A MULTILEVEL ANALYSIS OF A GENTRIFICATION PROCESS IN A SPANISH MEDIUM-SIZED CITY: THE CASE OF A CORUÑA

Un análisis multinivel de un proceso de gentrificación en una ciudad mediana española: el caso de A Coruña

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ABSTRACT

This article has deconstructed the general phenomenon of gentrification in the historic centre of A Coruña in two models. On the one hand, a model based on social class promotion, symbolic capital and economic status in the Cidade Vella. On the other hand, the neighbourhood of Orzán as a transformation process resulting from a phenomenon of commercial gentrification based on two interrelated processes: first, the demand for new places of consumption and entertainment and second, the material devaluation of the neighbourhood. In this regard, this work brings a new dimension to the global debate around commercial gentrification.

RESUMEN

Este artículo ha deconstruido el fenómeno general de la gentrificación en el centro histórico de A Coruña en dos modelos. Por un lado, un modelo basado en la promoción de la clase social, el capital simbólico y el estatus económico en la Cidade Vella. Por otro lado, el barrio del Orzán como proceso de transformación resultante de un fenómeno de gentrificación comercial basado en dos procesos interrelacionados: en primer lugar, la demanda de nuevos lugares de consumo y ocio y, en segundo lugar, la devaluación material del barrio.

1. Introduction

Contemporary tourism has become one of the main agents transforming urban space. While classic tourism is framed within the visual, aesthetic and patrimonial consumption of the city, post-modern tourism aims to consume the "identity of the place" (Perkins & Thorns, 2001; Pinkster & Boterman, 2017). This evolution implies understanding that the tourist has become a participating actor -and, therefore, with greater capacity to influence the environment- that aspires to experience the city in a broad sense. Elements such as gastronomy, street environment, traditional venues, urban art, etc., constitute an amalgam of sensory sensations that give shape to a model of tourism that avoids closed circuits and longs for exclusive experiences.

However, neoliberalism leaves little room for free will and spontaneity. The neoliberal management of the city is intimately related to the design of economic engineering based on a reinterpretation of urban space in terms of consumption and entertainment. A direct consequence of this process is the reification and commodification of spaces and activities in order to provide the visitor with a prefabricated setting for exploration. The tendency to look for new experiences in supposedly non-tourist areas results in the colonization of spaces of the city that until now remained unrelated to the dynamics of mass tourism[1] (Condevaux, Djament-Tran, & Gravari-Barbas, 2016). Therefore, the flexible and volatile design of circuits characterized by a diffuse delimitation with respect to the rest of the urban network, acts as incentive of a tourist model that rejects the stereotyped image of the "middle class" tourist, and values the experimentation of local life through role-play. In this light, a dynamic by which the tourist enters and leaves these circuits through an apparent sense of autonomy and spontaneous interaction with the environment is allowed.

Paradoxically, to keep tourist circuits based on the illusion of interaction with the "real city" tends towards the standardization and commodification of its attributes, deriving in the progressive homogenization of the tourist offer (Barrera-Fernández, Hernández-Escampa & Balbuena, 2016; Boussaa, 2018). This becomes a problem in a competitive context such as the global urban market, where cities must fight to be attractive and distinguish themselves among the others to capture increasingly demanding and volatile tourist flows (Harvey, 1999).

In order to counteract the progressive homogenization of the offer, the municipalities have incorporated the cultural dimension as a differentiating element (Della, Mariapina & Go, 2017; Rahbarianyazd & Doratli, 2017). In this way, the production of new cultural signifiers associated to the centre through the (re)production of space is, on the one hand, the main instrument to reactivate disused spaces and generate latent capital gains (Andres & Golubchikov, 2016). On the other, it is useful in order to identify cultural resources that function as metonymic image of the identity of the city as a whole (Cachinho, 2006; Featherstone, 2007). As a consequence, enormous public expenditure is destined to create cultural attractions and installations in the surroundings of the urban centre. However, this transformation leads to "perverse effects" (Choay, 2001) such as gentrification phenomena (Bidou-Zachariasen, 2007; Novak, 2019) or what some researchers have called "power landscapes" (Zukin, 1996) or "spectacularized landscapes" (Proença, 2010).

Although this is an aspect that has been extensively studied from the "School of Los Angeles", there are different terminological denominations that allude to the artificial and hermetic character of these "tourist bubbles" in which an idyllic and safe image of the city is reconstructed. Thus, in the international bibliography, we find concepts such as "museification" (Jaramillo & Del Cairo, 2013); "thematization" (Antón, 1999; Rocha da Cruz, 2017), "disneyfication" (Eeckhout, 2001; Bryman, 2004) or "mcdonalization" (Ritzer, 2009).

The physical framework of historical buildings, public spaces, museums, galleries, theatres, etc., becomes an institutional and patrimonial value with a strong symbolic burden that revalues the environment and the government that manages it (Expósito, 1998; Sequera, 2013). Cities are filled with a cultural content designed and controlled by the public administration, in tune with private agents, until they become a fundamental piece within the gear of the "cultural economy" as an "art container" (Ascher, 2004) or a "culture factory" (Carrillo, 2008).

