



UNIVERSITAT DE
BARCELONA

La Flor y Muerte de un Barrio

An Ethnography on Comprehensive Gentrification and Class Struggle in Urban Majorca

Marc Morell

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La Flor y Muerte de un Barrio.
An Ethnography on Comprehensive
Gentrification and Class Struggle in
Urban Majorca.

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Gentrification and Class Struggle in
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A ma mare i a mon pare, na Lynn i en Miquel.

M'inciaren en fer Ciutat, a estimar l'illa i a córrer món.

LA FLOR Y MUERTE DE UN BARRIO

Qué es poesía,
el verde, el azul,
pelirroja, la coja,
de aquí, pa'llá.
La barra de pan,
ahora chili que pum que pam,
el mojito y la calle del Simón,
la guitarra que no calla
y mi canción.
¡Calla! Que me calle dice el vecino
y se calló
¡pero que te va a caer!
que con esa mala leche
no te aguanta ni tu sombra,
dos minutos de silencio
y hará la pita al compás
que pum, que pam, que pum,
¡que esto no se pué aguantá!
Que va y llama la Bernarda, aquí a la
municipá
¡que se paren los tambores!
¡que me enseñe esté el carné!
¡que se ponga del revé!
que nos ha salido chulito, acompañeno
al cuarté.
Jodé, jodé, jodé
Me cauen la ostia,
esto son ganas de joder!.
Dos horas cogiendo dato
soy yo quien paga los plato,
los plazo, la juerga, y al ejecutó
vaya uté con quién?
de vuelta en la calle
me voy a comé.

Corre el aire marino
por la calle del viento,
en uno de sus extremos ella llora
perdida de su amor,
él gira la esquina
y desaparece en la lluvia
creyéndose libre por alguna razón.

Los tejados se hunden en sus casas
prohibidas al indigente,
abandonadas
puertas tapiadas de ladrillos y farsa.
Excavadoras hambrientas
se nutren del encanto del empedrado
y andamios especuladores
repasan la pintura de lo que fue un
alquiler asequible,
razonable, en fin, barato
dejando de color mierda todo nuestro
casco antiguo

¡Socorro!

Crece el juzgado racista y expulsa el
acorde gitano,
expulsa a las putas, encierra al camello,
desahucia al viejo zapatero, a la viuda
pensionista,
a mí, a la vecina y al colega,
la panadera, el barbero, el posadero, la
estanquera,
los gatos, los perros, las bicicletas
y el cuento de la lechera,
pues desde ayer, el sol en el barrio,
es sólo de quien pueda pagarlo.

(Víctor C. López, 2003a: 34-35)

THE BLOOM AND DEATH OF A NEIGHBOURHOOD

What is poetry,
the green, the blue,
red-haired, the limping,
from here to there,
The baguette,
bada bing, bada bam,
the mojito and Simón's street,
the guitar that doesn't stop
and my song.
Shush! The neighbour tells me to keep quiet
and he shut up
Careful 'cause you're gonna fall!
You have such a bad temper
not even your shadow puts up with you,
two minutes of silence and he'll stir things
up to the rhythm
of bada bing, bada bam, bada bing.
This can't go on anymore!
And there goes Bernarda and calls the local
police
Stop banging the drums!
Let me see your ID!
Turn around!
He's turned out to be a cheeky one, come
with us to the police station.
Fuck, fuck, fuck!
Goddamn,
They really wanna fuck me!
Two hours taking data
It's me who pays the consequences,
the instalments, the binge, and the executor.
Who's blessing you?
Back in the street
I'm going to eat.

The sea air blows
down wind street,
at one of its ends she cries
the loss of her love,
he turns around the corner
and disappears in the rain
believing himself free for some reason.

