

Chapter 13

Geographies of Gentrification in Barcelona. Tourism as a Driver of Social Change

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Among Spanish cities, Barcelona has arguably the greatest international projection. It tops the rankings in many of the country's tourist indicators and, in recent decades, the city has been the gateway into Spain for various socio-urban processes, including gentrification. Two decades of academic studies of this city have constructed a discourse of gentrification and mapped out the territories exposed to these processes. In this chapter, our objective is to study the geographies of gentrification in Barcelona based on an analysis of this literature. The bibliographic review shows how tourism has become a critical element in most modes of gentrification to which the Catalan capital has been exposed. Specifically, its historic centre – the diverse and segregated district of *Ciutat Vella* – subject to the strong pressures of tourism and the housing market, emerges as an inescapable point of reference in these studies. The same is true of other city neighbourhoods targeted by strategic plans of urban renewal, the case, for example, of *Poblenou*.

Keywords: gentrification; tourism; segregation; housing; urban regeneration; academic literature; *Ciutat Vella*; Barcelona

1. Introduction

Gentrification has ceased to be a process that is specific and exclusive to certain command-centre cities and has become generalized, both spatially and sectorally, as an urban strategy that has replaced liberal urban policy (Smith 2002; 2006). Since the 1990s, an extensive body of literature has shown that, in common with other consumer spaces (shopping centres, cultural and leisure complexes and entertainment landscapes), tourism too produces gentrification (Smith 1996; Judd and Fainstein 1999; Wilson and Tallon, 2011; González-Pérez 2020). Huning and Novy (2006, 2) moreover identify a growing body of empirical evidence suggesting as well that “tourists don’t only ‘push’ into neighbourhoods beyond the beaten path but are also increasingly ‘pulled’ into these areas”.

The influence of gentrification extends beyond bullish economic cycles and is even apparent at times of crisis (1973–74, 1981–82, and 1991–92). Initially, the academic literature had us believe that economic recession reduced capital flows towards gentrified neighbourhoods and would lead to a reversal of the process or to “degentrification” (Wilson and Tallon 2011). Yet, Lees (2009) confidently argued, a year after the onset of the 2008 economic crisis, that while gentrification may have temporarily slowed down, it was unlikely to be stopped. Likewise, in the cities of southern Europe, economic crises open up new possibilities for speculative investments, in this instance in the form of the tourist flows and property investments from northern and central Europe.

Thus, the gentrification of certain neighbourhoods can actually continue apace during years of economic crisis, above all in those cities of the tourist periphery that are dependent on the dynamics generated from abroad (notably the Global North). A good example of this is provided by the cities of Greece, which underwent some of their most intense processes of gentrification during the last crisis. In Athens, against the backdrop of the urban crises after 2008 (Koutrolikou 2016), gentrification processes went uninterrupted in the city’s central areas of Gazi and Psirri (Stergiou and Sidiropoulos 2014). In short, during the period of neoliberalism of the crisis and post-crisis era (the years since 2007), we have been witnesses to a new wave of revalorization, speculation and expulsion of resident populations (Cocola-Gant 2018), deepening the processes of gentrification and urban inequality (Janoschka 2018).

Gentrification came to Spain late and differed substantially from the processes observed in the Anglophone world. In academic studies, it has been addressed primarily in terms of a critique of the neoliberal model and, in recent years, associated primarily with tourism; as a result of which, it is Spain’s tourist cities that have received most attention in the literature. Since 2000, interest in the phenomenon has increased markedly, but it is primarily after 2010 that it became established as one of the main lines of research in urban studies (González-Pérez 2020).

In light of available references, the literature in this field can be classified into two main periods. The earliest works were carried out during the years of the housing bubble (1996–2007) and focused their attention on the study of the impacts of urban mega-events and mega-projects promoted by the public administration and developed within the framework of public-private mix initiatives. After 2007, during the crisis and post-crisis, the focus shifted and the debate came to centre on urban tourism and the impact of new

channels for the commercialization of tourist rental property on the internet or using computer apps, above all as a result of the emergence of Airbnb.

In the case of tourism gentrification, the cities attracting most attention in the literature are the tourist cities of the Mediterranean (Palma and Valencia), those of the Canary Islands (Domínguez-Mujica et al., 2020) and Bilbao (Janoschka et al. 2013; 2014). In contrast, studies concerned with the relations between immigration and areas subject to processes of renewal and gentrification have focused on other cities, primarily those at the top of the Spanish urban system, i.e. Madrid, Barcelona and Bilbao (Janoschka et al. 2013; 2014).

Barcelona, second only in Spain's urban system to Madrid, is an ideal city in which to study these processes. Indeed, the city has been widely publicized, above all after the 1992 Olympic Games, and because of its renowned, although widely criticized, "Barcelona Model" (García-Ramón and Albet, 2000; Monclús 2003; Marshall 2004; Capel 2005; Delgado 2007). The Catalan capital is a city in which the closely related variables of mass tourism and tourism gentrification take leading roles in one of the liveliest debates at the urban scale. The importance of Barcelona to tourism is undeniable: it is the Spanish municipality that receives the most foreign tourists (7,05 million in 2019); its port handles the largest number of cruise passengers in Spain (3,1 million in 2019); it is ranked number two in terms of the number of tourist beds on offer (83,849 in 2019) and number one in terms of number of hotel establishments open during the summer (698 in August 2019); and its Spain's leading city (eighth in the world) as regards the number of offers on Airbnb (18,302 in November 2019). The literature analysing the changes to the Barcelona landscape and the social and functional transformations of the city or of one of its neighbourhoods, attributable to the processes of gentrification, is broad and not easily quantifiable. For this reason, *on the other hand*, in this chapter we do not aim to draw up a list of all the contributions that have been published on this subject in relation to Barcelona, not least because we are likely to fail to take some of them into account. However, here, based on a systematic search of this literature, our review of roughly fifty published studies on gentrification in Barcelona makes it possible to identify their basic lines of research from both a temporal and spatial point of view. *On the other, our work does not focus on studying a single type of gentrification. That's not the objective. Rather, our idea is to publicize the gentrification process in Barcelona, probably the most and best-studied city in Spain, through scientific literature, and*

focusing on two main variables: evolution of the themes and territories studied within the city. This allows us to identify the presence and weight of both the different types of gentrification according to the stage considered, as well as the most gentrified neighborhoods if we look at the number of publications.

Note that earlier analyses undertaken of gentrification and associated lines of research in Spain by García Herrera and Díaz (2008) and in Spain and Latin America by Janoschka et al. (2014) constitute valuable methodological precursors to our work here. Unlike these, ours is the first to be carried out on a Spanish city and on an intra-urban scale. In this sense, we understand that our chapter represents a remarkable methodological contribution, which can be easily extrapolated to other cities.

Thus, the primary objective of this chapter is to study the geographies of gentrification in Barcelona based on a review of academic findings related to this process. We begin by reviewing the main discourses, themes and lines of research, before moving on to describe the location of those neighbourhoods or urban areas that have attracted most attention. Finally, we report a case study of the *Ciutat Vella*, Barcelona's old town and one of the city's districts that has been the subject of the most frequent and insightful studies, but which conceals a number of interesting internal contradictions.

2. Methodology

This chapter is structured in two main parts. The first, and what might be considered the most important, is a review of the published literature. The second is a case study, aimed at evaluating current processes of gentrification and at identifying new areas of debate. Together the two parts dictate the use of two types of methodology and sources.

