Artists against tourism gentrification: analysing creative practices of resistance in Porto

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ABSTRACT
We examine how artists' work has been used to fight gentrification in Porto (Portugal) over the last five years. After mapping agents, projects, and initiatives, the paper selected six artists from different areas, and who work on housing and city rights-related issues. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the artists, and their practices and discourse were analysed to discover their views on the city's transformations and the role Art and artists play in highlighting them. The interviews also revealed dilemmas and contradictions, such as: the tension between celebrating Porto's identity and avoiding tourism-phobia; the risks of Art being exploited for financial or political gain; the difficulty of striking a balance between artistic freedom and independence on the one hand, and funding and recognition on the other. One of the paper's findings is that such challenges reflect the precarious state of The Arts and Culture in Portugal today.

Keywords: urban artists; right to the city; tourist gentrification critique; creative practices; Porto

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INTRODUCTION

This paper presents the findings of research conducted since 2019 at the Institute of Sociology of the University of Porto, focusing on art-based resistance to tourist-driven gentrification in Porto, Portugal. The research involves gathering and analysing photographs of murals on the struggle for housing and the right to the city (Barbosa & Lopes, 2019; Barbosa, 2021); creating a timeline of social movements and of community and cultural spaces closed in recent years; and mapping artistic projects bearing on the subject (Barbosa & Lopes, 2020). Besides analysis and interpretation, the research also includes an interventional component, to wit a collection of postcards called "(A) Briga: 112 Images for the Right to Housing"[1] curatorship of a collective exhibition held at the Geraldes da Silva Gallery, in May 2021 – in which forty artists active in Porto took part – and a parallel cinema programme and debate on

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1 "(A)Briga" is a pun, in the Portuguese language, between shelter/home and struggle. "112" is the European emergency number (similar to 911 in the US, or 999 in the UK). https://www.facebook.com/ABriga112.

the issues raised. These activities sought to broaden public discussion of the themes, involving dialogue among artists, activists, academics, and civil society.

The research undertaken to date has pinpointed several key aspects. Since 2015, and especially between 2018 and 2019, Porto' intensive creative activity has lessened the vulnerability of artistic groups and their protests somewhat. Here, the Arts served as an effective tool for social criticism in the public space. Although there is shared unease about changes in Porto, especially as a result of tourism growth, it is expressed in diverse ways. The various protagonists, languages, strategies and creative processes *enter the scene* in different contexts. There are also networks, alliances and interactions among artists, the spaces they occupy and their dynamics. Last but not least, we found tensions and paradoxes both in practice and in discourse that render reflection on these issues all the more complex.

Among the fifteen artistic projects identified (Barbosa & Lopes, 2020), six artists were selected and semi-structured interviews[2] were held with them to discuss and shed light on some of the issues raised. The criteria for choosing the interviewees were their connection to the Porto region (they have lived in the city or still dwell there) and gender balance. We wanted the group to be both diverse but to highlight the experiences and concerns of a generation and labour segment that was badly affected by job insecurity. The six protagonists are aged between 29 and 40, work in several cultural and artistic areas, have distinct employment arrangements, are more or less part of the independent and alternative circuit, and they have conflicting views on strategies to fight for or claim their "right to the city". The artists are: Irina Pereira, visual artist, member of the "Oficina Arara" silkscreen studio; Flora Paim, a Brazilian performer and sound artist; Tiago Correia, set designer and playwright of a theatre company;

Ana Matos Fernandes, or 'Capicua', a popular rapper from Porto; Miguel Januário, known for his Street Art project "Mais Menos"; and Luís de Carvalho, gallery owner, musician and street ceramic artist.

The script covered the following three topics: (1) what led them to create works on the subject; (2) their perceptions of the changes to the urban landscape and the underlying public policies; (3) the role played by artists and arts in critiquing gentrification. The record of the interviews included a brief description of the works mentioned. The conversations alluded to some dilemmas and contradictions that had been previously identified: the tensions between praising the "Porto identity" and the risk of tourism-phobia; the implications of exploiting the arts for capital gain or public power; the balance between freedom and independence and the need for funding and recognition.

These tensions are heightened when local political power tries to maintain control over the aesthetics of urban space as a way of fostering greater social order (Molnár, 2017), using Street Art and other forms of "alternative" interventions (happenings, ready-mades, and performances) in an official atmosphere supported by the rhetorics of 'The Creative City'. This aestheticised, omnivorous, and consumerist Capitalism is based on the notion that "Economic and cultural forces combine and work together to revitalise and transform place and space through the politics of arts and culture." (Banet Weiser, 2011, p. 641). In that sense it can incorporate new forms of arts and activism that are not only acceptable but even lucrative, converting junk into gold or poor neighbourhoods into highly sought-after ones. Some artistic sectors even see themselves as neo-bohemian, inspired only by aesthetic orientations, forgetting the structural constraints on their agency (Ley, 2003; Lloyd, 2006). That is why it is important to grasp how can these artists create aesthetical and political projects in which their voices can be heard.

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2 The 50-minute interviews were conducted via Zoom or in person, between January and February 2021, during the COVID-19 lockdown.

