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ID 1325 | THE RIGHT TO THE CITY FOR REFUGEES AMID A EUROPEAN CRISIS: AN EXPLORATORY PERSPECTIVE

Sílvia Leiria Viegas¹
¹Gestual/FA-UL; CES-UC
silviaviegas@ces.uc.pt

1 INTRODUCTION

My presentation for the AESOP annual congress falls within the scope of a wider exploratory approach embraced at the launching of the post-doctoral research project INSEHRE 21, focusing on the process of socio-spatial and housing inclusion of African and Middle Eastern refugees and asylum seekers in contemporary Europe, with reference to the reception of Portuguese-speaking African communities in Portugal, from 1975 until today, i.e., after the liberation of most of its former colonies. The aim of this presentation is twofold: to introduce some theoretical authors selected for structuring the INSEHRE 21 investigation; and to confront the key concept of inclusion with the European possibility of constructing responses directed (or not) to the access of these needy immigrants to the Right to the City (Lefebvre, [1968] 2009), both purposes with reference to the current neoliberal crisis in the Western countries, particularly in Europe.

This presentation is organised into three interconnected parts, the first one concerning the theoretical-methodological structuring notion of inclusion starting from the thoughts of four important scholars, such as Michel Foucault, Slavoj Žižek, Henri Lefebvre and David Harvey, seeking to identify the broader meaning of belonging, and its paradoxical significances, and of “spaces of inclusion”, namely its materialisation. The second part refers to the project INSEHRE 21 itself, its principal objectives, description (theme, object of study, questions, methodology and structure) and state of the art, addressing social (self-) production and official production of housing (and urban) space in Portugal and other European countries. The third part discusses the theoretical premises of the project in light of its principal intentions aiming to frame spatial (and intersectoral) inclusion processes in future reflections and to identify new avenues of theoretical and empirical research.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the late 1970s, the French philosopher and social theorist Foucault ([1977/1978] 2008) defended that, in general terms, the government seeks to include all citizens, according to several levels of partaking in the building of society, so they best meet its policies. In short, for the author, inclusion equals normalisation within the framework of “governmentality”. It means preserving all individuals inside of the capitalist neoliberal system involving them in activities targeting the maintenance and reproduction of its segregating market logics. This contradictory process – inclusion as a path for rejection – implies larger surveillance and state control over the behaviour and wealth of communities. Nevertheless, referring to the crisis of the global system, Foucault (ibid.) also stressed its symptoms, outbreaks and/or forms, e.g., the resistances and counteractions that seek to encourage society as the legitimate holder of its knowledge whilst protecting collective needs.

For the Slovenian sociologist and theorist Žižek (1997: 44), the hegemonic neoliberal globalisation that emerged during the 1990s already had its strings attached to the fiction and/or ideal of multiculturalism tolerance, that is, a condescending ethnocentric approach based on a respectful form of “racism with distance” that asserts one’s own superiority, all the while founding propitious grounds for the emergence of fundamentalism ideologies and xenophobia. The decoding of such a paradoxical process – acceptance as form of rejection – forced Europe to transfer the focus once centred on the clash between cultures to the conflict between opposing viewpoints regarding the coexistence of different cultures (Žižek, 2016). Therefore, targeting “real inclusion”, Žižek (ibid.) advocates the commitment on the quasi-utopia of global solidarity (nearly) as a path for collective redemption and finding.

Regarding the physical expression of conflicting processes in neoliberal context, the French philosopher and sociologist of space Lefebvre ([1974] 2000) discussed, in the mid-1970s, the exclusion/inclusion present both in the spatial practices and in practical spaces, i.e., central to interventions and their material effects, while differentiating public and/or public-private (official) production of political spaces, namely representational spaces with exchange value (commodities), from the (social) production of social spaces, also known as spaces of representation, i.e., spaces of social inclusion regarding their use value. Furthermore, Lefebvre ([1968] 2009) developed the guiding concept of Right to the City advocating one’s complete access to a myriad of rights (housing, infrastructures, urban benefits, etc.) and the construction of citizenship.