The first involves a bibliographic search and the subsequent systematization of the information collected. Although it falls outside the scope of our remit here to quantify exactly the number of studies published on gentrification in Barcelona, we undertook an exhaustive search in the bibliographic databases of Dialnet and Google Scholar between January 1990 and January 2020. Having identified the publications, we then classified them according to the following indicators: year of publication, type of gentrification described, line of research, scale and territory of study. Our diagnosis and representation of the geographies of gentrification in Barcelona are then based on this information.

From the bibliographic search it emerges that the *Ciutat Vella* is one of the districts to have undergone the greatest transformations as a result of gentrification and, in addition, the one that arouses most interest among researchers. We measured the social change and the revalorization of property in this district by undertaking an analysis over time of economic (income), population (demographic change, foreign population, level of education) and housing (residential rental and sales market) indicators. This we undertake at the neighbourhood level, in order to detect contractions, processes of segregation and intra-urban diversity. This analysis has drawn primarily on statistical sources, based on data made available by the municipal statistical service.

3. Geographies of gentrification: lines of research and territories of study

In 2001, Rodríguez et al. reported that the phenomenon of gentrification had barely been studied in any structured fashion in Spain, compared, that is, to other processes such as urban regeneration and renewal which, although linked to it, cannot strictly be considered gentrification (Rodríguez et al., 2001). Some years later, García Herrera and Díaz (2008) once more lamented the paucity of studies and the little progress made in the period of their study (that is, 1999–2008), both from a theoretical and empirical point of view. This idea was further ratified by Janoschka et al. (2014) who, in a comparative review that included Latin America, stressed that very few researchers were interested in this phenomenon in Spain.

These negative diagnoses are probably not only due to the time lag in the development of gentrifying processes in Spain compared to the Anglophone countries, but also to an academic literature that, during the 1980s and 1990s, was more interested in other socio-urban trends: the problems of degradation that affected large urban areas (from historic centres to peripheral neighbourhoods and housing estates) and the territorial and environmental impacts of the major urban operations of the housing bubble years (1996–2007). However, studies of both urban regeneration and renewal paved the way to some extent for the expansion of studies of gentrification after 2000. The crisis and the post-crisis policies, from 2007 onwards, aroused the interest of geographers

around the world, as well as that of Spanish researchers, in the ‘return of capital to the city’, to paraphrase Neil Smith (1996).

Taking a chronological perspective, among the pioneering studies to tackle the question of gentrification in Spain, mention should be made of Gavira (1985), who examined tertiarization and social change in Madrid; López Sánchez (1986), who, despite not explicitly mentioning gentrification, analysed the processes of expulsion of the proletariat from two city centre neighbourhoods of Barcelona from the perspective of social geography; and Vázquez (1992), who studied urban policies and gentrification trends in Madrid’s historic centre, a subject he developed further in his PhD thesis (Vázquez, 1996).

With the change of century, however, interest in studying gentrification increased, above all in Barcelona and Bilbao, two cities that dominated the international representation of gentrification processes in Spain until the mid-2010s (Janoschka et al. 2014).

3.1 Lines of research. Two decades of academic study: 2000–2020

The discourse on gentrification in Barcelona forms part of a critique of the neoliberal city model and of the capitalist system; and, to a greater or lesser degree, public policies, as exemplified in plans for urban regeneration and renewal, and the impact of tourism are present in most published research. The number of academic studies of gentrification in the city of Barcelona peaked in around 2015; however, lines of research, the specific topics addressed and the territories studied have each evolved over these last twenty years (table 1).

Table 1. Academic literature on gentrification in Barcelona. Perspectives and debates

STAGE: 2000-2009		
Type	Scale: district/neighbourhood	Authors
Urban regeneration and gentrification	<i>Ciutat Vella</i>	Martínez Rigol (2000), Tabakman (2001), Ter-Minassian (2009)
Tourism gentrification	<i>Barcelona</i>	Palou i Rubio (2009)
Commercial gentrification	<i>Ciutat Vella</i>	Pascual-Molinas y Ribera-Fumaz (2009)
Immigration and gentrification	<i>El Raval</i>	Sargatal (2001)
Urban renewal: Housing and property development	<i>Poblenou</i>	Marrero (2003)
STAGE: 2010-2014		
Type	Scale: district/neighbourhood	Authors
Urban regeneration and gentrification	<i>El Raval, Santa Caterina, Sant Pere, La Barceloneta</i>	Tapada-Berteli & Arbaci (2011); Arbaci & Tapada-Berteli (2012); Pareja & Simó (2014)
Commercial gentrification	<i>Ciutat Vella (Santa Caterina)</i>	Hernández (2014)

Urban renewal: Cultural and productive gentrification	<i>Poblenou</i>	Casellas, Dot-Jutgla & Pallarès-Barbera (2010; 2012), Pallarès-Barbera, Dot-Jutgla & Casellas (2012); Barber & Pareja (2010)
Citizen resistance to gentrification	<i>Ciutat Vella, el Raval, la Barceloneta</i>	Cuesta (2011); Rius (2014); Pahissa (2014)
STAGE: 2015-2020		
Type	Scale: district/neighbourhood	Authors
Commercial and cultural gentrification	<i>Ciutat Vella, Barcelona, el Raval</i>	Hernández (2015, 2016); Cocola-Gant (2015); Rius & Posso (2016); Vila Márquez (2016)
Urban renewal: Cultural and productive gentrification	<i>Poblenou</i>	Limón (2015); Limón (2018)
Tourism gentrification (and public policies)	<i>Barcelona, Ciutat Vella, Barceloneta, Vila de Gràcia, Poblenou</i>	Arias-Sans y Quaglieri (2016); Cocola-Gant (2016b, 2016c, 2016d); Gutiérrez, García, Romanillos & Salas (2017); Quaglieri & Scarnato (2017); Arias-Sans (2018); Blanco, Blázquez & Cánoves (2018); Crespi-Vallbona & Mascarilla-Miró (2018); Zaar & Pontes de Fonseca (2018); Mansilla & Milano (2019); Mansilla (2020)
Citizen resistance to gentrification	<i>Barcelona, Poblenou</i>	Colomb & Novy (2016); Cocola-Gant y Pardo (2017); Mansilla (2018)
Green gentrification	<i>Ciutat Vella, Sant Martí, Sant Andreu, Nou Barris, Horta-Guinardó</i>	Anguelovski, Connolly, Masip & Pearsal (2018)
Gentrification: Inequality and impoverishment	<i>Metropolitan Area, Barcelona, Ciutat Vella, Sant Antoni</i>	Cocola-Gant (2016a); Caballero (2018); Donat (2018); Porcel, Navarro-Varas, Antón-Alonso & Cruz (2018); Mendoza (2019)
Anti-gentrification urban policies	Metropolitan Area	Nel.lo (2018)
Indicators of gentrification	<i>Barcelona, Vallcarca</i>	Riera (2018); Antunes, March & Connolly (2020)
Socio-demographic changes and gentrification	<i>Barcelona, Barri Gòtic</i>	López-Gay & Cocola-Gant (2016); López-Gay (2018)

Source: Study authors.

a) Stage 1: 2000–2009.

In this stage, the number of studies published remained low and appeared mainly in Spanish publications with little international reach. The subjects addressed were quite diverse, without a very clearly defined line of research: influence of urban regeneration plans on the gentrification of Barcelona's old town (Martínez Rigol's 2000 thesis; Tabakman 2001; Ter-Minassian 2009); the construction of newly promoted areas of the housing market (Marrero 2003); an initial, very general reflection, on the impact of tourism (Palou i Rubio 2009); commercial gentrification in *Ciutat Vella* (Pascual-Molinas and Ribera-Fumaz 2009); and, while there is no clear methodology as to how to measure

these processes, in almost all of them data on immigration are used as an indicator of gentrification (Sargatal 2001). Thus, it becomes evident that various groups of high-income foreign residents share the territory with labour immigrants from the countries of the South, reproducing processes of degradation and *chabolización* (slum creation) in the historic centre, at the same time as those of incipient gentrification.