THE CONTEXT OF ACTIVATION: GENTRIFICATION, TOURISM AND EXPULSION

To understand the context of these interventions, one needs to realise that Porto has undergone rapid gentrification since the turn of the 21st Century. The process is deeply rooted in a rent gap created by the contrast between an ever more run-down, forgotten urban core and swift tourism growth, leveraging a circuit of investment and real estate speculation that geographically restructured the spatial economy (Smith, 2007). Since then, a lot of work has gone into reinventing the city's image, underpinned by: urban marketing (initially linked with UNESCO's declaration of Porto's historic centre as a World Heritage Site in 1996);Porto as European Capital of Culture in 2001;several low-cost airlines

putting Porto on the map; implementation of the "Urban Regeneration Companies" (SRU) business model (which set up special legal frameworks and streamlined procedures to boost new investments and mobilise private organisations). In large part, this legal change stems from The Troika Memorandum, when housing policies were created based on a non-interventionist and neoliberal model: Residence Permits for Investment (commonly referred to as "Golden Visas"), Legal Framework for Local Lodging, Exceptional Arrangement for Urban Regeneration and the Legal Framework for Urban Regeneration (Antunes, 2019). In the post-austerity age, tourism thus emerges as a "panacea for the social and urban crisis" (Mendes, 2017), an opportunity to expand, radicalise and enhance gentrification processes (Janoschka, 2018).

Figure 1 In Ribeira, one of the oldest areas of the city, traditionally linked to the working classes and now particularly affected by over-tourism, a man tries to sell tin ashtrays in front of an expensive restaurant.

Photo by Inês Barbosa

The process, however, is far from consensual. A new contrasting lexicon is invading public space. On the one hand, business opportunities, artificial heritage, "invented tradition", the discourse of tourism as salvation and a renewed civic pride (Lopes, 2021), and on the other hand, growing complaints about rent rises, evictions, the expulsion of residents, and the concentration of property for tourism and speculation.

Between August 2009 and August 2019, passenger traffic at the airport grew 169%; the number of properties listed on Airbnb leapt from 10,000 to 100,000 between 2010 and 2018 (Fernandes et al., 2018); and the number of evicted families stands at around 100 per year. The urban diagnostics and profile report of the Municipal Master Plan reveals considerable deterioration in the housing stock, intra-urban disparities and the exponential rise in property values (Porto, 2018). Moreover, there are almost fifty social housing neighbourhoods with very different pathways, social realities and urban dynamics (Pereira, 2016) but that are marked by social and spatial marginalisation and, in some cases, by stigmas that drive the depreciation and invisibility of urban territories – those that do not fit in the façades of a "transnational" city.

The social and historical context, as we well know, is not directly transposed into artistic interventions. These, even when driven by an activist and critical ethos, always imply great scope for interpretation, mediation and translation. The fact that these artists are part of outlying, dominated areas of the local artistic field gives them greater autonomy and hones their anti-institutional tendencies. Even though it does not happen as a matter of course, social and historical conditions *trigger* a link between actual artistic components and the non-artistic dimensions of art works. Thus, the biographical components and social experiences that singularise the appropriation of these conditions and contexts in all areas of practice (family, academic, friendship, activism...) help one grasp both the artistic transposition (Lahire, 2020) and the creator's experiences.

These specific situations and experiences intersect with a host of social experiences. Gentrification dynamics, in their commercial greed, emerge as the dominant issue at a certain point in both the artistic and non-artistic life cycle.

One should note that artists are often seen as leading the way in challenging cultural norms fostering the hedonistic, bohemian, informal lifestyles that may foster gentrification. As a result, they form a unique group that challenges the mainstream view of civic pride. Their art, actions, and discussions can help broaden the conversation about the future of cities.

THE ROLE OF ARTS AND ARTISTS IN CRITIQUING GENTRIFICATION: SIX VOICES

Irina Pereira, 29 years old

Irina was born in a small city, studied Design and moved to Porto in 2015 to attend the Master's course. She was not planning to keep living in the city but the "friendly vibe" and "neighbourly feeling" made her stay. Working with *Oficina Arara*, a silkscreen studio, forming part of the alternative art circuit, was one of the decisive factors. It is in this sphere that housing issues are discussed. One of the most "exciting works" was "Arrebenta a bolha" (burst the bubble) banner, created for a public protest, in 2018. The banner was painted during a "collective process" (no one has assumed authorship) at a feminist and libertarian space located in the city centre. Irina's drawings pillory the "real estate bubble", exposing the unfair "game" that pits the giants (owners and speculators) against the wee folk (the people and their homes). The popular expression that lends its name to the banner means that someone had been cheating and the game must be stopped. It is, thus, a pun on the expression "real estate bubble".