The roofs collapse in their houses
forbidden to the indigent,
abandoned
doors blocked off with bricks and farce.
Hungry diggers
feed upon the charm of the cobbled paving
and speculating scaffoldings
touch up the paint of what was a rent
within everybody's reach,
reasonable, in short, cheap.
Turning all of our old centre a shitty colour

Help!*

The racist court grows and expels the gipsy
chord,
expels the whores, imprisons the dealer,
evicts the old shoemaker, the pensioner
widow,
myself, the neighbour and the buddy,
the baker, the barber, the innkeeper, the
tobacconist,
the cats, the dogs, the bicycles
and the tale of the dairymaid,
because since yesterday, the sun in the
neighbourhood,
is only for those who can pay for it.

(Víctor C. López, 2003a: 34-35)**

* *Socorro* is the Spanish for «help» but it here refers to the Street of Succour, a street of Es Barri, the neighbourhood in Ciutat where I have carried out the fieldwork that informs this thesis (Ciutat is also known as Palma, see appendix A). The street takes the name of the church that stands there: the Augustinian *Nostra Senyora dels* [Our Lady of] *Socors* (now written in Catalan).

** My translation based upon my 2004 version with Jaume Franquesa, in: <http://www.med-voices.org>; a website that is no longer available. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations of quotes and excerpts throughout the thesis are my own or from published translations.



Introductory Image: Carrer dels Desamparats (Es Barri), Ciutat de Mallorca. The name of this street is «Desamparats», which stands for: «Abandoned», «Helpless» or «Homeless». Photo: Marc Morell (2006).

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ABSTRACT

With his seminal proposal of a rent-gap theory, Neil Smith developed a consistent materialist explanation for gentrification that efficiently contended with individual consumer preference tenets by focusing on the cycles of capital's disinvestment and reinvestment in the built environment thanks to the necessary mediation of forms of collective social action. However, since the rent-gap theory had been devised to argue against «consumer preference», with the emphasis on the back-to-the-city movement by capital and not people, all understandings of people vanished, including those that hold them to be the bearers of particular class relations and interests.

Despite later attempts to mellow such a structuralist approach by teasing out the working-class experience of resistance and displacement, it is hard to find in the original and subsequent work on rent gaps any explicit reference to the actual class relations that take place in the production of space of which gentrification is only one out of many expressions. These class relations are encouraged by the geographical expansion of capital and by the bureaucratic mediations of the State but in the last instance all of these are dependent on the labour of the working class. Such an understanding bears the possibility for thinking and implementing the limits to gentrification. Not only does gentrification have to face the contradictions of capital in its geographical expansion, and the conflictive State mediations encountered at every moment of the rent gap, but it may also encounter the opposition of a working class objectively made within the gentrification process.

After theorising on the role ethnography can play in social anthropology and by extension in all social sciences, and by drawing lessons from the extensive oeuvre of Henri Lefebvre and to some ulterior developments on the production of space, I offer an ethnographic account for Es Barri, an area subject to comprehensive gentrification in the Historic Centre of Ciutat de Mallorca (also known as Palma, Spain). Although only partially successful, I argue the gentrification encountered in the field is comprehensive in so far it has been sought from several different instances and by various means, among which the involvement of so-called civil society organisations

specialised in implementing on the ground the ideas of scale (the neighbourhood) and preservation (heritage) the class relation the rent-gap hypothesis holds.

Furthermore, with the aim of complementing Neil Smith's contribution regarding the collective mediator the State is, and acknowledging that gentrification is only yet another a spatial expression of a much more comprehensive social relation, I argue each of the rent-gap moments of disinvestment and reinvestment are laboured by different groups (the so-called underclass and the middle classes) that, despite the fact they carry out a struggle that subjectively brings them together, they are apparently unaware of forming a single working class that produces surplus for others thanks to what I come to call their «urban labour». Likewise, I contend that for rent gaps to be successful and find a profitable closure there is a need to maintain as wide open as possible the class gap on which urban labour is founded upon.

Against the description of the spatialisation of classes that are already formed, there is a need to explain politically how spatialisation intervenes in the urban struggle that makes them.

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Regardless of the varied views the contents of this doctoral thesis will raise, the reader will agree with the author that it is a lengthy piece of work. The length of the volume is directly proportionate to the time spent at different academic institutions, research teams and projects, conference panels, the field I study here as well as others I have partially explored elsewhere, conversations with good old colleagues, and, indeed, innumerable gatherings with those who are not specialists in the subjects dealt with here, beloved family and celebrated friends.