Linked to the parameters of the "cultural economy", the regeneration of port spaces and seafronts for tertiary uses is a globally widespread practice that has generated an abundance of international literature. In the urban planning of these spaces, water hardly exists as a decoration to reinforce an aesthetic of consumption and leisure that encourages tourism, and undermines the port identity of the area. The first actions of this type took place at the end of the seventies in the great port cities of the United States such as Baltimore (Harbour Place), Boston (Quincy Market), San Francisco (Fisherman's Wharf), Los Angeles (Ports of Call) or New York (Battery Park City). Subsequently, the experience would be repeated in Canadian cities such as Toronto (Bunce, 2009). At the beginning of the eighties, this trend was introduced in Europe through the London Docklands (Grindlay, 2008: 61-62). This model of urbanism reached its peak in the following decade on the occasion of major world events such as the 1992 Barcelona Olympics or the 1998 Lisbon World Expo. Also noteworthy in the last decade is the transformation of port spaces into containers for "rapid consumption "focused on cruise tourism, a particularly abrupt and emerging global phenomenon in the cities of Lisbon, Barcelona, Marseille and Venice.

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1   In this sense, the models of slum tourism around the favelas of Rio de Janeiro in Brazil, the hutongs of China or the gang territories of New York Harlem, are paradigmatic.

This article explores the coexistence of two gentrification processes in the historic centre of A Coruña within the framework of a wide project of regeneration and privatization of its coastline. The structure of the article has the following sequence: First, we will begin by highlighting the most relevant sociodemographic characteristics to reveal the main guidelines of the social change in the historic centre. Second, we will analyse the residential gentrification process at the neighbourhood of Cidade Vella and then, we will study the fundamental keys that characterize the commercial gentrification phenomenon in the neighbourhood of Orzán. Although we suggest that both processes are autonomous and with different paces of development, we frame them in the same underlying process of touristification and privatization of the historic centre coastline (area of the Mariña-Parrote, lands of Sport Complex La Solana and Hotel Finisterre -henceforth "La Solana-Hotel Finisterre- and inland ports). This project aims to boost residential elitization and cruise tourism by creating a huge neighbourhood and new consumer spaces reinforcing the dynamics of residential and commercial change in Cidade Vella and Orzán, respectively.

2. Commercial gentrification as an autonomous process

Commercial gentrification has traditionally aroused little academic interest as it has been analysed as an expression within the global process of residential gentrification (Davidson & Lees, 2010; González & Waley, 2013). The change in commercial activities and, therefore, in the urban landscape, appears as a necessary factor to characterize gentrification along with three other indicators: the capital investment, the arrival of people with higher economic incomes and the displacement of low-income population (Lees, Slater & Wyly, 2008). Still, we can highlight pioneering works as those by Zukin (2008) on Brooklyn, or references to the "retail landscapes of gentrification" of Bridge and Dowling (2001: 95).

Commercial gentrification can be defined as the emergence of businesses and stores oriented towards a high-income social sector with high cultural capital. This implies the displacement or replacement of the old proximity trade, with special relevance in the central areas. This phenomenon should not be interpreted exclusively as the tertiarization of a place, but as a substitution of commercial activities with a component of neighbourhood identity. This process leads to the displacement -sometimes indirect (Cocola, 2015)- of the old proximity trade disrupting the social daily life of the neighbourhood (Jover, 2019).

This boutification process (Lees, Shin, & López-Morales, 2016), whereby large commercial chains and franchises transform the neighbourhoods and displace the original stores, sometimes responds to a political strategy of socio-economic revitalization through consumption in devalued central areas (Massey, 2005; Zukin et al., 2009). Factors such as its strategic location or its heritage assets allow to build a rhetoric that appeal to cosmopolitan patterns of leisure and entertainment as claims for the attraction of the creative class (Del Romero & Lara, 2015) and the generation of new tourist centres (Quijano-Gomez, 2019). Governments seek thus to encourage new commercial typologies related to leisure, which contribute to producing economic capital to include cities in the global scene (Zukin, et al., 2009). This strategy has also been observed in the specific case of traditional markets that, represented as deteriorated, dangerous and dirty places under the neoliberal view, justify their economic and symbolic revaluation by adapting to the preferences of the wealthiest social classes (González & Waley, 2013).

The shift from industrial capitalism to a logic of consumption constitutes a new way of living and experiencing the city. The social projection of consumption and leisure is a central element in the construction of collective and individual identities. In spatial terms, its link with the historic centre allows it to build a new urban culture settled on socio-economic differentiation and segregation of lifestyles (Cornejo, 2006). Thus, gentrification and tourism set a transformative dialectic that lead to touristificated spaces, defined as the transformation of a middle-class neighbourhood into a relatively rich and exclusive enclave marked by the proliferation of corporate entertainment and tourism venues (Gotham, 2005), and the displacement of population and traditional commercial networks (Jover & Díaz, 2019).