She later contributed with a silkscreen for "A Contra Cidade" (Versus City), a publication produced by Arara (2019) that included over a hundred texts, photographs and illustrations by artists about tour-

**Figure 2** **"Arrebenta a Bolha" banner (2018).**

Photo taken from the "Assembleia de Moradoras e Moradores do Porto" Facebook page.

ism, gentrification and urban transformation of Porto. "Dogus Portus" is a drawing created in collaboration with a partner, inspired by the city's coat of arms, symbolising Porto surrounded by daggers and ferocious dogs. With this, Irina alludes to the history of the city and its people (known for resistance and insurrection movements) and depicts it as now being under siege by destructive forces (tourism, political power or neoliberal Capitalism). Her aesthetic choices involve a lot of reflection and some dilemmas: "How does one represent speculation without falling into clichés", while at the same time being "direct" and "democratic" enough for anyone to understand the work?

Irina says she is involved in the struggle for housing because she feels it in her blood. Within her circle of friends, almost everyone has no choice but to share a house; they are all frustrated at not being able to buy a home of their own or having to move to the outskirts, and there are always those who face imminent eviction. She is shocked to see the contrast between "very rich people, with fancy cars" and "very poor people", "living on the edge" in the same neighbourhood. She bemoans the fact that there are so many empty houses and the official mantra that gentrification is a price that must be paid for city renewal.

Figure 3 **"Dogus Portus" (2019), included in "Buraco da Torre – A Contra Cidade" (Oficina Arara).**
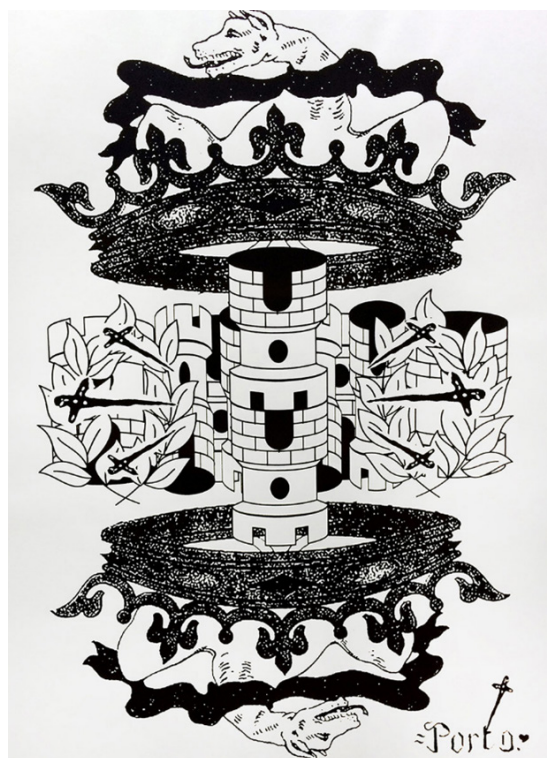
For Irina, "it's simple", rent and tourism "have to be regulated". At the same time, she fears being part of this process, recognising that the inflow of artists and their studios in more run-down areas of

the city has boosted gentrification, turning "cheap, deserted areas" into "cool" neighbourhoods, driving out the poor.

Another contradiction she feels bears on her trade as a designer, as she works with the Porto City Council. For her, it is "rank hypocrisy" that most of Porto's artists, despite their bitter criticism of official policies, end up being "absorbed by the city's art machine" (which has been one of the tourism flagship policies). Many artists start to tone down their criticism as they receive institutional support. The fact that the arts are not her "bread and butter" gives her greater freedom, unlike many artists living from hand to mouth on scholarships and grants. "It's a double-edged sword", "you have enough for your gallery to survive but you can't afford to rent an apartment". Another thing she noticed is that even the most "disruptive" measures are well received. "The political tone is becoming over-absorbed by arts" making "the intervention space very empty", creating a "sense of helplessness".

Flora Paim, 32 years old

Flora was born in Brazil, where she graduated in Architecture and Urban Design. She moved to Porto in 2016 to study "Art and Design for Public Spaces". Two years after, she moved to Lisbon, a gateway in Portugal for so many immigrant artists from third countries (Ferro et al., 2016). She has always been interested in urban issues and, in Brazil, she was involved in "informal occupation of public spaces". However, it was in Portugal that she first saw the impact of hyper-tourism, "I had never seen such deep change".

Back then, "it was a very hot topic", "there were lots of protests", and "it was a pressing and lively process". Together with her colleague, Inés Ballesteros, another foreigner, she created the "100 Lar" performance, presented at the closing and eviction of the Porto Worst Tours Kiosk, an association dedicated to offbeat tours through the city. "100 Lar" was a parody that imitated a "team of speculators specialising in discovering vacant areas and cran-

nies available in a neoliberal city". On a sad day for Porto's independent and artistic movement, the performance provided laughter and heated comments among the audience.

Figure 4 Poster of the performance «100 Lar» (2018) on the artist's website.

Flora was also working on artistic projects based on "impactful experiences of expulsion and dispossession", most of which centred around abandoned land in Eastern Porto, once a social neighbourhood. These works include the creation of an audio guide narrating the memories of a former resident and a book published after cataloguing the objects recovered from ruins. She also created a video installation using images of the demolition of the Aleixo Towers, in a rather controversial process of urban restructuring and social recomposition that has given rise to documentaries and academic research (e.g. Queirós, 2019). After moving to Lisbon, she has organised "speculative tours" that reflect on concepts such as "centre and outskirts, public and private, chaos and order".