It is not easy to attempt such a journey of acknowledgements but I hope I am able to include all of the people and institutions that have shared these years with me and that have either helped me or inspired me, even if only unwittingly. To them, every single one of them, I owe the choice of this route.

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Many authors and thinkers have been a source of inspiration. However, I feel especially indebted to one who left us recently. I would like to thank the geographer Neil Smith, who recently passed away, for his commitment to a sound social theory and for the good sense of humour (always necessary in academic circles) he transmitted through the different digital formats I encountered him in on the net. Not that I ever met him personally, but I admit I enjoyed reading his work where I found plenty to draw on.

In 1992, I took History at the UIB and attended the magisterial lectures of, among others, Carles Manera, Bel Moll and Albert Saoner. Later on, in 2001, I returned to the UIB and started my PhD studies in Geography with Climent Picornell, who magnetised many young social scientists with an interest in tourism. It was not until 2006 that I joined the research team *Política, Treball i Sostenibilitat* (PTS) also at the UIB. In these last years, the PTS has not only allowed me to access a space of critical

reflection, but it has also become the nursery for our common projects. I therefore express my gratitude to Antoni Aguiló, Joan Amer, M. Antònia Carbonero, Leandro Castagnari, Antònia Cerdà, Miquel Comas, Rosa Cursach, Andreu Horrach, Carlos García, Rebeca Martínez, Arnau Matas, Alejandro Miquel, Carlos Pérez, Bartomeu Sales, Joaquín Valdivielso and, especially, Bernat Riutort the head of the team.

In 2008 I became involved in a reading group with Alícia Bauzà and Sònia Vives, both at the *Grup d'Investigació Sostenibilitat i Territori* (GIST) of the UIB, and in 2010 I joined a second reading group, mainly organised by Ivan Murray and Macià Blázquez (also from GIST). I thank all four geographers for their persistent courage in organising these much-needed spaces for engaged thinking in this desert island of ours. I especially want to pay tribute to the memory of Alícia, who suddenly left at a very young age and whose promising unfinished career opened paths for us all to follow.

In all these disparate facets, the UIB has always given me a home.

My return to the UB for the closure of this PhD's long journey has given me the opportunity to join a promising group of people working on urban matters and led by Manuel Delgado. It has also allowed me to remember the many teachings I took in my degree in Social and Cultural Anthropology in the late 1990s. Omnivorous as I was, and still am, I tasted a bit of everything that was on offer. I sincerely thank Oriol Beltran, Joan Bestard, M. Jesús Buxó, Jesús Contreras, Manuel Delgado, Joan Frigolé, Susana Narotzky, Llorenç Prats and Gonçal Sanz for all they taught me. From my other degree at the UB, in History, I recall the passion of Andreu Mayayo and Ricard Vinyes. I took this passion to my then new field: social anthropology. In 1996, due to the second or third re-establishment of the journal *Antropologies*, edited by social anthropology students, I had the fortune of meeting Sandra Ezquerro, Jaume Franquesa, Blanca Garcés, Joan Mayans and Ana Pérez. We shared common interests and became good friends. Thanks to them, I definitely decided to pursue my academic career.

The Med-Voices Project was my first good excuse for wandering the streets of *Es Barri* between 2002 and 2005. I thank Raoul Bianchi, Jonathan Karkut, Julie Scott and Tom Selwyn –the four then at London Metropolitan University (LMU)- for asking me to join Med-Voices back in 2002; and I am grateful to Xavier Garcias, Climent Picornell

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Despite their delaying effects, my three doctoral research stays abroad have also been a chance to reflect on the field back home. I am thankful to the Tourism Studies Unit at *L-Università ta' Malta*, the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of Manchester (Manchester) and the School of Geography at Queen's University Belfast (QUB) for hosting me.