This document sheds light on the global debate around the autonomous capacity of commercial gentrification to transform the urban landscape and promote the change of socio-economic networks. Confronting with a process of elitization and symbolic segregation in the case of the neighbourhood of the Cidade Vella, this paper reveals how the neighbourhood of the Orzán has its own pace and shows an independent dynamic of change driven by commercial gentrification. This process is explained, not only by a shift in the consumption preferences of some social groups, but also by the devaluation and degradation of the built environment. Moreover, the reconfiguration of its image from the assumptions of place-making is also an element to be taken into account. In this way, we relate cultural variables with economic factors as we consider that only from the dialectic interrelation between the classical dimensions of gentrification (demand and supply) can exhaustive explanatory and complex frameworks be constructed.

Finally, we converge both gentrification processes in a scenario of regeneration and privatization of the maritime facade of the city. This macro project is based on two major assumptions: touristification of the old port area to attract cruise tourism, and the construction of a great and elitist new neighbourhood in the coastal part of the historic centre. If carried out, this urban regeneration macro project would imply the implementation of

a neoliberal city model that defines new functionalities for the neighbourhoods of Cidade Vella and Orzán, also accelerating their current gentrification processes.

3. Gentrification and social change in the historic centre of A Coruña

A Coruña is a middle-sized city (250 thousand inhabitants) within the urban system of north western Spain. The area analysed corresponds to two of the four neighbourhoods that make up the historic centre of the city: Cidade Vella and Orzán (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Map of the composition and location of the historic centre
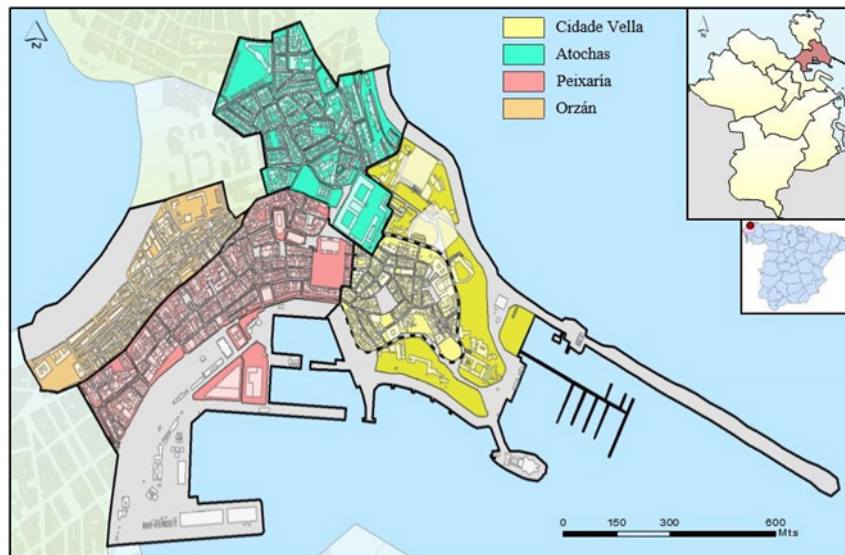
Source: Author's own elaboration.

The historic centre has a remarkably aged demographic structure. According to municipal census data, a decade ago, the area was characterized by a strong presence of over-65s (26.4% versus 19.3% municipal), mostly women (17.2% versus 11.7%, respectively). Within this context, the trend of the Cidade Vella neighbourhood was noteworthy, with 29.7% of elderly people -made up of 19.7% women- illustrating a socio-demographic composition that was not very dynamic. These two features, aging and feminization, characterize the classic profile of a social group susceptible of being displaced in a context of gentrification (Duque, 2016).

However, the latest available data clearly reflect a changing trend in the neighbourhood. The average annual growth rate (AAGR) of residents over 65 has decreased considerably in the last decade in the Cidade Vella, while in the municipality and the rest of the historic centre it has increased (Table 1). This trend is confirmed by analyzing the ageing index of the Cidade Vella, which shows that the pressure of over-65s on the younger age groups is decreasing. On the contrary, the Orzán district reflects the opposite process: a high rate of ageing in the last decade and an increase in the average age, although below the municipal average. In any case, the neighbourhood of Orzán continues to be the historical area with the lowest number of elderly people while Cidade Vella continues to be the largest (Table 1).

Table 1. Demographic indicators

Territory / Neighbourhood	AAGR (2008-2018)	Aging Index		Average age		Population > 65 y. old	
		Value (2018)	AAGR (2008-2018)	Value (2018)	AAGR (2008-2018)	Value % (2018)	**AAGR (2008-2018)**
Municipality	-0.01	151.6	1.28	46.5	0.51	20.1	1.91
Historic centre	0.25	193.1	-1.09	47.7	0.00	26.3	0.39
Cidade Vella	0.30	174.6	-3.21	48.0	-0.19	29.7	-1.15
Orzán	0.89	219.9	1.38	47.9	0.21	24.2	1.41
Peixaría	-0.05	183.2	-1.28	47.6	0.03	26.7	-0.22
Atochas	0.04	192.7	-1.66	48.0	0.01	26.0	0.81

Source: National Statistics Institute (INE).

