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Gentrification process of a degraded space turned into a cultural showcase. The case of the Historic Center of Malaga

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The deterioration and subsequent transformation of historic urban centres has been one of the most analysed phenomena in the field of urban geography in recent decades at an international level.

Malaga, a city in the south of the Iberian Peninsula, on the Mediterranean coast, has become the sixth largest Spanish municipality in terms of total population, largely due to the effect of tourist activity since the mid-20th century. Although a series of profound architectural, functional and social transformations have been perceived in the Historic Centre of Malaga in recent decades, these processes had not yet been systematically analysed, although there have been partial studies in the municipality, such as the one carried out in the district called "SoHo" (Borondo, 2015).

This work aims to determine if the Historic Centre of Malaga has presented a gentrification process from the last third of the 20th century to the beginning of the 21st century, comparing the behaviour of this possible phenomenon in the different areas that make up this area of the city. A secondary objective is to provide a geographical vision, with a transversal contribution on a detailed micro-territorial scale, to the scientific production focused on urban processes that considers social, economic and environmental aspects.

Specifically, the administrative units that roughly coincide with the limits of the old Muslim city have been studied: the census tracts of 2906701, 2906702 and 2906703. When possible, it has been deepened to the census section unit scale: 2906701001 (Atarazanas Market), 2906701002 (surroundings of Calle Larios), 2906702001 (Alcazaba-Paseo del Parque), 2906703001 (central area), 2906703002 (surroundings of Plaza de San Pedro) and 2906703003 (around the Palacio de Valdeflores), although some information comes from external information with other delimitations (DonDeNegocios, 2016).

The methodological proposal has consisted in obtaining a series of demographic, socioeconomic and real estate indicators and an integrated analysis of them, taking into account their temporal evolution. The

order in which the variables are analysed allows us to verify the patterns of gentrification and to nuance and separate them spatially during the analysis. In the first place, first indications of gentrification are collected in the study area using criteria of social hierarchy of the population at the census section level; Later, the socioeconomic characteristics are studied in depth, placing particular interest in the population that arrives and leaves the study area. Finally, the urban transformation that accompanies the previous indications is recognised through the variables of real estate and public spaces.

Regarding demographic and socioeconomic variables, 1) the temporal evolution of the population at the census section scale between 1981 and 2019; 2) the evolution of the demographic structure through the ratio of the values of the different population cohorts for the years 2001, 2011 and 2019; 3) the evolution of the volume of foreigners for the period 2001-2019 through the location coefficient, comparing the presence of foreigners in the Historic Centre with that of the total in the municipality between 2001 and 2011 and 2019; 4) the at-risk-of-poverty rate of households and 5) the Gini index to measure income inequality of the population for the year 2011.

Regarding the characterization and evolution of the housing stock and the home, 6) the evolution of the price of built land, measured in €/m^2, in the period 2001-2012 was taken into account; 7) the process of demolition-rehabilitation of the house based on the interpretation of an annual sequence of plans from 1956 to 2016 in which the demolitions are counted; 8) the year of construction of the houses, taking the house as a unit; 9) the evolution in the state of the building allows to detect if there is a process of abandonment and reforms; 10) the size of the dwelling; 11) the household structure and 12) the tenure system. These last variables have been measured by taking the values of the census sections from the total value of the study area for the years 2001 and 2011.

The last block of variables used deals with the variables on services and facilities, in which we examine 13) the evolution in the supply of commerce and hotels and restaurants, broken down according to the Spanish National Classification of Economic Activities, in the Historic Centre of Malaga for the period 2001-2016), 14) the evolution of the number of premises for each group of activities, expressed by means of an index in base 100 and 15) an account of the evolution of cultural facilities in this urban area, also considering their spatial distribution. The methodological proposal tries to connect the results following a chronological logic and local, national and international socio-economic processes, as the asymmetry of the data, despite its richness, prevents the application of a quantitative methodology.

The interpretation of the results makes it possible to detect, from the demographic dimension, signs of gentrification from fluctuations in the total size of the population, with a negative trend from which it has not recovered with the growing presence of tourism in the area and with the transformation of the population structure, tending towards a rejuvenation and a greater presence of foreign inhabitants, a pattern repeated in other large globalized western cities such as Barcelona (Sargatal, 2000; López-Gay, 2018) or Madrid (Sorando & Leal, 2019). These demographic fluctuations occur simultaneously with the variations in the socioeconomic condition of the inhabitants, where fairly high inequality values are observed, according to the Gini index and the at-risk-of-poverty rate in 2011, which reflect the contrasts typical of a population. gentrification without ending in an economic stage marked by the crisis of 2008 (Sorando & Leal, 2019). On the other hand, the transformations of the housing stock also reflect patterns such as the reduction in the size of the home associated with the increase in the price of land, the numerous demolitions and, instead, new constructions, which mean the passage of a housing stock particularly degraded to one in good condition, in a context of intensive rehabilitation. This translates into a phenomenon typical of gentrification: the increase in the income gap due to the increase in the difference between the capitalized rent of the land given its current use (previous price of the land) and the potential rent of the land that can be capitalized through a new use of it (Smith, 1987). Finally, this set of transformations has interacted favouring an evident functional metamorphosis of the study area, which is reflected in the typology of commercial activity and in the increase in restaurants and hotels, as has been detected in the Historic Centre of Seville (Jover, 2019); as well as in the growing cultural equipment promoted by public administrations, emulating planning proposals similar to those of Bilbao (Angulo-Baudin *et al.*, 2017) or London (Davidson, 2008) and which leads to a loss of urban identity, already identified in the city of Malaga (García *et al.*, 2019).

Consequently, public-private investments have favoured the continuity in the indirect expulsion of lower-income groups, who cannot access property due to gentrification and, subsequently, also to the touristification of the Historic Centre. This phenomenon is reflected in the increase in the number of empty houses and the price of houses or the change of businesses and facilities that working-class families suffer when their neighbourhood is transformed, as has happened in London (Davidson & Lees, 2005).

With these results, it is concluded that the Historic Centre of Malaga has become a cultural showcase, as has been promoted by public entities since the last decades of the 20th century, in order to reconvert the productive model of the Historic Centre. However, this strategy has led to an intense process of gentrification with the territorial imbalances that it entails, and which has led to and favoured other more recent processes such as touristification.

The development of gentrification does not manifest itself in a spatially homogeneous way. The central sections show an earlier and tenuous gentrification than the sections on the left bank of the Guadalmedina River 2906701001 (area of the Atarazanas Market) and 2906703003 (around the Palacio de Valdeflores). These last two areas undergo a very intense evolution of transformation between the late 1990s and early 2000s. These changes are reflected demographically in a rejuvenated population, male and with a higher proportion of foreigners than the other sections, as well as by the accelerated process of demolitions and rehabilitation of the residential park.

The detection in the present study of other subsequent urban processes such as touristification opens the opportunity to address them in future research. To better understand the profound territorial transformations that are taking place in the city and the consequences that they may have in the medium and long term, it would be interesting to differentiate and assess the relationships between both phenomena. In addition, a path of investigation on gentrification is opened that extends the study unit to the surrounding neighbourhoods of the Historic Centre.