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The latest period of this voyage has witnessed my entry into another research team and two networking groups all of which prove to be excellent places for the exchange of ideas, unexpected re-encounters, and plenty of laughs on the net. I hope that I will soon be able to engage further with those involved in the Commission on Global Transformations and Marxian Anthropology of the IUAES, and the *Grup de Recerca sobre Exclusió i Control Socials* at the UB, and the *Observatori d'Antropologia del conflicte Urbà*, also in Barcelona. Beppe Aricó, Maribel Cadenas and Miquel Fernández (two wonderful hosts!), Martin Lundsteen, Jose Mansilla, Marco Luca Stanchieri, and so many others that I cannot possibly name here, *gràcies oacus!*

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New flowers growing in Es Barri have also been important. maria bel and her associates' project, *transitant*, is an autonomous oasis in such a fast changing context.

May the world they seek be here and now! How couldn't I? I thank the poet (what is life without poetry?), Víctor, for allowing me to use the title of his poem. He left us in 2014 without a goodbye. His family, friends and admirers, like me, will miss him dearly. I dare to say we have lost one of our most important everyday-warriors in Ciutat. May these materials aid to honour your memory Víctor!

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PRELUDE

Broadly, this thesis is about the production of space in market society. As shown in the publications and other texts that are brought together, I unpack the process of gentrification by focusing on the relationship maintained by three highly polemical categories: class, scale, and preservation. I tease out analysis and reflections that help to explain the social structure of current urban society, as well as the possibilities of social change that this urban society beholds. My approach, though, is not only reserved to the theoretical bedchambers of a comparative armchair anthropology, since I do seek to illustrate and explain these concepts through field observations gathered during a long period of in-depth research that has been interrupted by continuous changing working conditions, withdrawals and returns, falls and recoveries, amnesia and memories.

Heritage, tourism, entrepreneurialism, urbanism: all of these fields of inquiry serve to look at the project represented by gentrification and to shed light on how the working class remains central to questioning the inner workings of a social reality that ethnography renders intelligible through continuously new, and yet irresolutely *déjà-vu*, living conditions. They also bring us to the local scale that the idea of neighbourhood represents, one in which the working class appropriates attainable spaces of its own. Although the pervasiveness of these categories will be made explicit across the thesis, I will now bring forward a relatively recent example of the implications they bear, beyond gentrification, so as to make visible the implications these categories, domains and processes have elsewhere in urban society.

On 15th May 2011, 2 – 3,000 people, apparently ideologically confused, gathered in an all-inclusive act of civil disobedience at *Plaça d’Espanya* [Square of Spain].ⁱ This was one week before the Spanish Municipal elections, which coincided with elections in most of the *comunitats autònemies*. *Plaça d’Espanya* is a major square in Ciutat, and one of its main nodes. Strategically placed on the border between the Centre and the rest of the city, it has been the site protests for many decades. On a local scale, together with

ⁱ This number may not be reliable as it is information provided by the organisers of the event. In 2010, Ciutat’s total population amounted to 404,681. Ciutat, short for Ciutat de Mallorca, is the capital city of Majorca and of the Balearic archipelago. Its current official name is Palma and it has also been known as Palma de Mallorca.

the high levels of unemployment, and the inability of many to meet their mortgage repayments, anger focused on charges of corruption against, and the illicit enrichment of state, regional and local dignitaries and bankers.ⁱⁱ

That same evening, more than 50 other Spanish cities witnessed similar events. Through online social networks, a civil platform named *Democràcia Real Ja!* [Real Democracy Now!]), from here on DRJ, an assemblage of around 200 unrelated associations with an uneven geographical presence across Spain, organised an unauthorised demonstration to show the frustration against what the authorities and media had, and still do, referred to as the ongoing «world economic crisis». At an international level, the main concerns were the threat of a financial rescue of the country, popularly understood as a corporate scheme for economic profiteering. The call by DJR to demonstrate broadly appealed to workers, students and the unemployed.

The demands set forth to the campaigning political parties, called for a true, rather than «real», socialisation of economic wealth and political power. Thus, the most frequently chanted slogans were «*Li diuen democràcia i no ho és!* [They call it democracy and it isn't!]", and «This is not about those on the left and on the right but rather about those above and those below». Although somehow ignored by the protestors, and purposely concealed by the media in general, there was a very definite class nature to the gathering. This was the longest-lasting demo that ever took place in Ciutat as well as in many other major Spanish cities. The major media companies covered the events across Spain.