On the other hand, the historic centre has slowed its loss of population, historically structural, thanks to the impulse of neighbourhoods like Orzán. The residents of the historic centre come largely from other areas of A Coruña (Rodríguez-Barcón 2016). That is to say, as opposed to a process of "migratory mobility", coming from outside the city and characteristic of the rest of the areas analysed, we are facing a process of "residential mobility", coming from other neighbourhoods of the city, and related to other processes of gentrification (Atkinson 2000).

The historical expulsion of inhabitants explains in part, the increase of empty housing in neighbourhoods such as the Cidade Vella (32.8%) between 2001 and 2018, while in the municipality has increased 16,1%[2]. Paradoxically, this trend is parallel to the increase in total (17.8%) and main housing (18.7%) in the Cidade Vella, whose medieval structure is protected and barely incorporates new-build housing. This fact could be explained by the restructuring and reparcelling of the existing dwellings due to the arrival of new family typologies characterized by the reduction in the size of the family nucleus, which has been highlighted as an archetypal feature of the potential gentrifier (Beauregard, 1986; Bondi, 1991). Likewise, the detriment of rent as a means of tenure in favor of property in the study area has been defined as one of the fundamental features of gentrification (Mendes et al., 2018: 15). The case of Cidade Vella is especially relevant. Between 2001 and 2011 it shows a decrease in the percentage variation of rental housing (-24.39%), while in the municipality it is only -2.43%, and an increase in ownership of 21.42%, compared to -0.80% municipal.

Taking as a starting point the 1960s, from which the inflows of labour began, mainly from rural municipalities, we can observe the development of the average socioeconomic condition of residents per year of arrival at the dwelling[3]. Exists a progressive growth in the historic centre from 1960 to 2001. We can even establish a certain turning point in the year 2000, where the divergent character between the historic centre and the rest of the city is manifested. The case of the Cidade Vella is revealing, since in 1960 it occupied the last position and in 2001 leads the average socioeconomic growth (1.35) well above the average of the municipality (1.11) and the historic centre (1.27).

Based on this general approach, we can highlight the sociodemographic characteristics that show a process of social change in the historic centre. We suggest the possibility of decomposing this phenomenon in two differentiated models from an eminently ethnographic and descriptive approach. These, in spite of showing common elements, are characterized by the existence of one or several preponderant factors that determine the differentiated nature of the phenomenon both in the Cidade Vella and in the Orzán neighbourhood. Subsequently these models will be contextualized in relation to the megaproject of regeneration and privatization of the seafront of the city and to the thrust of cruising tourism as a transversal element that accelerates the two gentrifying dynamics throughout the historic area.

4. The two gentrifying models in the historic centre of A Coruña

4.1. Residential gentrification and social change: the case of the Cidade Vella

In spite of constituting the medieval genesis of A Coruña, the Cidade Vella, unlike the rest of the urban areas around, it is an area with a scarce commercial and hotel structure. Its ageing socio-demographic structure, associated to a large extent with a low economic profile, characterizes a historically and socially depressed area. The serious deficiencies in terms of infrastructure and services of this neighbourhood can be explain by these factors. Until just a few years ago, the neighbourhood showed evident signs of degradation and significant pockets of poverty, drug addiction and social exclusion. Despite these handicaps, the price per square meter, both commercial and residential, has been among the highest in the city, undoubtedly explained by the very nature of the place and by the protection status with which the Special Plan for the Protection and Interior Reform of the Cidade Vella and Peixaría has protected its built environment since 1998.

However, with the turn of the century a significant change has been evident both in its social composition and in its visual aspect. Certain characteristics have converged with the rise of urban tourism and new models of consumption and leisure to revalue aniconic site within the collective imaginary of the city: improvement of its infrastructures and municipal services, revaluation of the architectural and cultural heritage, requalification of public spaces and green areas, quiet rhythm and strong neighbourhood networks, etc. We must also underline the importance that the constructed building has as an explanatory variable of this transformation. Today, the physical change of the neighbourhood is visible through the restoration of buildings of high patrimonial value (Figure 2). However, the most evident change, located in the area of the Mariña-Parrote, is explained to a large extent by its proximity to the coastline (an aspect that we will return to later). It is no coincidence that the southern front of

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2   The absence of updated information, especially since the last Population and Housing Census of 2011, forces us to work with proportional estimates for the year 2018 (result of the weighting of the growth carried out on the basis of the Census data for 2011, once the average annual growth in the period 2001-2011 has been calculated).

3   In order to produce this indicator, the Spanish National Statistics Institute calculates an algorithm that is obtained by combining the information on the variables of occupation, activity and professional situation of all residents in a territory. At municipal level, the algorithm in Spain varies between values 0.31 (very low socioeconomic condition) and 1.86 (very high socioeconomic condition). This indicator was last presented in the 2001 Census.

the neighbourhood, which opens onto the sea and the port, is home to important executives and politicians and constitutes the city's residential "golden mile".

Figura 2. Examples of residential rehabilitation in Cidade Vella

Source: Author's own elaboration.