In 2009, the French geographer, Ter, defended his doctoral thesis on gentrification in Barcelona in which he analysed the situation in the city district of *Ciutat Vella*. In it, rather than presenting an analysis of types of gentrification, he studied the factors characterizing the process. He used the neighbourhood as his primary unit of study, applying this approach to two areas that have become the most frequently cited in the literature to date: on the one hand, the historic centre (the district of *Ciutat Vella* and more specifically the neighbourhood of *el Raval*) and, on the other, *Poblenou*, a peripheral neighbourhood in which the City Hall launched an ambitious action program called *Plan 22@*. *Poblenou*, a former industrial area, characterised by a large number of abandoned buildings – occupying almost two million square metres – that could serve as premises for a range of economic activities, is the subject of a renewal plan aimed at the reconversion and specialization of this neighbourhood for uses related to information technologies and culture.

b) Stage 2: 2010–2014.

In this stage, the number of studies published was similar, with the difference that the lines of research related to the types of gentrification under study were gradually consolidated. Moreover, the role played by public policy as both an element and cause of gentrification was confirmed. Urban planning became the usual strategy of study: urban regeneration plans promoting touristification and new commercial models in the historic centre (Tapada-Berteli and Arbaci 2011; Arbaci and Tapada-Berteli 2012; Pareja Eastaway and Simó 2014; Hernández 2014), as well as strategies for urban renewal in declining industrial areas, promoting new types of cultural and productive gentrification (Barber and Pareja 2010; Casellas et al. 2010; 2012a; 2012b). Interestingly, this stage saw one of the first studies of urban resistance to gentrification among the citizens (Cuesta 2011). Taking a different perspective, Rius (2014) explored the role of culture as a gentrifying element in *Ciutat Vella*. The author argued that culture can contribute to the revalorization of marginal neighbourhoods by constructing a more positive image and empowering citizens against gentrification.

The stage was marked by the introduction of studies that compared neighbourhoods in two different cities experiencing similar problems: for example, *el Raval* in Barcelona vs. *Cabanyal* in Valencia; Eastside in Birmingham vs. 22@ in Barcelona. The delayed identification on the part of the public administration of processes linked to gentrification accounts for the fact that there are no studies examining the very few anti-gentrification urban and sectoral measures taken by the Barcelona City Hall and the regional government, the *Generalitat de Catalunya*.

As in the previous stage, the scale of study was intra-urban, and centred on the same districts: *Ciutat Vella* (*Barri Gòtic*, *el Raval* and, for the first time, *Barceloneta*, *Sant Pere i Santa Caterina*) and *Poblenou* (linked again to the Plan 22@). This lack of diversification in the territories under study often meant the research repeated the same discourse and even used the same methodologies to identify and analyse gentrification.

c) Stage 3: 2015–2020.

This stage has witnessed a veritable boom in studies of gentrification in Barcelona. Some thirty academic studies can be identified as well as numerous undergraduate and master's dissertations, two doctoral theses (Hernández 2015; Limón 2015), a special issue in an academic journal (*Papers: Regió Metropolitana de Barcelona*) entitled “*Gentrificació i dret a la Ciutat*” [Gentrification and the Law in the City] (2018), and a book that designed and applied an index of gentrification index to the city (Riera 2018), among other notable contributions.

At the same time, there has occurred a marked internationalization of research with the publication of studies in leading journals in English (Arias-Sans and Quagliari 2016; Cocola-Gant 2017; Gutiérrez et al. 2017; Anguelovski et al. 2018; Blanco et al. 2018; Mansilla and Milano 2019; Antunes et al. 2020), and comparative analyses with neighbourhoods in other cities have flourished: Barcelona and Madrid (Hernández 2015); Barcelona and Berlin (Novy 2016); Getsemaní (Cartagena de Indias) and *el Raval* (Barcelona) (Rius and Posso 2016); Hortaleza (Madrid) and *Poblenou* (Barcelona) (Limón 2018). In addition, the analyses have incorporated a new scale, the metropolitan level (Nel.lo 2018; Porcel et al. 2018), and hitherto ignored neighbourhoods, both in Barcelona's *Eixample* (*Sant Antoni*) (Caballero 2018), and in the periphery (*Vila de Gràcia*) (Mansilla and Milano 2019). However, *Ciutat Vella* and *Poblenou* continue to be, by far, the preferred areas of study.

The range of subjects addressed have become more diverse, but in practically all cases – and regardless of the type of gentrification analysed – urban tourism is understood as the primary factor influencing all the different processes of gentrification. The rapid expansion of peer-to-peer (P2P) platforms, with spatial distribution patterns that exert considerable pressure on certain traditionally residential neighbourhoods, has become a key factor in the interpretation of gentrification in recent years (Gutiérrez et al. 2017). Thus, the analysis of tourism gentrification has been consolidated and, to a lesser extent, progress has been made in studies of commercial, cultural and productive gentrification. Although present in many publications, studies of urban regeneration and gentrification, one of the most frequent focuses in previous stages, have lost importance.

Likewise, new perspectives have appeared, such as studies of green gentrification, linking socio-environmental and fundamentally socio-urban issues framed in the search for equitable access to the city and environmental justice. An example of the former is provided by Anguelovski et al. (2018), who study sociodemographic gentrification based on the proximity and influence exerted by urban green spaces. In addition, the effects of the 2007 crisis and post-crisis policies have been incorporated in analyses of gentrification by focusing on their dual impact: the increase in segregation and inequality in the city, on the one hand, and governance and citizen responses, on the other. In the case of the former, inequality is measured from different points of view: access to housing, displacements and evictions (Cocola-Gant 2016a; Caballero 2018; Donat 2018; Mendoza 2019), and poverty and social stratification (Porcel et al. 2018). In the case of the latter, Nel.lo (2018) examines the solutions offered by public urban and housing policies designed to fight against segregation and gentrification.

In a similar vein, other authors (Arias and Quaglieri 2016; Cocola-Gant 2016b; Cocola-Gant and Pardo 2017; Quaglieri and Scarnato 2017; Blanco et al. 2018; Crespi-Vallbona and Mascarilla-Miró 2018; Mansilla 2019) have studied tourism gentrification, primarily via the holiday home phenomenon (the so-called ‘Airbnb syndrome’) and the social responses and/or urban regulations introduced in Barcelona. In this line of research, it is common to find in the same article an analysis of the strategies of the anti-gentrification social movements and of the urban and tourist policies developed by public administration. That is, in this stage, the analysis of tourism gentrification usually concludes with a description of the corrective measures being taken.

In short, the stage of development reached by studies of gentrification since 2015 has been accompanied by the publication of articles that make outstanding methodological contributions, and which extend well beyond the simple interpretation of indicators. Bravo (2018) has studied the meanings of the term gentrification, using as examples its impacts and processes as manifest in Barcelona. Porcel et al. (2018) have described the evolution of gentrified neighbourhoods over a ten-year period (1991-2001) by using a set of indicators. And Antunes et al. (2020) have linked critical cartography and cognitive mapping with more traditional gentrification studies, with the aim of detecting, in the neighbourhood of Vallcarca, areas perceived as being affected by gentrification or at risk of gentrification, and symbolic places in the fight against gentrification.