Recently, as throughout the peak of the global neoliberal dominant system, the British urban geographer Harvey (2008: 23) reinforced the importance of this fundamental notion by sustaining that this Right to the City is “moreover, a collective rather than an individual right since changing the city inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power over the processes of urbanization.” As such, regarding the production of what I designate as “spaces of inclusion”, the author reclaims some vital questioning: ““what kind of humanity [do] we wish to create amongst ourselves,” and “how do we [really] want to create it?”” (Park apud Harvey, 2007: 2). Hence, embracing a hopeful vision, Harvey (2000) also advocates the collective use of the cracks in the system (its inconsistencies) so as to build an alternative, emancipatory and socially just society.

3 RESEARCH PROJECT INSEHRE 21

3.1 OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the study is to identify the strategic guidelines being drawn up by the European Union (after 2015, being a year of pronounced influx of refugees) for the socio-spatial and housing inclusion of these vulnerable and heterogeneous social groups, as well as the more significant consequences of the interventions of certain States, in view of their different border pressures. Moreover, I intend to deepen current policies and instruments in Portugal, being considered a semiperipheral European country with experience regarding the inclusion/exclusion of Portuguese speaking African communities after 1975, where the shortterm arrival of refugees (until 2018) is expected to be of small-scale, as opposed to Germany, the leading European hoster during 2015. Consequently, I propose to follow the interventions programmed by the central government, articulated with local administrations, civil society (more or less organised) and the private sector, seeking to identify contributions for the rise and consolidation of a new paradigm of socio-spatial and housing inclusion of refugees coming from Africa and the Middle East.

On the other hand, considering the ideological-economic division between Member States of the European Union and the most excluding effects of certain (inter)national policies, I also seek to understand if these macro strategies have induced local, complementary or alternative, visions to the current dominant global policies and practices, developed by grassroots communities encouraged by better access to housing, urbanisation and full citizenship. I also want to identify whether the involvement of these immigrants in the production and/or transformation of (their) urban and housing space can contribute to fostering and invigorating European networks of solidarity and transnational support with positive effects regarding their socio-spatial inclusion. At the same time, I intend to identify convergent practices within this network as a starting point for the drafting of an international manifesto aimed at improving the quality of urban and housing life of refugees and their host societies as well, reinforcing Portugal’s strategic importance on the topic of the European response.

3.2 DESCRIPTION

The theme of this research is the inclusion of African and Middle Eastern refugees in contemporary Europe from a socio-spatial and housing perspective, with Portugal as a case study as opposed to Germany.

The critical reading of the past, namely the reception of Africans from Portuguese-speaking countries after the independences (1973-75), synchronous with the onset of political and social instabilities, particularly in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau, is a case-control. This allusion helps to understand, on the one hand, the complex processes of self-production of housing space in everyday life as a strategy of access to housing within a specific context of reduced state response regarding the promotion of massive housing. On the other hand, it helps to comprehend the recent public and private-public interventions of (re)housing aimed at controlling the access of these communities to space and accommodation, including the consequences of these different scenarios concerning the inclusion/exclusion of these populations in Portugal.

The research has, as object of study, the access of the most vulnerable immigrants, refugees or asylum seekers, to space and housing in Europe, either through the government of the Member States that follow the strategic directives of a discordant European Union, or through the participation of local agents in the process of production and transformation of the urban and housing space. I refer, in particular, to (1) government policies and practices with greater openness to the participation of these immigrants in the production of space, including in regard to the design of (their) urban and housing solutions, granting greater room for manoeuvre in a more inclusive scenario, and (2) organised civil society (local associations, NGOs, religious congregations, etc.) that, within this flexible governance, articulated with refugees and/or other co-citizens residing in Europe – considering and respecting their origins, rhythms and own experiences –, adopts innovative and (vital) emancipatory responses, complementary or alternative to the globally advocated.