In our opinion, this phenomenon of gentrification does not respond, in the first place, to economic factors. In spite of the historical deterioration of the neighbourhood there was no tangible devaluation of the economic value of the residential and commercial land, maintaining high levels that prevent explaining the gentrification in merely speculative terms. The main explanation should be sought, preferably, on the demand side. The gentrifying collectives look for housing in the neighbourhood to reflect a certain socioeconomic and class status from the perceptive change on the general image of the neighbourhood (Rodríguez-Barcón, 2016). In this sense, we agree with the thesis of Mesa (2019), who indicates the arrival of the creative class, using the Florida (2002) methodology, as the key factor of sociological change in the neighbourhood. As a result, the transformation of the brand image of the area and its symbolic capital has turned the enclave into an attractive location in residential terms.

4.2. Commercial Gentrification and 'rent gap': the case of the neighbourhood of Orzán

The rent gap theory, proposed by Neil Smith (1982), is defined as the difference between the current rent of the land, i.e. its present economic value, and the potential rent, which would be the rent obtainable in the event of optimizing and revaluing the land -by investing in it- until the maximum possible surplus value is reached. This theory explains the historical differential of capitalization in the neighbourhood of Orzán framed in a cyclical logic of investment-disinvestment-reinvestment.

Unlike the Peixaría neighbourhood, located in the southern part of the isthmus that forms the historic centre (Figure 1) and that brings together the commercial, tourist and financial nucleus of the city, the neighbourhood of Orzán has evolved in the upper part of the isthmus in a very different way. With a very irregular pattern of development, a discontinuous and unequal architectural structure in height and of poorer aesthetic and constructive quality, it historically housed activities that were not very attractive (port storage and municipal slaughterhouse) or marginal (such as prostitution at present).

Figura 3. Images of the neighbourhood of Orzán: buildings in ruins (above), newcommercial premises (vintage bike shop and tattoos/hipster barbershop, bottom left) and brothels (bottom right).

Source: Author's own elaboration.

As we ascend Orzán from the Peixaría neighbourhood through its interior perpendicular streets, the urban landscape degrades (Figure 3). Despite its central location, the neighbourhood of Orzán has undergone a very acute process of devaluation and deterioration to the point that the visual landscape is full of ruined or abandoned buildings, closed commercial premises, graffiti, lack of urban equipment, damaged roads, etc.

However, this environment of abandonment and degradation, interspersed with pockets of poverty and brothels, has been the propagating wick of the current dynamics of residential gentrification in the neighbourhood from the emergence of an alternative and counter-cultural commercial typology linked to the preferences of consumption and leisure of the new creative collectives (Florida, 2002). The existing rehabilitations are of small scale, and come from the private investment of small promoters. The growth of the symbolic capital of the neighbourhood around this revival of alternative leisure (reflected, for example, in the appearance of the commercial brand "SoHo Orzán", which brings together most of the neighbourhood commerce), is triggering processes of residential rehabilitation, commercial substitution and social change in the neighbourhood (Rodríguez-Barcón, Calo & Otero-Enríquez, 2018a).

In Orzán Street, the main artery that gives the neighbourhood its name, it is very difficult to find traditional neighbourhood shops, abundant in the past, except for a few restaurants, a butcher's, a copy shop and a scrap shop. The abandoned shops, intermingled with ruined houses and recently renovated buildings, are interspersed with modern establishments not oriented to the traditional resident of the neighbourhood, such as pubs, cafés and hairdressers with hipster aesthetics, specialized comic shops, vintage bicycle shop repair and decoration stores, ecological products, gourmet and Asian snack shops, cultural and co-working spaces, etc. As a whole, this colourful combination of commercial typologies gives the area a certain decadent charm.

Therefore, the progressive economic revival of Orzán -now transmuted into a commerce characterized by aesthetics, design and offer not focused on the traditional customer of the neighbourhood- is the triggering factor of the real estate exploitation of the rent gap, which developed throughout the prolonged period of economic disinvestment in the area.

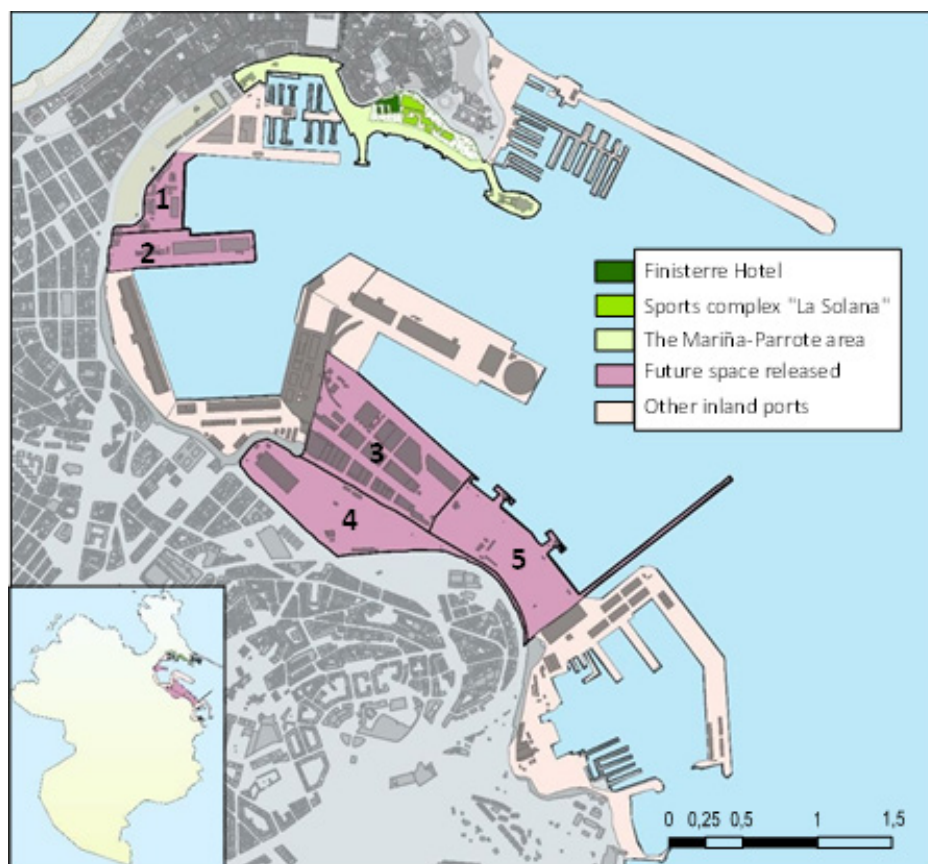## 5. Touristification and regeneration of the seafront