3.2 Territories of gentrification. Districts and neighbourhoods in the academic literature

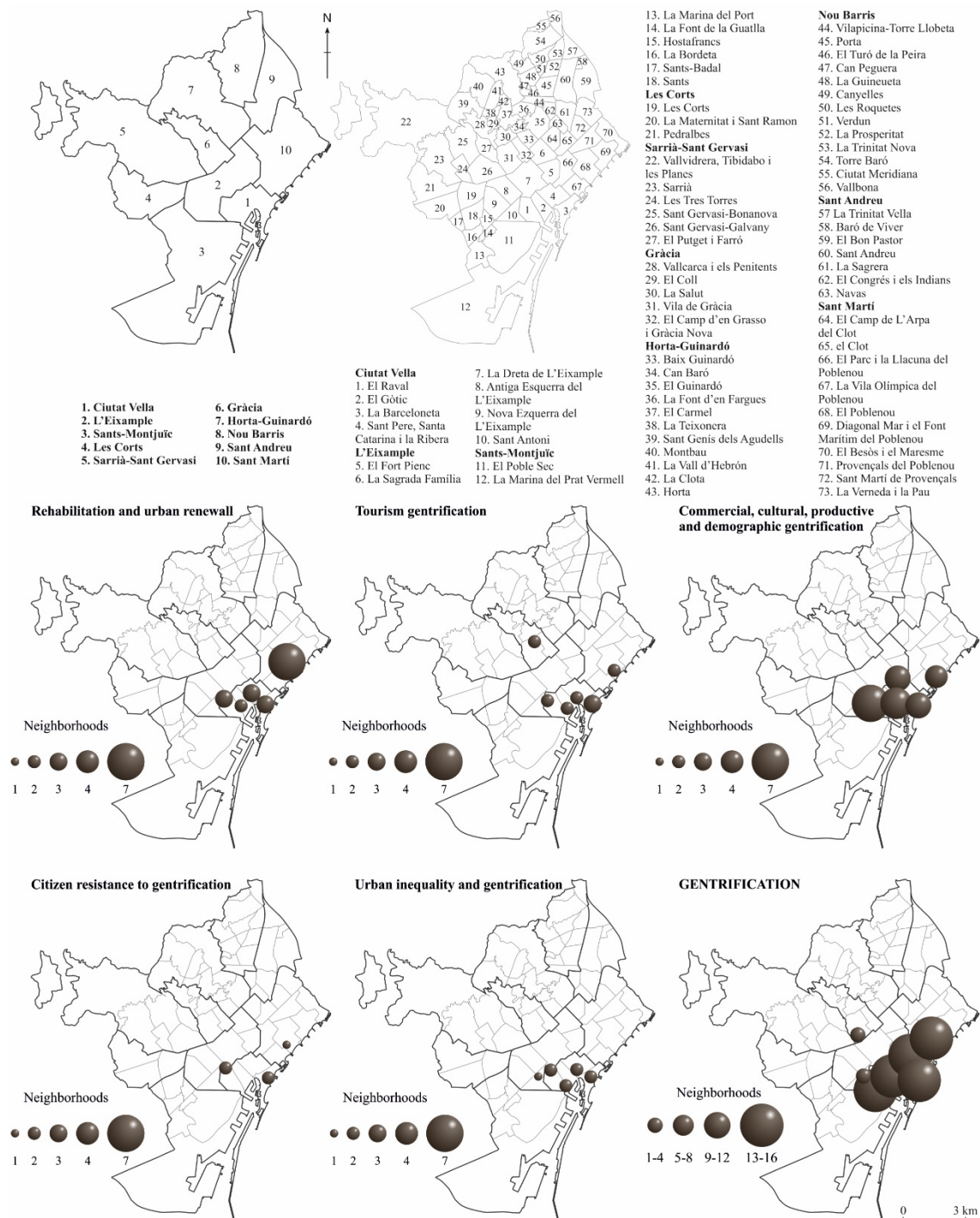
Antunes et al. (2020) recently wrote that scholarship about gentrification in Barcelona has specifically focused on the old town and the 22@ District in its analyses of the Barcelona Model and the politics of transformation to a tourist-oriented global city. The systematic review that we have carried out here, analysing academic studies published over the last twenty years, confirms this view: of a total of 45 papers that have as their area of study a district or neighbourhood of Barcelona, a total of 22 focus on the district of *Ciutat Vella* or on one of its four neighbourhoods (*Barri Gòtic*, *el Raval*, *Barceloneta* and *Sant Pere, Santa Caterina i la Ribera*), and 14 focus their attention on *Poblenou*. Barcelona as a whole or as an intra-urban space is also a frequent focus (11 publications) and, only very recently, and largely insufficiently, has the metropolitan scale been taken as the scale of study by two papers. Neighbourhoods outside the urban centre have rarely been the focus of gentrification research.

This section aims to map out the way in which the research makes Barcelona's neighbourhoods visible as areas or territories of study according to the typology of processes to which they are exposed: gentrification, regeneration and urban renewal; tourism gentrification; commercial, productive and cultural gentrification; citizen resistance and urban anti-gentrification policies; sociodemographic changes and gentrification; gentrification, inequality and urban impoverishment. A summary map is provided.

The map, however, has a series of limitations that should first be pointed out. First, it does not include the territories referred to in publications on green gentrification (which, as a matter of fact, constitute a relatively small number of contributions); second, it does not consider contributions that use indicators; and, finally, papers that have as their area of study the city of Barcelona as a whole or its metropolitan area have been left out. Likewise, it should be noted that most of the works consulted (around a dozen) have the district of *Ciutat Vella* as their area of study, a fact that has been taken into account when summing the neighbourhoods that make up this district.

Historic centres have been found to be the most suitable places for studying the theory and practice of urban processes in the 21st century. This is borne out here by studies of gentrification in Barcelona. The Barcelona Model, so widely admired and internationally acclaimed in the 1990s, is the source of multiple re-evaluations in the first decade of the new century. And probably most of these reappraisals focused on one neighbourhood: *Poblenou* and its urban renewal policies. As many as 14 studies use *Poblenou* in their critical assessments of gentrification in Barcelona. Based on the interest shown by social scientists, the *Eixample*, with the sole exception of a study of *Sant Antoni*, and the city's peripheral districts have not experienced significant processes of gentrification (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Territories of study in publications examining gentrification in Barcelona by typology and neighbourhood



Source: Study authors.

4. Ciutat Vella. Social change and property revalorization

In the collective imaginary, Barcelona is seen as an emblem of success, of a city that has managed to lead a process of urban change and which enjoys a position of advantage both nationally and internationally. The building of this image has been helped by evaluations of the processes underpinning its transformation, characterised by active policies of urban

renewal and regeneration and its projection as a global city in the tourism sector. However, when the city's socio-urban changes are put to scrutiny, a series of internal contradictions are detected that have to be taken into consideration in studies of the city and, in particular, of districts such as *Ciutat Vella*.

This district is made up of four historic neighbourhoods – *Barri Gòtic*, *Sant Pere*, *Santa Caterina i la Ribera*, *el Raval* and *Barceloneta* – and it constitutes the heart of the city, corresponding to the area contained between the walls of the ancient city of Barcelona. Its neighbourhoods have been subjected to intense process of change over the last few decades. In fact, if we travel back in time to the seventies and the first half of the eighties, the conditions of the district were typically described as atrocious. This sector of the city was characterised by badly rundown housing, and found itself in a state of dereliction and disrepair, and in demographic freefall, both because of the ageing of its residents and because of the exodus of its other inhabitants, a flight that was not offset by the arrival of new neighbours.