Her interest in "living off the city" came from her "dissatisfaction with architectural studies" – which aim at "designing things in a restricted and all-encompassing manner" – and from her critical view of injustice, inequality, and marginalisation. She combines artistic intervention with research and participation in public protests. "Arts have the power to deal with the absurd", to "use humour" and satire to "denounce what's wrong in the world".

Figure 5 **«Voragem» (9 min, 2019), video about the demolition of the Aleixo Towers, available on the author's website.**

Flora feels that her role as an artist is ambiguous. "When I was mapping empty spaces," I was worried about "making them visible" and contributing to their gentrification. One day, on one of the tours she held, someone asked "why don't you list this on Airbnb Experience?" "No way!" she replied, "it would go against everything I think and believe in".

Yet many artists leave their principles and criticisms aside when they tender for City Council projects. We are "stuck in a web of precariousness and, sometimes, we end up doing contradictory things". Placing ethics and aesthetics on a scale, Flora says that ethics weigh more in the balance for her. What she does forges strong links to people and places, and she is more concerned with the process rather than the

result. She considers her work to be Political Art, insofar as "everything is political", but she does not "wave the flag".

She longs to live in a "fairer", more democratic and plural city, where: she would not feel such a "strong private sector presence"; the housing market was regulated; the "benefits of tourism were for the public sector", implying a "public power" that "did not aid and abet the present relentless policy of speculation, exploitation and profit".

Tiago Correia, 33 years old

Tiago is from Tomar but has lived in Porto since 2005 when he moved there to study theatre and where he founded "A Turma" company, of which

Figure 6 **Cover of the book with the play «Turismo» (2020), written by Tiago Correia.**

he is the Art Director. His interest in aesthetically exploring the city emerged in 2016, when he was invited to take part in several artistic residencies, creating poetic 'sound walks' inspired by the spots he found. The research he did for the audio walk "À Margem" (at the margins) ended up influencing the creation of the play "Turismo", co-produced by the Porto City Council, with the support of the Directorate-General for the Arts, and which was also published as a book. (Correia, 2020)

"Turismo" was written "with the sound of pick-axes from morning till night"; construction works had been ongoing in the building next door for two years. He lives in the city centre, in a "one-bedroom apartment with a very low rent, given the current market". When he wrote the play – 2018/2019 – there was such a "huge, sudden obsession with tourism in the city" that he began to fear he would be evicted or that his rent would rise so much that he would have to take on an extra job to make ends meet: "My life as an artist would be over".

Tiago remembers a very different city when he moved there, he was even mugged a few times. Tourism made Porto's dark and deserted streets safer but the "safety issue is a double-edged sword" because, at the same time, he began to see signs of discontent, graffiti - "Tourists go home" - was being spray-painted on the walls, and "the older, less educated people of the city would look at foreigners" with suspicion. Along with these local expressions, he saw the "rise of the Far Right" and "the refugee crisis in Europe" as a dangerous mix. This is what led him to write about the "relationship with foreigners", "tolerance" and the "complex network" linked to tourism. The result is a dialectical exercise that shows the clash of interests: a young tenant who subleases her apartment to pay her expenses; a landlord, also in dire straits, is forced to sell the apartment; and the tourist who, playing a critical role, also contributes to the entanglement. The ambient sound is marked by the noise of construction works and airplanes and, quite guilelessly, mixes in the fire set to the building near Bolhão market, an

episode of real estate bullying associated with the so-called 'Golden Visas' that left one person dead.

The impact of the play's premiere, at the Municipal Theatre in 2020, stemmed less from the content of the play than from the controversy surrounding the censoring of the text written by Regina Guimarães, a respected figure in the city's cultural scene, and whom Tiago had invited to write the room sheet. In the text, she talks about a "Disneylandesque" city, the "proliferation of charming hotels, gourmet grocery stores, private condominiums", the "rampant real estate speculation" and the complicity of artists, the intellectual middle class and "left-wingers" in everything that was happening. The text was removed and accusations flew. Tiago tried to stay on the side-lines of the controversy and, so, reservedly says that he does "political theatre". "It is a rebellious play" that questions "the current order" but it is not political in the sense that it does not seek to be "associated with a partisan cause". His aim is not to "give answers" or "pass on a final message", "that's not my role", he proposes instead to pose "complex questions" that give rise to "different interpretations". For him, the theatrical process itself is already a utopia, it presupposes freedom, it is based on trust and collective creation, and it reflects a vision of community and society.

At the centre of the discussion about the transformations of the city, there is a key question for him. If society were more balanced and there were not so many rifts between social classes, the city would be a fairer place. In the Portuguese case, inequality has only been worsened by precarious work, making the idea of a "stable, organised life" by the age of 35 or 40 little more than a pipe dream.