The two models of gentrification proposed for two of the neighbourhoods that make up the historic centre of A Coruña converge in a single scenario of social change and physical transformation. From this work, we suggest that it is possible to link this process with the recent project of regeneration of a large part of the city's seafront. The aim of this megaproject is to strengthen and expand the tourist dimension of A Coruña by redirecting tourist

circuits, multiplying consumption and leisure spaces and improving its presence in the global market of cruise tourism, an activity that has increased exponentially in recent years.

The process of regeneration of the seafront has several stages, some of which have already been completed, while the rest are currently in the centre of controversy. This project underlies the logic of positioning tourism as the main economic engine, assimilating and normalizing its capacity to shape the urban environment and the social body linked to it. For this, in a context such as the European one, the intervention -or complicity in the best of cases- of the public administration is necessary. We propose that this mega-project of privatization and transformation of the seafront has a direct impact on the gentrification models already analysed.

The construction of a huge outer port in an adjacent municipality has accelerated the delocalization of industrial activities in the port of A Coruña, liberalizing large spaces in the historic centre, and generating enormous interests of speculative type with the unaffected ground. The redevelopment of the area can be classified into three major stages that concern specific sub-areas: regeneration of the area of the Mariña-Parrote, privatization of the land of "La Solana-Hotel Finisterre" and, finally, redevelopment of the inland ports (Figure 4). These three interconnected processes have generated a direct confrontation between different public administrations (mainly the past Local Government of the political party of Marea Atlántica and Port Authority) and express the two hegemonic ideological models of city and urban development in A Coruña.

Figura 4. Location of the three redevelopment processes of the seafront.

Source: Author's own elaboration.

5.1. Pedestrianization and touristification of the esplanade of the Mariña-Parrote

The first phase of the transformation of the seafront of A Coruña begins with the remodelling of the Mariña-Parrote area. This place constitutes the "tourist postcard" of the city and connects the districts of Cidade Vella and Peixaría (Figure 1) by its southern front. In essence, the intervention, completed in 2015, consisted of burying road traffic and pedestrianization of 50,000 square meters of surface integrating, in the words of the Port Authority, "the Transatlantic dock and the cruise terminal with convenient access and practically free of vehicles for tourists" (Autoridad Portuaria de A Coruña, 2015).

However, it is possible to identify previous interventions aimed at reconfiguring the area to provide a space for the arrival of cruise tourists and nearby commercial and leisure stimuli with the inauguration in 2005 of a new Conference Centre a shopping centre, and the creation of a new cruise terminal in 2011. The recent intervention on this space generated a significant social protest centred on the platform "Non ás obras da Mariña" ("Not to the works of A Mariña"). This platform criticized both the form (to

accelerate the works at night with a view to forthcoming elections) and the background of the project (for its high cost in the midst of the economic and social crisis that Spain went through in the period 2008-2013).

During the last decade, the volume of cruise passengers has experienced a significant increase: from more than 54,000 tourists in 2009, it reaches more than 150,000 in 2013. Likewise, a great number of commercial franchises have proliferated in the central streets of the historic centre, oriented to a large extent towards this type of visitor. In synthesis, the tourist spectacularization of the inner port of the city, and the consequent urban transformation of this space, is linked to the metaphors of the "growth machine" (Molotch, 1976) and of "entertainment" (Lloyd & Clark 2001) through the promise of the linear increase of cruise tourism.

In conclusion, the Mariña-Parrote area has been configured as a tourist scenario, which facilitates the processes of "artificialization" of the sociological network of the city, and which plays a very important role in the propagation of the gentrifying inertia, both residential and commercial, in the historic centre neighbourhood. The growing "tourist thematization" intensifies the already high rate of the service sector in the area. In addition, the new vintage and neo-bohemian shops in and around Orzán offer global, symbolic and aesthetic codes that are perfectly recognizable not only by the emerging creative class in the area, but also by foreign tourists seeking "alternative" claims. In addition, in a circle that feeds back, the "residential spectacularization" of the Cidade Vella neighbourhood is reinforced by becoming an iconic landscape of the city, of incipient tourist interest, and at the same time associated with the wealthiest social classes.