The following evening, hundreds of people gathered again in *Plaça d'Espanya* and, in an assembly, following the trend of what had been decided in other major Spanish

ⁱⁱ The list is long. The most important cases are those of a former President of the Island Council of Majorca, later President of the Balearic Parliament, and of a former President of the Balearic Government and Minister for Environment in the Spanish Government. Whereas the first case is about abuse of power in connection to real estate speculation and urban-planning engineering, the latter is for, among other charges, irregularities in the payments for building a sports arena and an Opera House, designed by a well-known architect. The aim of the Opera House was to create a newer centrality for Ciutat and therefore had to stand on the city's seafront. However, unlike the now abandoned sports arena, this latter project was not constructed.

cities, they took the decision to camp there indefinitely. The so-called «Spanish Revolution» had begun. In the process, DJR withered away and the indignant movement, also known as the 15M arose. The Jasmine Spring leapfrogged from neighbouring Southern Mediterranean shores and eventually spread elsewhere in an attempt to achieve a «global street» (Sassen 2011).ⁱⁱⁱ Following the trend to give new names the reclaimed and occupied squares of all these Spanish cities, the assembly at *Plaça d'Espanya* renamed the square as *Plaça d'Islàndia* [Iceland].

Shortly after, an Icelandic flag was fixed to the horse-mounted statue of King Jaume I who, ironically, given the parallel context of the Arab spring, drove Majorca away from the Muslim orbit in the 13th century. The example of the Icelanders, who had recently taken action against their «elected» government, which was driving them into debt, became the Majorcan utopia. Sooner rather than later, in an exercise of complicated witchcraft, colleagues at the Universitat de les Illes Balears were summoned by the media to interpret and translate what was obvious: the profound social disaffection towards the political system. The momentary economic crisis, showed its true colours, it was actually a very stable political crisis. National elections were just around the corner too (20th November).

While the indignants did not form their own party, the dignitaries entertained the idea that there was a need for change and that people had the right to be infuriated and to express it. However, not only did they not take on board the demands of the indignants, they actually encouraged suspicions surrounding the illegal camp and the legality of assembling «freely» in public space. All of the elections took place and there was a change in all governments. The reformist governing party left, and in came the other major party with an absolute majority of votes, but not the full support of the citizens. It would therefore govern alone the next years in the national government and in the three major political-administrative institutions within the archipelago: Balearic Government, Island Council of Majorca (CIM) and the City Council of Palma.

ⁱⁱⁱ Corsín Jiménez and Estalella (2011) offer a colourful account of how the 15M movement developed in Madrid and how it included the call to retake squares and neighbourhoods. On the other hand, Delgado (2011) and Delgado and Miessen (2012) acidly tear up the communicative and deliberative nature of 15M's assemblies by uncovering their ideological assumption of the equality of the members that momentarily form it.

This was the first time a single party had taken power in all four major institutions, at least in the so-called Spanish new democratic and autonomous period that developed between 1979 and 1983. The generalised discontent arose from the fact that all parties managed similar programmes and were equally conditioned by the demands of the market. While they all agreed that something had to be changed, they obviously disagreed on the degree of transformation. Some parties put the emphasis on bringing back a diluted avatar of the welfare state they once cut back to meet the requirements of the financial markets. Others sought to further the neoliberal turn by spinning it even faster, in an attempt to convince us all that by so doing we would finally become free.

In fact, the vocabulary of all parties was much the same. They all used a language imbued with notions of entrepreneurship, competitiveness, innovation, capability and creativity. All of this contributed to the 2000s and 2010s regional and local modalities of what Lefebvre came to call the «static mode of production» (1976c/1976d/1977/1978), that is, State mediation in the contradictions of Capital through the search for equivalences. In doing so, the exploitation that is necessary for the rendering of surplus value relies heavily upon the domination of social space to fix labour to the flows of Capital. In Majorca, the vernacular version of the static mode of production focuses on the desire to fix labour to the apparently ever-lasting attraction of tourism and tourists.

