placed with *Banco Espírito Santo* (Loures Ordnance Survey, 2010). In the contract signed in September 2009 by the fund with the city council to elaborate a new *Plano de pormenor*, no figures are given for rehousing and no information on building indexes is provided (CML, 2009). Since 2010, we can classify the site as being in a state of fallow ground for capital. With construction companies hit hard by the recession, delays in the circuit of capital have been common. However, all indications are that this is a just a pause in the process – that gentrification will shortly resume.

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FOUR

City upgraded: redesigning and disciplining downtown Abu Dhabi

Surajit Chakravarty and Abdellatif Qamhaieh

Introduction

Gentrification generated by successive investment cycles is a commonplace occurrence in cities today. Social displacement and loss of housing options often follows attempts to redevelop neighbourhoods. Scholars in the field of urban planning have long recognised and critiqued this trend. Brenner and Theodore (2005), MacLeod (2002), Harvey (1978, 2006, 2010) and Smith (1982, 1996, 2010), among others, have argued that gentrification is not merely a by-product of neoliberal planning, but rather a quintessential part of it – a strategy for successive cycles of investment and accumulation. Few studies, though, have examined gentrification in the emerging cities of the Arabian/Persian Gulf region. Urban planning in Abu Dhabi is reconfiguring the city, and, in the process, displacing some segments of the population.

This chapter examines recent policies causing the gentrification of Abu Dhabi's city centre. These include a Revitalisation Plan, together with policies regulating the spatial practices and housing options of the low-income population. Given a paucity of options, the displaced low-income groups are likely to become isolated in remote locations. Although there are stark differences between the planning cultures of Abu Dhabi and those of cities in Western Europe or North America, there are similarities in how the 'spatial fix' is administered. This study sheds light on the causes of the housing affordability problem in Abu Dhabi, and through an analysis of current policies and realities on the ground, it is argued that ongoing development plans are likely to lead to a significant demographic change in the city centre and further squeeze the housing options for the city's less wealthy residents.

Understanding the Abu Dhabi housing market

Rapid social and economic change

Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), has expanded dramatically in terms of wealth, urban growth and infrastructure development over