In fact, the residential accessibility of these spaces, with rents and sale prices that have risen in the last five years[4], is being circumscribed with increasing strength to local and economic elites (Inditex workers) that provide a gentrifying scenario in which a population of young, hard-working extraction has no place.

5.1.1 Privatization of the lands of "La Solana-Hotel Finisterre"

Once the intervention on the Mariña-Parrote area is over, the focus of interest shifts. In the last years (coinciding with the political cycle of the Municipal Government of Marea Atlántica between the years 2015 and 2019) the attention is directed towards other liberated port areas such as the large sports and leisure complex of "La Solana" (publicly owned), and the five-star "Finisterre" hotel located both on the front line of the coast (Figures 4 and 6). The possible privatization of these lands could be used to cover the expenses acquired with the construction of the outer port in the vicinity of the municipality of A Coruña. This situation frames two opposing ways of understanding the city. First one, the Port Authority, owner of the land and prone to its sale by bidding the private sector in order to cover the costs acquired with the construction of the outer port; second, the model of the Local Government of Marea Atlántica that advocates preserving public ownership of the land and enhance its cultural and recreational use.

The back and forth litigation between different entities and Administrations are very complex[5]. In short, they converge in the attempt to activate a privatization process, inscribed within the model of transformation of the port area that we call "official". This is promoted by public entities (Port Authority, State Ports and General State Administration) but has strong support from a constellation of private agents combined in a network of local elites (stakeholders, promoters, associations of merchants, etc.). At the opposite pole, the past Local Government, which advocates preserving public ownership, has managed to awaken and organize a certain social response and slow down the auction process through different legal strategies after a frustrated attempt of direct purchase of the land of "La Solana".

Figura 5. Parrote beach and old city wall at the foot of the Cidade Vella (above) and current facilities of "La Solana" and

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4   See the recent analysis of the real estate market in the area in the news, written by Lucía Madriñán, entitled "Rent in A Coruña is not suitable for all pockets". See: https://bit.ly/3AuP1Yv.
5   See the works of Rodriguez et al. (2018a; 2018b) on this litigation.

"Hotel Finisterre" (below).

Source: Municipal Archive.

The "official" perspective, which opts for the continuity of a luxury hotel setting, also surrounded by a private and exclusive sports complex in its coastal location, is linked to the appropriation and reification of spaces to provide the visitor with a new space to visit. This circumstance is reinforced in the lands of "La Solana-Hotel Finisterre" for a double reason. First, the location of this enclave culminates, by its geographical proximity to the area of the Mariña-Parrote, the cruise circuit of leisure and fast consumption of postcards of the city. Secondly, the economic elites are exploiting the hotel and sports complex as a symbolic showcase of its growing presence in the new gentrified areas, especially, of the Cidade Vella[6] (Figure 5).

5.1.2 Redevelopment of inland ports

The conflict that revolves around the lands of "La Solana-Hotel Finisterre" is just the prelude to the one that will come, due to its enormous speculative potentialities, at the moment of undertaking the reform of the inland ports (Batería, Calvo Sotelo, San Diego and oil dock) (Figure 4). By means of an agreement signed by the City Council of A Coruña and the Ministry of Development in February 2004, the former undertook to re-urbanize those lands that had been abandoned. The idea was integrating them through the processing of the revision of the General Municipal Development Plan (hereinafter, PGOM for its acronym in Spanish) in a maximum period of four years, as "unconsolidated urban land". In parallel, it is assumed the need to cover the expenses arising from the construction of the outer port through these lands. To this end, the inland ports are divided into Zone 1 (Batería and Calvo Sotelo docks) and Zone 2 (San Diego docks and goods station and oil dock).

In summary, and given the enormous debt acquired with the construction of the outer port, the Port Authority considers the construction of a new residential area of 5,700 dwellings[7] (legal maximum allowed in the agreement of 2004 and the PGOM -in force-of 2013[8]) in the new available port spaces. In addition, the large areas destined to hotel uses suggest a political predisposition to increase the tourist pressure in the area.

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6   In 2018, this was the venue chosen to celebrate the wedding of one of the daughters of Amancio Ortega (founder of Inditex and one of the world's great fortunes), an event that had an enormous global media impact.

7   With the sale of houses, the Port Authority estimates to collect between €85 and €250 million. See: https://bit.ly/3y2vcEQ.

8   It should be noted that the PGOM, written by the architect Joan Busquets in 2009, contemplates the possibility of specifying shared uses of the port space where they combine not only residential and commercial functions, but also public spaces and green areas. It is also unquestionable that the use of the cultural and symbolic heritage of the disaffected port space, its interaction with the sea and its accessibility, constitute extraordinary potentialities for converting the coastline into a space for citizen use with a dynamic and lively sociological network.