This situation of general degradation was accompanied by a notable economic and social downswing, which led to the progressive stigmatization suffered by some of its neighbourhoods. In response to the situation, plans were launched by the public administration in the hope of breathing new life into the neighbourhoods and, in the case of *Ciutat Vella*, two PERIs (*Planes Especiales de Reforma Interior* or Special Plans for Internal Reform) were passed by the City Hall in the mid-1980s, aimed at carrying out what was known as “urban surgery”: one for *el Raval* (with the *Rambla del Raval* – a broad boulevard – as its emblematic figure) and a second for *Santa Caterina* (with the redevelopment of its market as the jewel in the crown). While these policies represented an initial impulse to change, their actual impact on processes of gentrification was quite limited. In fact, the first studies of *el Raval* and *Santa Caterina* conducted at the turn of the century suggest that gentrification at that time was in a stage that is best described as incipient.

The next step of significance was the implementation of policies under the new Neighbourhood Law in 2004, at the instigation of the left-wing tripartite in the regional government, the *Generalitat* (Llei 2/2004). Between 2004 and 2010, in the metropolitan area of Barcelona, a total 36 neighbourhood plans were adopted, a third of which were implemented in the municipality of Barcelona. The district of *Ciutat Vella* concentrated much of the attention, with initiatives being taken in three of its neighbourhoods: *Santa*

Caterina i Sant Pere, Barceloneta and *el Raval Sud*. However, subsequent evaluations of the outcomes achieved in this district were not excessively satisfactory and significant deficits were detected in relation to the targets set by the plans according to the *Actualización de los indicadores de la Ley de Barrios de 2011* (Update on the indicators of the Neighbourhood Law 2011).

Finally, following the economic crisis, public policy initiatives were resumed in 2016 with a new Neighbourhood Plan, led in this case by the Barcelona City Hall. This time 16 neighbourhoods were earmarked for action, two of which are in the *Ciutat Vella* district: *el Raval Sud* and *el Gòtic Sud*.

As can be seen, political initiatives and action plans have been constantly present in one of the most internally segregated districts of the city. But these initiatives have not been the most decisive force in play, given that the contribution made by tourism has been far from negligible in the transformations – uneven, it should be noted, in spatial terms, but significant nonetheless – that have come to characterise the *Ciutat Vella* over the last two decades.

Different indicators identify the district as being the one facing the highest rates of overtourism in Barcelona. According to AirDNA data, *Ciutat Vella* has 4,385 holiday homes (Airbnb, HomeAway, etc.), that is, a density of 10.03 holiday homes per hectare compared to 1.84 for Barcelona as a whole. The 2018 municipal census of tourist accommodation reported that there are 27,436 tourist beds in *Ciutat Vella*, of which 18,814 are provided by hotels. However, this process of touristification has not led to its gentrification or *elitization*: first, the district has the second lowest average annual income in the municipality, both per household (28,384 euros) and per person (12,832 euros); second, the district's resident foreigners are dominated by labour immigrants from the South, mainly Asia; and, third, the growing supply of holiday homes has not affected the number of residential rental homes, which has grown during the housing bubble and the crisis, in parallel with the boom in tourist accommodation. The increase in supply has, however, been accompanied by a hike in prices, possibly because of the constant increase in demand and the pressure exerted by the rental holiday property (Table 2).

Table 2. AirBnB accommodation listed in *Ciutat Vella*, 2019.

Indicator	el Raval	el Barri Gòtic	la Barceloneta	Sant Pere, Santa Caterina i la Ribera	Ciutat Vella	Barcelona
Population 2019	48297	19180	15173	23170	105820	1650358
Accommodation offer AirBnB - A	1498	1184	393	1030	4105	18302
Entire home, Apprt - B	592	511	242	538	1863	8912
Entire home, Apprt./accommodation AirBnB (%)	39.52	43.16	61.58	52.23	45.38	48.69
% Accommodation AirBnB /total AirBnB BCN	8.18	6.47	2.15	5.63	22.43	100
Entire home, Apprt. /total BCN (%)	6.64	5.73	2.72	6.04	20.90	100
Accommodation AirBnb /1000 inhabitants	31.02	61.73	25.90	44.45	38.79	11.09

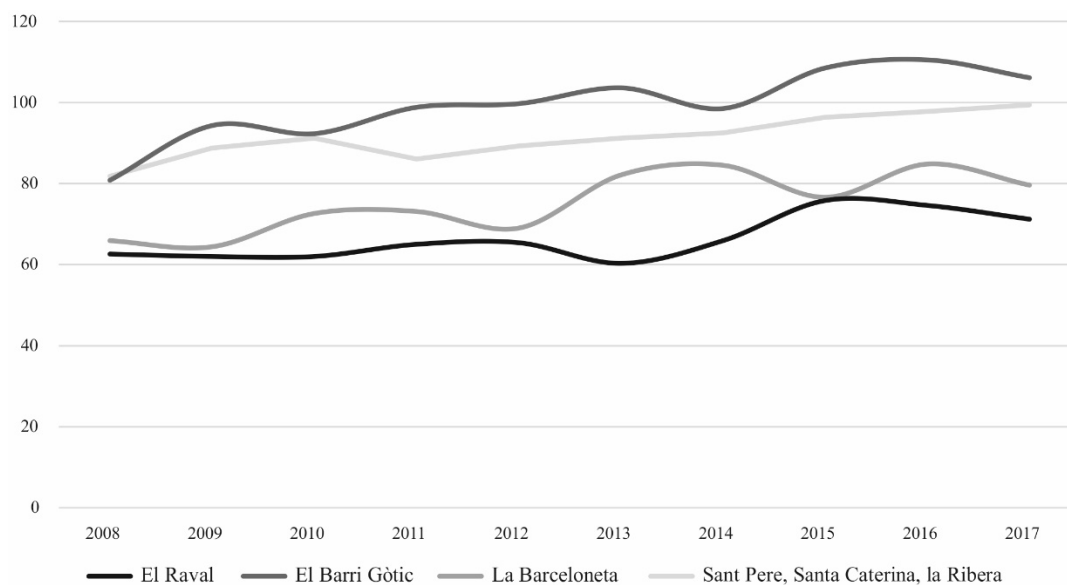
Source: Based on data from the AirBnB Inside (noviembre, 2019) and Ajuntament de Barcelona: Estadística Municipal.

In what follows, we study the sequence taken by these processes by undertaking an analysis of the social changes (measured by indicators of income and foreign population), and changes in the property market (based on supply and house prices) at the neighbourhood scale.

4.1 Social changes in *Ciutat Vella*

As highlighted above, *Ciutat Vella* is the district with the highest rate of overtourism in the city and is one of the most exposed to the processes of gentrification; yet, it has a disposable household income (DHI) below that of the municipal average. At the neighbourhood level, the last decade has been marked by an overall upward trend in DHI, above all in the main tourist neighbourhood of the *Barri Gòtic*, which is the only one to exceed the city average. Two of the key factors accounting for this apparent contradiction are the notable weight of the working-class population in *Barceloneta* and the high numbers of foreign labour immigrants in *el Raval*. These two factors explain what a slow improvement in income levels in these two neighbourhoods is only (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Distribution of household income in the neighbourhoods of *Ciutat Vella*, 2000–2017. Barcelona DHI index = 100



Source: Based on data from the *Departament d'Estadística del Ajuntament de Barcelona*.

Overall, *Ciutat Vella* presents a positive demographic trend between 2001 and 2019, growing by more than 20,000 inhabitants over these two decades. This growth was particularly high between 2001 and 2007, being coupled with the arrival of foreign immigration that contributed to changing the face of the city. The economic recession marked a new period of demographic decline, but since 2015, the positive dynamic was restored and the previous upward trend has been consolidated (Table 3).