Ana Matos Fernandes (Capicua), 39 years old

For some years now, Capicua – a sociologist and rapper from Porto - has been voicing her thoughts in songs, interviews and chronicles about the tourism craze. In 2013, with Troika-imposed austerity in full swing, she wrote a new revision of the traditional "Mariquinhas" lyrics for Gisela João, denouncing the

house as "dead and in ruins" with a plaque reading "For Sale: empty and in tatters". In 2019, and for the same *fado* singer, she rewrote the lyrics to "Hostel da Mariquinhas", where one can eat gourmet sardines, tuk-tuks are lined up outside the door, and the only Portuguese person "in the picture" is a "busy" waiter. In early 2020, she wrote "Circunvalação", an ode to the features of the "authentic, charming" city: Vandoma, the back-to-back houses, the ruffians, and the women of Bolhão market. She asks that the city is not "pushed" into the abyss, ending with a call to action: "for the right to the city we love, we will shed blood, sweat and tears."

For the sociologist the indignation is obvious: there is a "collective drunkenness" of political power, trapped in a network of "urban marketing", "rankings", "event-city", "all those commercial conceptions of a city", along with "zero accountability" for the drawbacks and turning a blind eye to the "serious policy problem". The rapper recognises that there are positive aspects (such as urban renewal) but stresses that one cannot "put all one's eggs in one basket, that is, the tourism industry", because "people are being expelled" and

Figure 7 **Frame of the «Circunvalação» (2020) video clip, from the album Madrepérola.** *Madrepérola (Nácar).*

the city is becoming a "Theme Park". For her, this is really a kind of "colonialism", a violent invasion targeting mostly older people and the poor.

Singing about the issue is her way of spreading the message. "With a megaphone, comes responsibility." It would be a "waste of a platform and a betrayal" if, as an artist from the city, she stood by and did nothing. Of course, "in practical terms", "the real estate fund won't stop bullying an old man who lives in Sé just because it heard my song", "unless I achieve international success and become rich, in which case I'd buy half of downtown and set all rents at €300 (laughing)." Despite identifying limitations in the role that arts can play in effective change, she considers that it can "raise awareness" and "sow the seeds of critical thinking". On the other hand, the rapper recognises that artists are also contributing to making the city "cooler", fostering a "myth" that in the end leads to bad outcomes.

Being critical of the government's position and voicing her opinion publicly does not stop Capicua from taking part in municipal projects when interests are aligned, "It's not exactly the same as collaborating with McDonald's, Nestlé or Monsanto". She says she has never felt censored but recognises her privilege as a renowned artist in the city. There will be few who can afford to refuse work. At the same time, she considers that precariousness must not jeopardise an artist's freedom and independence. In her view, "All art is political", even if it is "by omission". In her view, being a woman on a stage with a "clearly feminist attitude" is already a political act.

As for the future, Capicua believes that "regulating" the amount of rent paid and "diversifying sources of income" is vital. In her view, the issue of "identity" can be a central element in the resistance that takes place in the city, remembering that the people of Porto historically played an important role in the criticism and struggle for freedom.

Miguel Januário (*MaisMenos*), 40 years old

It was when he returned from Lisbon, in 2015 - where he had worked as an artistic director for a design agency - that Miguel Januário, known for his project "Mais Menos", was faced with the "abrupt change" of his home town, which had gone from a "calm,

nostalgic and melancholic" Porto to a "schizophrenic, hectically busy, cosmopolitan, best award" Porto. In the same year, the City Council invited him to create a project for an "abandoned" alley in the city centre. He built a large wall of tiles, that involved about 1,000 people, based on the slogan "Who are you, Porto?", questioning the "Porto identity" (Ferro, 2015). It is a "seemingly low-key work" but contains "sharp critique". Contesting the City Council's marketing strategy – "Porto Ponto" (Simply Porto), "imposing", "no discussion, no dialogue" – the work offers a "question mark", an open, contradictory and multifaceted view of the city as a "person" and not a "thing", a brand for sale.

hysterical, it becomes obvious: the desire to hail the city, only to encounter its inescapable and omnipresent destiny".

For Januário, "Mais Menos" has been a way to "demonstrate his position in the world", "openly and comprehensively". It is a political project that raises questions and seeks to encourage "critical thinking", "action and reflection". He believes that it can "touch" others, thereby "slowly" driving social change. "It's a drop in the ocean but the ocean is made of drops." He takes part in protests whenever he can and has a political commentary talk show on *Radio Manobras*. The "hyper turbo" world in which we live – where there's no time

Figure 8 Close up of the «Queméstu, Porto?" panel (2015) that includes a wordplay with the epithet "Antiga, mui nobre, sempre leal e invicta" (Old, very noble, always loyal and indomitable).

Four years later, the rapid gentrification and his own difficulties in affording a house in the city led Miguel to hang a banner from the balcony of the "Instituto", an independent cultural space located on a street that has become virtually impossible to walk through because it is thronged by tourists: "Bonjour Trespasse". The synopsis is clear, denouncing evictions and speculation: "standing on the balcony of one of the thoroughfares that lead to the heart of the city, once historical, now

Figure 9 "Bonjour Trespasse" (2019) banner on the «Instituto».