Furthermore, regional government agendas have constantly pursued the much talked about, unachievable «quality tourism», roughly equating «quality» to «luxury». Here, though, tourism has transmogrified into bricks-and-mortar, and it has done so to such an extent that its development has become a Maussian total prestation in which the islanders have given away the island hoping for the ever-increasing arrival of tourists.^{iv} However, this total prestation has been undermined in perpetuity since these

^{iv} For Mauss, total prestations are «... at once juridical, economic, religious and even aesthetic and morphological, etc. They are juridical of public and private law, of an organised and diffuse morality, strictly compulsory or simply praised and sanctioned, political and domestic at once, equally affecting social classes, clans, and families. They are religious, of religion, strictly speaking, of magic and of animism and of diffuse religious mentality. They are economic, because the ideas of value, usefulness, interest, luxury, richness, acquisition of accumulation, and on the other hand, that of consumption, be it of pure spending, purely sumptuary, are continuously present ...» (Mauss 1974: 259).

expectations have not been met and therefore the very islanders have become indentured tourists of their own island, just as they have become slaves to the mortgages on their properties.

Presidential discourses have emphasised this backbone condition, total and totalising, of tourism in the configuration of contemporary Balearic society. Take, for example, former President Antich's speech at the swearing-in ceremony of the Minorcan Joana Barceló as the newly created Regional Ministry for Tourism and Work on 5th June 2010,^v when he stated: «our hotels are our factories» (<http://www.dBalears.cat>, 06/06/2010). This one statement brings together two interesting aspects. First, it reaffirms the idea that tourism was not only the economic kernel of the archipelago, but also the only key, no matter how diversified, to define the growth model which would follow (and, thus, the need to «grow» whatever that might have meant).

A «growth» model, which former Regional Minister for Economy and Treasury and economic historian, Professor Carles Manera considered as a collective action, that is, in his own words, a form of «consensus economy» (Manera 2009: 123). Thus, this was a «consensus» geared towards achieving full tertiary diversification doctrines, with a tourism perspective. Tourism was presented as the only industrialisation and modernisation engine possible, and it paved the way for the shock measures against the deficit that the «crisis» dictated. Finally, by referring to *our* factories, Antich drew together all Balearic citizens under his party and the establishment's will to turn, even if only in words, hotels into factories.

However, though it may be a powerful symbol, the Balearic government owned no «factories». Thus, one might have thought that the question was about whose «factories» they were and, most importantly, who laboured in them. Yet there was a further matter, and its analysis was just as transcending as the class issue we have just questioned. Should we only consider production in terms of tourist consumption in the resorts where the hotels were? Were hotels the only «factories» in the production of

^v This was the first time in the history of the Balearics that both portfolios, work and tourism, were brought under one political responsibility. Although these changes were the result of budget cuts they actually signalled how deeply path-dependent the Balearic economy was.

tourism? If so, we would be limited to some strikingly reduced aspects of what tourism production was about, and that could only partially explain the classic sun and sand model.

This approach definitely escapes from what the geographer Albert Quintana put forward more than thirty years ago when he spoke of Majorca as a single urban system (Quintana Peñuela 1979).^{vi} In the last thirty years this single urban system has consolidated, plans for road networks have proliferated, the consumption of territory for urbanisations, and areas of urban expansion have increased and the countryside and nature have become urban theme parks in the form of admired landscapes and heritage. This process also includes the overflow of tourist spaces from old tourist resorts, favouring the spread of tourism across the island and turning into tertiary industries (mostly services) spaces that stopped being productive when tourism became an important cutting-edge economic activity, a process that accelerated around half a century ago (e.g. Artigues Bonet 2006).