Table 3. Demographic evolution by neighbourhood, *Ciutat Vella* 2001–2019

Population growth 2001-2019

Year	el Raval	el Barri Gòtic	la Barceloneta	Sant Pere, Santa Caterina i la Ribera	Ciutat Vella
2001	36,282	15,199	14,252	19,444	85,177
2007	46,595	27,946	15,921	22,572	113,034
2010	48,767	18,720	16,261	23,101	106,849
2015	47,617	15,269	15,036	22,305	100,227
2019	48,297	19,180	15,173	23,170	105,820

Annual rate of growth 2001-2019 (%)

Period	el Raval	el Barri Gòtic	la Barceloneta	Sant Pere, Santa Caterina i la Ribera	Ciutat Vella
2001-2007	4.26	10.68	1.86	2.52	4.83
2007-2010	1.53	-12.50	0.71	0.78	-1.86
2010-2015	-0.48	-3.99	-1.55	-0.70	-1.27
2015-2019	0.36	5.87	0.23	0.96	1.37

Source: Based on data from the *Ajuntament de Barcelona: Padrón de Habitantes. Estadística Municipal*.

An analysis of foreign population data indicates the importance of immigrant influxes: *Barri Gòtic* and *el Raval* presenting the highest proportions of foreign-born residents in Barcelona: 62.0 and 60.26%, respectively. At a somewhat lower level we find *Sant Pere, Santa Caterina i la Ribera* (45%) and *Barceloneta* (39.06%) (Tables 4 and 5).

Table 4. Evolution of the proportion of foreign-born residents by neighbourhood (2001–2019)

Neighbourhood	2001	2007	2010	2015	2019
el Raval	28.71	49.94	54.16	56.78	60.26
el Barri Gòtic	28.59	60.99	47.83	48.58	62.00
la Barceloneta	12.46	28.97	33.52	36.75	44.89
Sant Pere, Santa Caterina i la Ribera	21.04	37.63	41.95	45.96	51.78

Source: Based on data from the *Ajuntament de Barcelona: Padrón de Habitantes. Estadística Municipal*.

Table 5. Demographic evolution of the main nationalities by neighbourhood (2001–2019)

2001

el Raval		Barri Gòtic		la Barceloneta		S. Pere, Santa Caterina i la Ribera	
Nationality	nº	Nationality	nº	Nationality	nº	Nationality	nº
Philippines	1913	Morocco	378	Morocco	245	Morocco	769
Morocco	1236	Ecuador	378	Ecuador	156	Dominican R.	437
Ecuador	927	Colombia	224	Colombia	126	Ecuador	219
Dominican R.	386	Argentina	208	Bolivia	72	Philippines	179
Colombia	333	Philippines	168	Dominican R.	67	Italy	154

2010

el Raval		Barri Gòtic		la Barceloneta		S. Pere, Santa Caterina i la Ribera	
Nationality	nº	Nationality	nº	Nationality	nº	Nationality	nº
Pakistan	5036	Italy	1007	Italy	662	Italy	1045
Philippines	4261	Pakistan	1003	Morocco	499	Morocco	778
Bangladesh	4085	France	554	Pakistan	396	France	685
Morocco	1842	Morocco	406	France	273	United Kingdom	433
Italy	1270	Bolivia	328	Germany	195	Pakistan	411

2019

el Raval		Barri Gòtic		la Barceloneta		S. Pere, Santa Caterina i la Ribera	
Nationality	nº	Nationality	nº	Nationality	nº	Nationality	nº
Pakistan	4360	Pakistan	1549	Italy	1146	Italy	1721
Philippines	4021	Italy	1265	Pakistan	418	France	838
Bangladesh	3050	Bangladesh	812	Morocco	354	Morocco	764
Italy	1974	France	656	France	323	United Kingdom	588
Morocco	1389	India	538	UK	221	Germany	420

Source: Based on data from the *Ajuntament de Barcelona: Padrón de Habitantes. Estadística Municipal*.

The demographic evolution of the main nationalities underscores the growth of the foreign-born population, which increased in all neighbourhoods between 2001 and 2019, but it also points to some changes that are indicative of differential gentrification. In 2001, the main nationalities present in the neighbourhoods of *Ciutat Vella* were people from Morocco and various Latin American countries (Ecuador, Colombia and the Dominican Republic). The proportion of Asian immigrants is only predominant in *el Raval* (from the Philippines) and of secondary importance in *Sant Pere, Santa Caterina i la Ribera*. Thus, what we observe is predominantly labour migration, primarily from the South.

As of 2010, there was a two-way development in immigration: on the one hand, other Asian groups, especially Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, began to acquire importance, while on the other, certain European nationalities emerged among the largest groups (Italians are ranked first in three of *Ciutat Vella*'s four neighbourhoods, while the French gained in importance). Figures for 2019 ratify these trends so that the strong Asian presence has been upheld along with a growing representation from Europe. Thus, the data serve to confirm the hypothesis of segregation and the coexistence of gentrified areas with others that are more vulnerable and rundown. Pakistan and Italy are two of the most frequently represented nationalities, the Italian being the only one to have grown between 2010 and 2019 in *el Raval*.

It is also worth noting the changes that have taken place in the neighbourhoods of *Sant Pere, Santa Caterina i la Ribera*, on the one hand, and *Barceloneta*, on the other. In both cases there has been a certain fall-off in the number of those nationalities associated with labour immigration (less weight attached to Moroccans) and a greater relevance acquired by European immigration (Italians, French, British and even Germans). In the first of the neighbourhoods mentioned above, only the Moroccan community remains among the top-ranked non-European nationalities. Indeed, the most relevant processes of social change are occurring in these two neighbourhoods, which are precisely those that have generated most interest among scholars of gentrification.

A further factor that ratifies the trends described is the proportion of people with higher education (university or advanced vocational training) in the *Ciutat Vella* neighbourhoods. These figures can be used as a further indicator of gentrification, since in 2001, all the neighbourhoods of *Ciutat Vella* presented a proportion of inhabitants with higher education well below the average for Barcelona, and in two of them – *el Raval*,

but above all in *Barceloneta* – these percentages were decidedly lower. The changes detected in the district as a whole indicate a notable shift in this indicator, which since 2010 has exceeded the average for Barcelona in el *Barri Gòtic* and in *Sant Pere, Santa Caterina i la Ribera*. The arrival of new inhabitants in the neighbourhoods has seen an increase in the qualifications of its inhabitants, which ratifies the idea identified above of gentrification processes occurring at different speeds in different parts of the district (Table 6).

Table 6. Evolution of the weight of the population with higher education by neighbourhood (2001–2019)

Neighbourhood	2001		2010		2019	
	%	BCN = 100	%	BCN = 100	%	BCN = 100
el Raval	15.72	57.95	18.68	78.06	26.69	81.33
el Barri Gòtic	24.32	89.64	28.74	120.08	36.36	110.80
la Barceloneta	9.87	36.39	19.03	79.51	30.05	91.56
Sant Pere, Santa Caterina i la Ribera	20.61	75.98	30.20	126.22	41.76	127.25
Barcelona	27.13	100	23.93	100	32.82	100

Source: Based on data from the *Ajuntament de Barcelona: Padrón de Habitantes. Estadística Municipal*.