Photo by Ivo Tavares Studio.

for reflection and where hate and populism are growing – has driven him to use a "more incendiary rhetoric", "verging on militancy". For him, the importance of art lies in the fact that works "focus on sensitive subjects" that "provoke reactions in people", "embody desires and emotions", "are neither controlled nor mathematical", avoid "pragmatism" and, therefore, can "influence other ways of thinking about the world". That said, he acknowledges that "political art" is now "cool".

The artist admits the contradictions. While Miguel was living in Lisbon, he felt that he was being used as a "tool" for gentrification, because his graffiti helped boost the "urban value" of certain neighbourhoods. The "exploitation of Street Art" by the "Local Authority, capital, advertising" was "obvious". My "work was gaining popularity, it was cool, daring; 'don't you want to put it on T-shirts?'' "Suddenly, the Lisbon City Council itself was highlighting my work"; "Cool Street Art could stay", what "didn't fit their vision for the city was removed". A kind of "curatorship" by municipal cleaning and maintenance crews that can also be seen in Porto.

Despite participating in municipal projects, Miguel does not collaborate on everything: "Some things are more compromising than others". He stresses that "Artists are in a very precarious position" and they need to be able "make a living" from what they do. He has experienced all this "first hand", and constantly questions himself and his work, and expresses many of his concerns in the PhD thesis he is writing. Miguel acknowledges that tourism has brought "more offerings", "more culture, more opportunity" but that it cannot just be about "business". In his view, this "ultra-liberal perspective" has made Porto an unfair city and now, with the pandemic, it will be even worse for artists (Ferro, 2020) and for less privileged social groups.

Luís de Carvalho (Três Pontinhos), 41 years old

Luís, who has been living in Porto for twenty years, splits his time between managing the Geraldes da Silva Gallery, his music project "Santrana", and his

work as a ceramist and street artist, under the pseudonym "Três Pontinhos". His fascination with murals began over a decade ago, even before he joined the art collective "Arte sem Dono" (Art without owner), a project seeking to "democratise the arts" by creating stencils and night collages along the streets. "I'm a gallery owner. I host many exhibitions here but it's amazing out there in the streets". Sometimes it is "a tiny detail", a "minimalist" intervention. It can be "something comical", a more "assertive" phrase or "something shocking". The "best part is that it makes you turn back". He likes the "ephemerality" of Street Art – "It can last 500 years or 5 minutes; what matters is that it existed". Unlike some street artists he has dealt with, Luís is not at all upset

Figure 10 and 11 **Porto City Council logo and image created for the tile "Porra..." (2015) by Três Pontinhos.**

when someone paints, tags or cleans his art objects, it is part of the nature of the activity. Now that the collective he was a part of no longer exists, he says he even prefers to do his works alone, he likes the adrenaline, which "is such a rush!". He often does not even sign his own work: "That's street culture, being anonymous".

Porra tile art is based on subversive use of the Porto City Council logo. Using ellipses and combining a phallic image, the tile suggests a mix of dismay and rebellion. The first tile he created was placed on the Porto Worst Tours kiosk when they announced its forced closure. He places other tiles from the same series when he comes across a building that is empty or in a poor state of repair.

The artist also created the "O meu coração ficará no Porto" (My heart will always belong to Porto), a series of sculptures and stencils, which critiques the eviction of residents from an emotional standpoint. At first, the piece had another meaning. It "gained new meaning halfway through", since it was created as part of the "Mais Menos" mural "Who are you Porto?". At the time, in 2015, gentrification "wasn't such a hot topic" and tourism was still considered an "added value". Today's Porto has changed radically and Luís resents the fact that he now pays twice as much now at his "usual" haunts, has to zigzag through a "maze of tourists". Afraid of being misunderstood, Luís stresses: "I'm not being xenophobic but tourism has to be stopped". "Porto is not a product to sell, it's a city to live in."

The song he wrote – "A tua cidade" (Your city) – reflects on these same issues: "My neighbours are gone / they left, defeated / My landlord has deep pockets / He tripled the rent, the bastard (...) Our dialect / our accent, is barely heard / Now it's all concrete / Artificial tourism / I had better learn English." More recently, in 2019, he painted a large mural on Praça dos Poveiros square that depicts Porto's mayor, Rui Moreira, naked and in a seductive pose, accusing him of having sold the city to tourism. The mural was painted white a few weeks later, as has been the case with the more explicitly critical graffiti. The Council's Legal Department even filed a complaint against unknown-author due to widely spread stickers with the pun "Porto-Morto", which means "Dead Porto".

Figure 13 **»Best Tourism Destination» (2019)**

Photo by Inês Barbosa.

Figure 12 **Ceramic object created by Tres Pontinhos. Photo by Ines Barbosa.**

Photo by Inês Barbosa.

Luís does not consider himself an artist but rather an "artisan", since he does not live from his creations. His interventions are a way of sharing his views" on politics and social issues. He likes to think that what he does encourages people to "think about

these problems" but considers himself a "political agnostic"; he only votes in referendums. "To be an activist is to be alone, not with a group".

LINES OF INTERPRETATION AND CONCLUSIONS

While being a microcosm, the voices that we have brought here clearly reflect the diverse experiences, anxieties and contradictions found in the city's artistic and cultural universe. Despite being a very privileged group – white, middle-class, with higher education and high cultural capital – these artists experience Porto's transformations at first hand, rebelling against them through their artistic practices.