The main questions that guide this study are:

1. is the European Union promoting the economic, political, socio-spatial and housing inclusion of refugees from Africa and the Middle East in Europe today?;
2. how can Member States, conditioned by the dominant political and economic environment, through a critical analysis of their past experiences on this subject or similar ones, contribute to the establishment of more inclusive national (socio-spatial, urban and housing) policies?;
3. can local communities, together with governments and other players, including immigrants and/or refugees, contribute to identifying practices that point to larger access to urban space, infrastructured housing, and complete citizenship?;
4. are these national and/or local learnings able to revert politically and operationally in favour of the socio-spatial, urban and housing inclusion of refugees on a transnational scale, thus contributing to the building of an inclusive Europe?

Methodologically, I opted for a qualitative approach. Starting from architecture and urbanism as nuclear disciplines, I will make an interdisciplinary bibliographical review on the scientific, theoretical and empirical knowledge, referring to the two identified models of access to space and housing (via global or local responses), that are the object of study, including synergies, permeabilities and consequences. Then I will seek additional empirical information on the subject, case study (from a historical perspective) and cases for counterpointing in present-day Europe, through fieldwork. This includes conducting semi-structured interviews with privileged speakers, namely members of governments (including of the European Union), grassroots communities and representatives of immigrants from the Middle East and African (including Portuguese-speakers in Portugal), and direct observation in European contexts that represent the problem that I address. The restitution of knowledge will take place through communications in scientific meetings, publications in specialised journals and a colloquium with the participation of the agents that were interviewed, adopting a reflexivity logic. The recommendations will be included in the final report and book, also being disseminated on the project website.

The written record of the oral discourse and of the informed observation of the living space will contribute to illuminate the complex processes of access to space and housing for masses and their effects, such as the role of the various players involved in this dynamic. The construction of an iconographic roadmap, consisting of photographs, drawings and maps, based on interviews and observation, besides illustrating

morphologies, typologies and types of housing, among other indicators, constitutes an additional tool for analysing these processes and their materiality. Thus, I intend to decode the logics of appropriation and selfproduction of the urban and housing space (re)produced by these immigrants under study, as well as the physical expression of some governmental solutions (policies, instruments and practices) aimed at the access of these groups to housing, according to different phases (initial reception, support for installation and inclusion), endeavouring to identify points of contact between different practices (global, national and local) and between these practices and the drawing of responses leading to greater inclusion. This cross-cutting approach will be a positive differentiator in broader international projects-to-be about refugees' inclusion in Europe today, reinforcing North-South research partnerships.

The research is structured in two parts, the first referring to collected experiences namely in Portugal and the second to the problematic, both starting from a theoretical essay on “spaces of inclusion” in contemporary Europe. The first part contemplates two chapters alluding to the lessons of the African diaspora including: (I. 1) the study of self-produced neighbourhoods in other people's soil and/or on private nonbuildable land, and (I. 2) areas of rehousing with low costs, especially in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area. The two points of the second part are about: (II. 1) the present materialisation in space of the refugee crisis in Europe, noteworthy in impasse areas that are part of the most covered routes, such as refugee camps in Greece and/or Hungary; and (II. 2) on (inter)sectoral public discourses and responses being outlined in Europe, aimed at the access of these refugees to space and housing, including its contradictions, taking into account different past experiences. These interventions will be analysed in light of the economic-political and social structures of the countries. I refer, in a comprehensive approach, to Greece and/or Hungary, among other Member States, and, in an in-depth look, to Portugal, being a non-wanted peripheral country that is coming out of a financial recession but that wishes to collaborate on this matter, as opposed to Germany, a central and preferred European destination in economic growth that proclaims great capacity for inclusion. This study finishes with a critical analysis that articulates the initial theoretical framework with its empirical parts, preparing the research for its final conclusions.

3.3 STATE OF THE ART

The current refugee crisis became highly visible in 2015 when over one million people from Africa and the Middle East crossed the European borders seeking to survive (UNHCR, 2015). Besides enhancing the image of the Mediterranean as a geographical and cultural barrier, European structural imbalances have become evident due to the financial-ideological rupture between northern and southern countries (Varoufakis, 2016) and, lastly, between the United Kingdom and the other 27 Member States of the European Union, under the Brexit. Furthermore, the pressure of terrorism and nationalist xenophobia in a continent unprepared to receive these populations and habits have deeply increased (Žižek, 2016). By the end of 2015, Portugal had welcomed 699 refugees from 1354 asylum seekers (i.e. population of concern), contrasting with 316,115 individuals of the 749,309 requests addressed to Germany (UNHCR, 2016: 58-59), the European country with “the proacceptance political flag”, having great expression through that year. In a considerably reduced scale and with no border pressure, by 2018, Portugal intends to receive 10,000 refugees, approximately 13% of its present-day Portuguese-speaking African immigrants (SEF, 2015: 65-69).