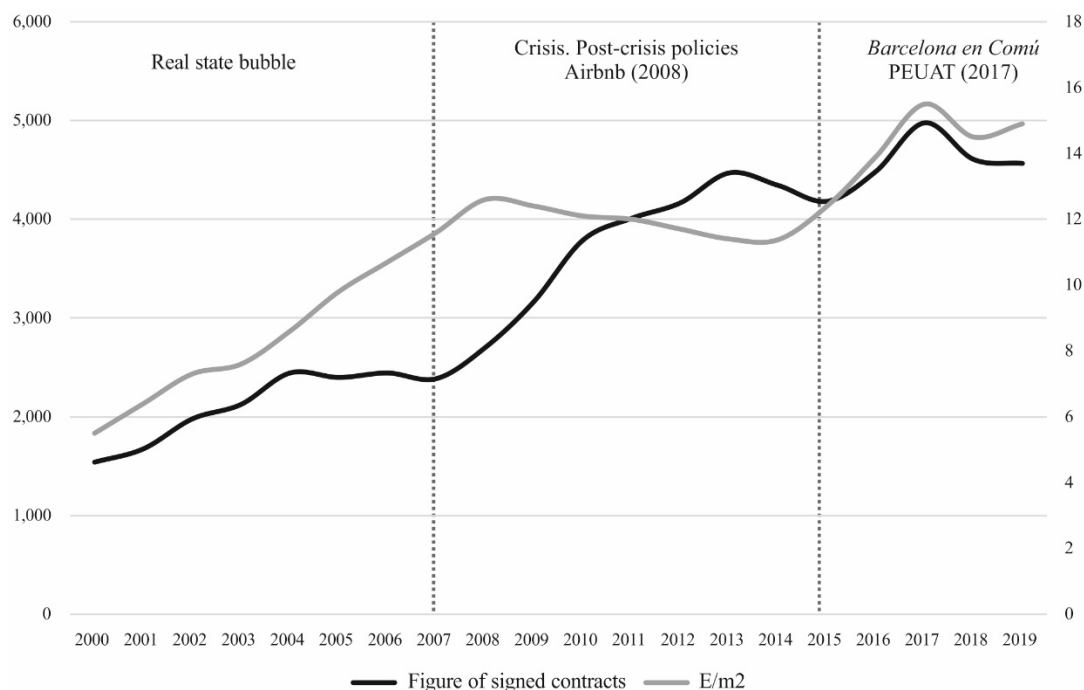
4.2 Housing revalorization in *Ciutat Vella*

In an area of the city characterized by such a degree of overtourism and the significant presence of holiday rental properties, the residential rental market is, of necessity, dynamic. An increase in the number of rental contracts can be detected almost without interruption, even throughout the crisis and at the time of the bursting of the housing bubble. With the exception of a parenthesis between 2010 and 2015, rental prices evolved in correlation with the number of signed contracts, that is, the more contracts entered into, the higher the rental prices rose. Probably, this rise in demand, which since 2008 has had to compete with the new holiday rental platforms, has caused prices to increase.

These trends coexist with another phenomenon that is common in most gentrification processes: evictions as an antecedent of social change. In 2017, *Ciutat Vella* was, together with *Nou Barris*, the district with the highest number of eviction orders in Barcelona. In that year 605 evictions were registered, that is, an increase of 380.16% on 2015's figure and representing the highest rate of growth in the city's ten districts.

Coinciding with the approval of the *Plan Especial Urbanístico de Alojamiento Turístico* or PEUAT (Special Urban Plan for Tourist Accommodation) in March 2017 by the left-wing government of Barcelona *En Comú*, the upward price trend was checked at the same time as the number of contracts signed presented a slight upturn. In addition to forcing owners to obtain a Tourist Licence, the PEUAT introduced a four-area zoning plan to regulate the operation of hotels and rental properties for tourist use (Figure 3).

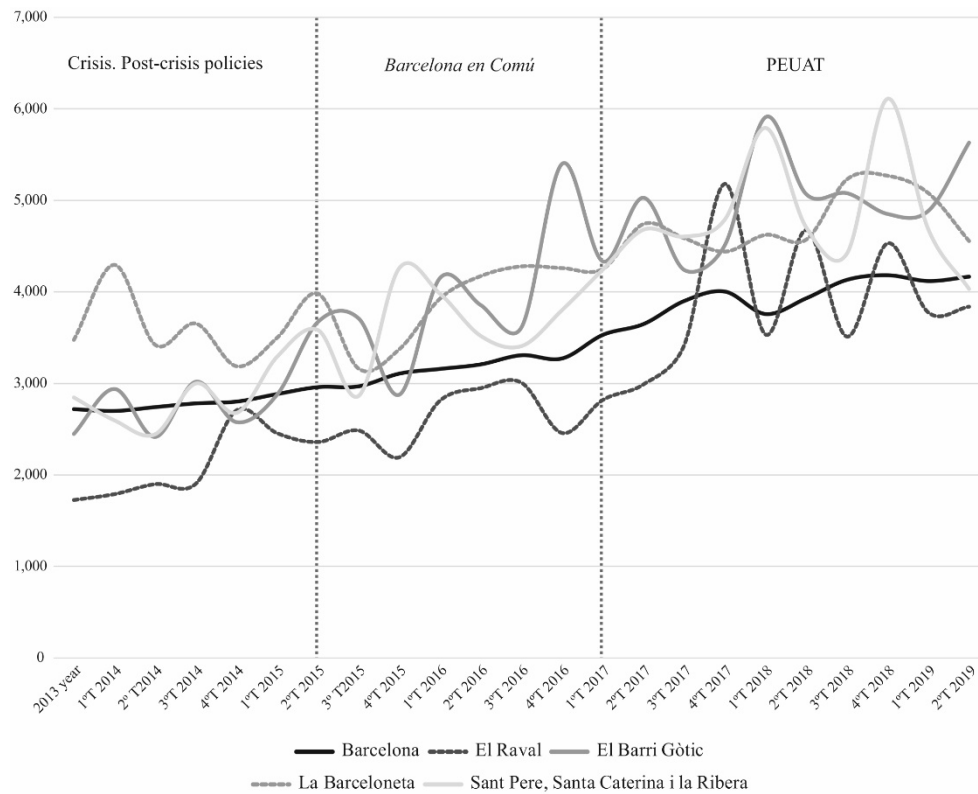
Figure 3. Residential rental property market in *Ciutat Vella*: number of contracts signed and rental rates, 2000–2019



Source: Based on data from the *Ajuntament de Barcelona: Departament d'Estadística*

Therefore, the pressures of gentrification in such diverse and, at times, socially segregated neighbourhoods are manifest most typically in the increase in housing prices. This increase not only encourages speculation, but it usually goes hand in hand with the expulsion of the longstanding residents or the more vulnerable, in many cases groups of foreign nationals, from the South who, as pointed out, have been displaced by Europeans from some of the neighbourhoods. The evolution in sale and rental prices at the neighbourhood level (Figures 4 and 5) are two of the best indicators of this process. In this regard, it is significant, first, that the trend taken by housing sales prices was higher in three neighbourhoods of *Ciutat Vella* (the exception being *el Raval*) than in Barcelona as a whole, between 2013 and 2019.