Once again, the past Municipal Government of Marea Atlántica opposes this action, alleging its speculative purpose, and, in accordance with the stipulations of the 2004 aforementioned agreement, understands that it is the competent authority to undertake an integral planning of the disaffected lands (a point of view that, with several nuances, is defended by the current Municipal Government of the PSOE).

We are, therefore facing a new open struggle to understand the right to the city. If the urban vision of the current Port Authority were to prevail, we would witness the foundation of a populous neighbourhood in the middle of the city centre with a high projected height -between 6 and 10 floors-, which will surely block the line of sight towards the sea. In all likelihood, this project will delimit a space segregated from the rest of the urban network and with a markedly elitist character. Consequently, as a mirror, the gentrifying ethos (both residential and commercial) of Cidade Vella and Orzán would be reproduced in this new neighbourhood (Figure 4). Therefore, especially the cruise tourist would have, integrated in the same terminal, an iconic extension of the tourist postcard of the Mariña-Parrote area for consumption.

6. Conclusions

This paper has deconstructed the general phenomenon of gentrification in the historic centre of a Spanish medium-sized city in two models that react to different triggering factors. On the one hand, a model of gentrification based on aspects of social class promotion, symbolic capital and economic status in the Cidade Vella neighbourhood is described. Factors as its heritage capital, its pedestrianization, the improvement of public spaces or its segregated and well-defined morphology gives the neighbourhood a certain elitist distinction. This fact is more obvious in the southern part, closer to the Mariña-Parrote and the port, as opposed to a northern area still very degraded and with a low socioeconomic profile. This change in the perception of the neighbourhood has attracted much of the socio-economic elite of the city that has resulted in a significant social change based on an increase in the price of land.

On the other hand, it is explained how the neighbourhood of Orzán witnesses a transformation process resulting from an acute phenomenon of commercial gentrification based on two interrelated processes. First, the demand for new places of consumption and entertainment under the aesthetic and supply parameters of the creative class and the neo-bohemian leisure (Lloyd, 2006). Second, the material devaluation of the neighbourhood framed within the logic of the rent gap theory. The degradation of the environment makes possible the appearance of an alternative and countercultural trade model that configures a new brand image, which harmonizes with the new consumption practices of the creative class attracted in recent years by multinationals such as Inditex.

In this regard, this work brings a new dimension to the global debate around commercial gentrification and emphasizes its importance as an autonomous process capable of generating displacement and change of the urban landscape. Commercial gentrification should be seen as a parallel phenomenon linked to residential dynamics without relying on it. This paper reveals how commercial gentrification can happen unconnected to nearby residential gentrification processes, reacting to different trigger stimuli, and leading to diverse consequences on the social, economic, symbolic and physical level of a neighbourhood.

We have enclosed both gentrification models within a macro-project of the regeneration of the maritime facade of the city that involves the privatization and touristification of the coastline. We have structured this process in three stages: (1) the integral regeneration of the Mariña-Parrote area with the aim of integrating the emerging cruise tourism into a fast leisure and consumption circuit; (2) the privatization project of the lands of "La Solana-Hotel Finisterre" that hides the struggle between two antagonistic ways of understanding the urban development of the city; and (3) the redevelopment of the so-called inland ports, which could mean the promotion of new commercial spaces and the constitution of a huge neighbourhood.

The city model that is intended to be imposed with this initiative will accentuate the process of change in both neighbourhoods. On the one hand, a residential gentrification that involves a process of elitization (Cidade Vella) and, on the other hand, a scenario of commercial gentrification based on a model of alternative consumption and nightlife (Orzán), different from the mainstream touristic offer located in the Peixaría neighbourhood, very similar to any commercial street around the world.

There is a line of research in the Spanish-speaking academic field that underlines the relevance of consumption as a transforming force in commercial gentrification (Janoschka, Sequera & Salinas, 2014). However, almost all the literature emphasizes the role of public administration (Hernández, 2016). Paradoxically, the case of Orzán reveals that the negligence of the municipal governments provides the conditions for the arrival of private capital. In addition, we propose to relate the consumption factor with economic variables such as the cyclical logic of the rent gap, interrelating different dimensions of the phenomenon.

In any case, this paper fits into the set of works that break the geographical centralization focused almost exclusively in Madrid and Barcelona, and introduce other components for the analysis. Thus, commercial gentrification has recently been linked to the arrival of the creative class in neighbourhoods such as Russafa in Valencia (Del Romero & Lara, 2015), the configuration of a new brand image in A Coruña (Rodríguez-Barcón, et al., 2018b), or the value of heritage in the historic centre of Seville (Jover, 2019).

Finally, we also would like to point out the importance of carrying out critical analysis regarding the interaction between gentrification and tourism in the global context of medium-sized cities because it is there, in our opinion, that the effects become more visible and have a greater impact. Therefore, we would like to stress the need to continue expanding the limits, not only theoretical, but also geographical, around the study of gentrification, already initiated in works such as those of López-Morales (2015) or Lees et al. (2016). In this way, it is possible to explore peripheral urban realities to make visible the complexity of discourses, actors and processes that underlie the gentrifying logics that are intuited in medium-sized cities like the one of our case study.

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