This expansion had also taken place within the administrative and governing institutions making it difficult to disassociate politics from tourism itself (Amer Fernández 2006). All in all, Majorca, as the real estate company Knight Frank (2013) proudly proclaimed, had achieved a first class lifestyle that made it a top destination for people to go to live to. Within the tourism scheme, heritage had become a public domain that did indeed boost private patrimonies via tourism, but also real estate, in the attraction of further capital. As elsewhere, the grand projects of «heritage», «environment» and «territory» held salvific properties that aimed to combine, in the oddest fashion, conservationist attitudes and major urban development.

There is no preservation without transformation. Think, for instance, of the relatively recent declaration of the Tramuntana mountain range as a UNESCO World Heritage Site after CIM's huge public investment and after four decades of declarations and laws that aimed to protect it (Morell 2015).^{vii} This status –in an island entirely

^{vi} For a recent collection of enlightening texts of his on the urban and on other spatial matters, please see Quintana Peñuela (2008). Most of these texts have Majorca and the Balearics as the main field from which to think his geography.

^{vii} See: http://www.conselldemallorca.net/?id_section=3438&id_parent=494&id_lang=2,

devoted to tourism- represented the quintessence of the contradictory condition of heritage: protection against development vs. development thanks to the attraction protection entails –see for instance Hillali’s exploration of tourism as a means to protect heritage or a means to destroy the environment (Hillali 2008).

Whereas these monumental projects mainly focussed on central spaces linked to the sites of tourism production (development-conservation), the space of social reproduction was mostly that of the «neighbourhoods». Thus, it was no surprise that four years earlier, in his inaugural address, former President Antich announced that his government would address the needs of neighbourhoods (Morell 2008). This was something he never got round to.

Back to the 15M, it was only a matter of time before it took shape and become fully independent of the foundational demonstration. Its direct action spread.^{viii} Elements of the later atomised and severed social squatter movement, which has a rich tradition in Spain, strengthened the «twinkling» and affinity-driven assemblies, especially after the police violence in the Barcelona assembly on 28th May and the hunt for indignant campers across Ciutat on 4th July. Unexpectedly, and following a major national trend, what once looked like a class-based movement camouflaged by the current state of flexibility, the indignant announced that they were leaving *Plaça d’Islàndia* in order to explore the world beyond. Funnily enough, this was the world of the neighbourhoods, in their desire to spread, and perhaps decentralise, the hope for change (see MB and X 2011, Pastor 2012, Corsín Jiménez and Estalella 2013, García Espín 2013).^{ix}

A month after it all started and following a meeting with Canamunt (the association of residents of Es Barri) the first major action undertaken by the indignant was to protest the eviction of a mother and son from a council flat. Graciela, an Argentinian-born neighbour who used to teach tango dance and, as we will see, a

10/06/2010. The idea of protecting the Tramuntana mountain range dates back to 1972 when the architect and planner Alomar Esteve declared it «picturesque landscape». In Sections 1.4.3.1. and 3.1., I briefly consider the work of Alomar Esteve, whose mixture of development and conservation has become crucial for understanding Ciutat and most of urban Spain.

^{viii} See Graeber (2009) for an extensive account of how direct action can work.

^{ix} See Image 42, Appendix of images, for the case of the 15M moving into Es Barri, where I have carried out my research for this thesis.

controvert member of Canamunt, could not pay the 380€ a month rent since she had no current job and only received benefits of 360€. A couple of weeks later, the police managed to force her eviction. Here, the «neighbourhood», became the newly scaled panacea in which action could curtail urban cuttings of the city and adapt them to its own will. Yet the idea was not new, it had already been present in the so-called «transition» to democracy in the 1970s. Thus, the neighbourhood is not a flimsy matter, but a desired scale in which to develop action beyond the centre.

In the thesis that follows I will return to the idea of the neighbourhood as an assumed malleable scale, and I will highlight how it links to efforts of renewal and preservation in an area subject to intense gentrification. I will also link it to how social classes work in the realm of the urban, both those located above and those located below within the existing social order. Most importantly, by looking at the labour those from below deliver, I will emphasise the relation that makes classes. The field is the backbone of the texts that follow on the diversity of scale, preservation and the class issues encountered by the gentrification process, and besides, the field is an excuse to look out of the window into the world, and particularly into urban society.