The following table summarises the main findings on these artists 'representations of the city (the one they criticise and the one they desire); their own reasons for covering gentrification and touristification issues; the way they relate to the artistic work; the strategies they use in their creative process; the role they attribute to arts, and the links they establish with politics, in the broadest sense. The table reveals both similarities and notable differences among the artists.

	Criticism and concerns	Personal link	Demands	Relation with art	Creative strategies	Role of art	Political action
Irina Pereira 29 years old Designer and visual artist	real estate bubble; empty houses; inequality; gentrification;	difficult access to housing; evictions;	regulation of rents and tourism;	does not live from arts	metaphors; puns; symbols; reference to the past;	democratic, but avoiding clichés;	Takes part in groups, goes to demos;
Flora Paim 32 years old Performer, sound/ visual artist, architect	Over-tourism; speculation; expulsion and dispossession; strong private sector (housing)	precariousness; critical view - injustice and inequality;	regulation of housing market; public housing;	rarely lives from arts;	irony; humour absurd; real stories and memories reference to the past;	arts use different tools to denounce problems; bring people closer to politics	participating in collectives; going to demos;
Tiago Correia 33 years old Theatre director and playwriter	Over-tourism, real state bullying; 'tourist phobia';	fear of eviction	balance between social classes; combating precariousness	lives only from arts	contradictions and dialectic thinking; real stories;	provoke questions, not answers; allow different interpretations	only through his art
Ana Matos Fernandes (Capicua) 39 years old Rapper and sociologist	de-characterisation of the city; loss of identity urban marketing; "colonialism"; expulsion of lower classes;	sense of belonging and injustice;	regulation of rents; diversifying sources of income (not only tourism)	lives only from arts	irony; puns; humour call for action; emotion; reference to "identity"; and to the past;	spreading a message; raising awareness and critical thinking;	Writing chronicles and talking about these issues in interviews
Miguel Januário *(MaisMenos)* 40 years old Street artist and graphic designer	abrupt change, over-tourism; urban marketing; ultra-liberal perspective;	pushed to the outskirts; sense of responsibility (as street artist)	the city should turn more towards the people who inhabit it;	lives both from arts and design	irony; puns; direct messages; reference to the past; illusions; reference to identity;	encourage reflection and action; embodies desires and emotions;	Through his art, going to protests; making a radio programme;
Luis de Carvalho 41 years old Ceramist, musician, street artist, gallery owner	Over-tourism; vacant houses; evictions; price rises; loss of identity; urban marketing;	sense of belonging and injustice;	regulation and restriction of tourism	Does not live from arts	humour; metaphor; puns; emotion; provocation; reference to identity;	democratic; encourages critical thinking;	defines himself as politically agnostic

Regarding the criticisms, there is broad agreement: almost everyone says they have seen very rapid changes in the city's marketing and real estate speculation. The consequences they most regret are evictions and the expulsion of the inhabitants to the outskirts. There also worry about the city's loss of character, which could jeopardise Porto's "authenticity". In Luís de Carvalho's speech, one can see how easily one can go from a "praise of identity" to tourist phobia, a fear also evoked by the playwright Tiago.

Figure 14 **One of the many anti-tourist graffiti scattered around the city. Here we can read «Fuck hotel», «Porto for the people» «Tourism, no».**

Photo by Inês Barbosa.

The reasons they focus on these themes in their artistic output varies greatly depending on the economic and financial situation in which each artist finds himself. If for some it is experiential — such as difficulties in finding affordable housing — for others it stems more from a sense of solidarity or even of belonging to and responsibility for the city in which they live. Their demands are mainly based on two arguments: regulation (of tourism and rent levels) and protection of the most vulnerable

groups (fighting precariousness, promoting public housing, etc.).

As for the strategies they use in their creative processes, there are some aspects that are in line with previous research (Barbosa, 2019; 2020): largely, the use of irony, humour, metaphor and puns but also the use of emotion (through memories and personal stories) and intimidation (through direct messages or provocation). The use of Porto's identity and past of resistance was also clear.

Although they interpret the function of art in a relatively narrow way in terms of the intended impact on the recipients (namely, to stimulate critical thinking and raise awareness), the interviewed artists differ on whether arts should convey a certain message or rather raise questions, allowing many interpretations. If arts cannot do everything, it can do something and for some. However, once again, they differ in the way they articulate creative work with political intervention. Irina and Flora get involved in the independent associative movement and take part in protests; Januário also goes on demos and uses his radio programme to spread his views. Capicua also does so through chronicles and interviews with the media, taking advantage of his popularity. Tiago and Luís say they are "individualistic", preferring to limit themselves to artistic output.

Another aspect of the interviews (and that also emerged in other research)is the contradictions. There are essentially three: (1) the role that the artists themselves play in the gentrification of the city; (2) the tension between squaring the need for independence and public recognition with the need for institutional funding; (3) the tendency for political or interventionist arts to be turned into "fashionable" and "cool" products. Here, too, the artists' 'fame' and the circumstances in which they find themselves circumstances are linked. These paradoxes make discussion on these topics more complex but they often also boost demobilisation and feelings of helplessness.