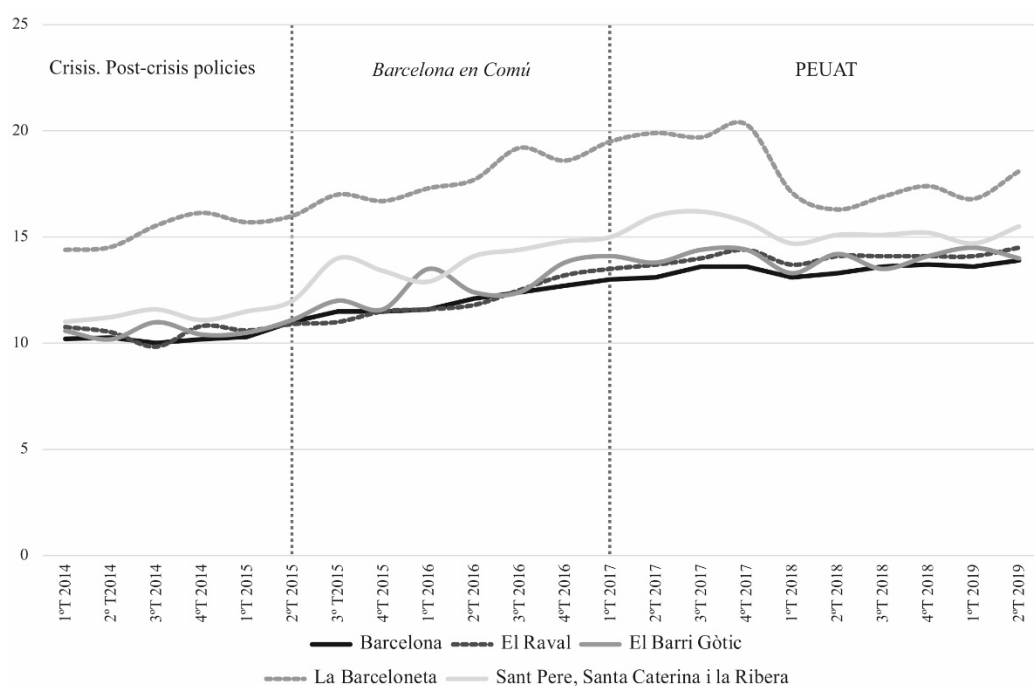
Figure 4. Evolution in housing sales prices (euros/m²) in the neighbourhoods of *Ciutat Vella* (2013 – 2nd quarter of 2019)



Source: Based on data from the *Ajuntament de Barcelona: Departament d'Estadística*

Second, throughout the period analysed, Barcelona records lower rental prices than the four neighbourhoods of Ciutat Vella. Third, note the general upward trend in sales prices, with a fall in average prices in the last quarter, with the exception of *Barri Gòtic*. Thus, the neighbourhoods with the highest rates of overtourism and most exposed to gentrification present the highest housing prices and the most regular evolution of these prices. Finally, note that residential rental prices also present an upward trend. However, coinciding with the approval of the PEUAT, this growth has slowed in all the neighbourhoods, and in some of them prices have even fallen. Today, there is a sense that price trends have stabilized somewhat. *Barceloneta* is, far and away, the neighbourhood with the highest rental prices, exceeding 20 euros/m² in the 1st quarter of 2017.

Figure 5. Evolution in housing rental prices (euros/m²) in the neighbourhoods of *Ciutat Vella* (1st quarter 2014 – 2nd quarter 2019)



Source: Based on data from the *Ajuntament de Barcelona: Departament d'Estadística*

In response to these trends, discontent has grown among the citizens. They consider tourism to be one of the main elements destabilising the property market and these sentiments have given rise to a current of tourism phobia (Figures 6a and 6b).

Figures 6a and 6b. Reactions to tourism in Barcelona



Notes: 6a – Tourism kills neighbourhoods. 6b – We’ve shut down more than 2000 illegal tourist beds. But there are still many left on the internet. Source: Study authors.

Here, we should stress that three of the neighbourhoods of Ciutat Vella – except for el Raval – head municipal surveys on the perception of tourism, specifically those residents who wish that there were fewer tourists in their neighbourhood (more than 40% in Barri Gòtic, Barceloneta and Sant Pere, Santa Caterina i la Ribera, compared to 16% in Barcelona as a whole).

6. Conclusions

As a Mediterranean and tourist city, the gentrification processes in Barcelona provide novelties with respect to the most studied cases of Anglo-Saxon cities. From an exhaustive review of the scientific literature, we have identified specific stages of gentrification defined by typologies and territories (neighborhoods). In the course of this chapter, we have reviewed much of the research examining the processes of gentrification in the city of Barcelona. The distinct stages we have identified in this literature reveal a correlation between the dynamics of these trends and significant increases in the number of studies and the diversification in the subjects they address. From the moment these studies first turned their attention to the link between public policies and gentrification, the focus was broadened to consider different modes of gentrification (e.g. commercial, cultural and tourism) and the social dimension of these analyses acquired greater importance (e.g. resistance to change).

However, the expansion of this field of research is evident not only in terms of the number of studies published and the themes addressed but also in its geography. Despite the fact that *Ciutat Vella*, both as a single unit and at its neighbourhood level, has become the chosen ‘urban laboratory’ for the analysis of gentrification in Barcelona, as scholars have published their findings, new areas of interest have emerged, ranging from *Poblenou* – another exceptional space given the number of innovative public policies implemented there – to neighbourhoods such as *Vallcarca*, *Gràcia* and parts of the *Eixample* such as *Sant Antoni*. The construction of the discourse on gentrification has become increasingly plural in number, themes, territories and voices, with contributions coming from such disciplines as geography, sociology, anthropology and economics, which collaborate and complement each other in their interpretations of a common problem.

The case study reported here – in which we have focused our attention on the district in which these socio-urban changes have been most prominent – allows us to corroborate that the neighbourhoods of the historic city centre are subject to major

pressures of tourism and gentrification, while they have maintained their notable social diversity, as exemplified by the growing presence of their foreign population, albeit from two quite distinct points of origin. Despite presenting clear indications of gentrification, the neighbourhoods of *Ciutat Vella* maintain their diversity (or internal segregation), which is critical in defining a dynamic residential property market, although there are evident signs that point to increasing *elitization*.

The public policies implemented by the Barcelona City Hall and the *Generalitat* served to lay some of the foundations for change, but structural elements already present in this district, including the massive and almost ubiquitous presence – given the lack of seasonality – of flows of tourists into these neighbourhoods has been crucial in instigating the changes detected in *Ciutat Vella*.

The property revalorization and the upward social mobility of its residents are present in all four neighbourhoods, albeit with varying degrees of intensity. Given its social make-up, the old rundown neighbourhood of *el Raval* may well be the most vulnerable to rising prices and the displacement of its residents. But it is *Barceloneta*, with its numerous foreign nationals, led by the Italians and the French, where the increase in house prices presents greatest risks.

Any overall view of *Ciutat Vella* as a single unit fails to hide the internal differences that have come to characterize the district. As Ter-Minassian (2014) pointed out, the diversity of processes and of the paths taken by its four neighbourhoods is one of the most outstanding features of socio-urban change in this area. Moreover, the passage of time and the ravages of the long period of economic crisis that the city has suffered have maintained two distinct spatial patterns: with marginalized sectors, like the southern end of *el Raval*, standing in stark contrast to the up and coming, gentrified areas of *el Born* and *el Gòtic*. All in all, the effects of the economic recovery and the influence of tourism are slowly seeping into the more disadvantaged areas, so that the general advances made by gentrification cannot be ignored.

Reactions to the most negative effects of these processes have been concentrated in anti-gentrification policies, led by the left-wing municipal government, and centred above all on the proposals and actions of PEUAT. While it is still early days, initial results give cause for optimism. However, it is hard to escape the feeling that a sectoral policy, *a priori*, will not be enough on its own to stop successive waves of gentrification.

Acknowledgments:

This study has been funded by the following research projects: “Tourism and the city: analysis and evaluation of the synergies, conflicts and challenges generated by the growth of tourism in Spanish cities” (PGC2018-097707-B-I00) and “Housing and international mobility in the cities of the Balearic Islands. The emergence of new forms of urban inequality” (RTI2018-093296-B-C22), State Research Agency, Ministry of Science, Research and Universities, and FEDER.

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