Figure 15 Subversion is cool. "Page of Time Out magazine, where in addition to advertising for Porto brands, we can see one of the most widespread protest graffiti against gentrification: «Make Porto Podre again».

Photo by Inês Barbosa.

During the interviews, alliances, networks and cross-fertilisation between the respondents and other artists from Porto were also seen, though less in Capicua's case — maybe because she is already part of the mainstream circuit. The fact that Porto is a small town, where almost everyone knows one another — either because they studied at the same faculty or because they occupy the same independent and alternative contexts fosters such connections. The importance of this aspect is even greater bearing in mind that civic mobilisation in Porto remains very low. Demonstrations are seldom held and activist groups tend to fade quickly. Thus, we may be facing a kind of "artistic movement" of an interventionist nature that, although sometimes dispersed, manages to produce a common message of displeasure at the current state of affairs. The exhibition, organised by the researcher, sought to reinforce this, by bringing together over 40 artists in the same space, on the same topic and with similar questions and concerns.

A recurring theme in these interviews is artists' precarious circumstances. Although some currently have a contract and are part of an institution, they are highly dependent on project work, State aid, supplemental income and continuity. This deregulation of institutional art mechanisms helps weaken the *doxa*, that is, the legitimate definition, at a given historical time, of the struggles and balance of power, of the values and criteria that establish the belief of

what it means to be an artist and what a work of arts is (the issue of conflict between boundaries and the legitimate points of view that establish "principles of vision and division" (Bourdieu, 1996: 256).

On the one hand, the hybridisation of arts media, languages and genres illustrates the elasticity of boundaries and of the distinctions once regarded as immutable, opening paths to experimentation and heterodoxy. On the other, as exemplified by Miguel Januário and Capicua, although they move in alternative and critical circles, some creators find commercial success in their works, critical acclaim and impact in the public sphere. From this perspective, one could say that the arts today are divided by a *polytheism* of criteria of worth, legitimacy and recognition that enable marginal and peripheral creations to find their own way and their "worlds of art" (Becker, 2008).

Moreover, this project-to-project approach, coupled with the structural inadequacy of State aid, creates two very strong conflicts. The first bears on the continuum between *autonomy* and *heteronomy*. Rather than a rigid dichotomy, we can say this conflict encompasses centripetal and centrifugal forces in an ever-shifting continuum. Thus, those artists who are inspired by the dynamics of the city (gentrification, mass tourism, real estate speculation) are supported, albeit occasionally, by the local authority promoting that same business-city model, based on cultural speculation, façadism or on the ostentation of the intercultural cosmopolitanism that superficially includes the fringes. Indeed, the proliferation of "tolerant" cultural activities in public spaces, neighbourhoods and interstitial areas is part of the urban marketing frame for creating an image of inclusivity. The ephemeral, innovative works of critical and peripheral artists are part of the enormous effort in branding the city and making it alluring. These "displacement" operations (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2011) make reflection and reflective learning more difficult, not only because artists need to eat but also because they, simultaneously, seem to use their works to revolt against the categories and codes of which

they are both a result and a condition. In fact, these "displacements" hinder the establishment of emerging, antagonistic categories of counter-hegemonic thought, which is supplanted and neutralised at the last minute by Capitalism's sheer flexibility. Some artists seem to be trying to resolve this performative self-contradiction by using discourse where there is "gentle critique" or "searing critique", which are also ways of dealing with the *heteronomy/autonomy* or censorship/self-censorship conflict.

The second ambiguity stems from the reconfigurations of the working world brought about by "artification" processes (Shapiro, 2019) or the "artistisation" of Capitalism (Lopes, 2013). On the one hand, the "values of imagination and creativity become routine obligations" (Menger, 2005: 131), while, on the other, the risks of individualisation and social insecurity are worsened by the continuing expansion of what is understood as culture and arts, by the elasticity of the criteria for evaluating artwork, and by the fierce competition between those dedicated to the arts and culture. Thus, urban artists become creators of interstices, seeking to contextually inspire critical and independent thinking (by reinventing languages, media and genre) and experimenting with new harmonies between ethics and aesthetics, individual work and collective work. It remains to be seen whether this effort to break the rules will stop 'business as usual' and prevent the city being turned into a commodity.

Throughout these pages, stories have been analysed on how many artists have inspired a critical mindset and called for collective mobilisation, proving that art's social and aesthetic roles can go hand in hand. These practices scope for resistance seems to lie in the fact that they link two ways of critiquing Capitalism (Boltanski &Chiapello, 2011). On the one hand, there was a "social critique" based on social inequality, oppression and the material right to housing. On the other, there was the "aesthetic critique", as a creative expression that defies Capitalist values (ego, greed, corruption), based on the right to the city. Given that gentrification is an

"ideological and political issue" and a "process of urban change that best personifies the struggle of the classes on the modern city's stage". (Mendes, 2017: 489-490), one needs to stress how artists express the need to link these to new ways of critiquing Capitalism in an effort to fight back.

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