The urban and housing effects of this complex scenario are yet unexplored. On a macro scale, space produced in the refugee camps of Europe, as identified by Flinders (2016) in line with Lefebvre ([1974] 2000), illustrates the individual (often survival) strategies of everyday life. Concerning Portugal, the urban areas of illegal genesis (AUGI) and the self-produced neighbourhoods located in occupied lands, in both cases inhabited by Africans since the 1970s, illustrate daily processes as well (Raposo, 2012; Cardoso and Perista, 1994). In the long-term, national governments face many local challenges mostly related to the access of housing, urbanisation and the building of citizenship, as encouraged by Lefebvre ([1968] 2009) and Harvey (2008).

Although the MIPEX (2015) indicates an integration of 75% in Portugal and of 61% in Germany, the OECD/EU (2015) declares that 14% and 6% of their immigrants have reduced living conditions. Past governmental responses fall short of immigrants' needs and of the alleged intentions to overcome them. Regarding Portugal, once the SAAL was concluded in 1976 (Bandeirinha, 2007), only after 1990 did the administration conceive new significant public instruments so as to promote housing space. There is the Law of AUGI (1995), whose reconversions were studied by Raposo (2011), and the PER (1993), with 32%

of its segregating rehousing practices targeting Portuguese speaking African immigrants (Malheiros and Mendes, 2007; Malheiros and Fonseca, 2011: 54), followed by some other unsustainable versions (Amilcar et al., 2011). In some countries of origin, as recognised by Melo and Viegas (2014) and Viegas (2015), massive resettlement and rehousing practices are even more segregating.

The Portuguese government wants to contribute towards the inclusion of refugees in Europe: (1) the Working Group for the European Migration Agenda (2015) anticipates a National Action Plan, (2) the State Budget (2016), despite the weak economic growth, provides for the co-financing of European mechanisms up to € 24M, and (3) the Major Options of the Plan (2016-2019) recommend innovative housing policy, stimulating the public reflection (Pereira et al., 2016; Matias, 2016). Germany, meanwhile, intends to maintain economic development by employing immigrant workers, also by providing the construction of 400,000 homes/year for these refugees (Deutsche Bank, 2015, Reuters, 2016). However, Somerville and Steele (2001) reveal how the limited housing options for minorities favour exclusion. Thus, local responses from civil society have emerged all across European countries whilst trying to accommodate these communities inclusively.

4 BRIEF REFLECTION

The cross-checking of theoretical and empirical issues concerning the strategic guidelines being drawn up by the European countries for the socio-spatial and housing inclusion of refugees (and asylum seekers) must take into account, as underlined by the nominated scholars – Foucault, Žižek, Lefebvre and Harvey – , the hegemonic global neoliberal system we live in, as initiated in the late twentieth century having increased at full steam to these days. Regarding the corresponding policies, following Foucault's thoughts ([1977/1978] 2008), this means that the European governments, either from central (Germany) or peripheral (Portugal) countries, may be inclined to create mechanisms of seeming inclusion for the needy immigrants that, in fact, in the long run, contribute instead to the preservation and/or enhancement of a predatory system that will necessarily neglect them. Žižek (1997) addresses a corresponding deception when unveiling the hidden intentions and consequences of the multiculturalism tolerance in Europe, by defending that separation between different cultures results from taking a discriminatory position towards these immigrants. Of interest for my quest of production of “spaces of inclusion”, i.e., spaces where these poor immigrants may really belong to, Lefebvre ([1974] 2000) identifies that most public and/or public-private spaces are being forged so as to create more value, thus to nourish the market logics of capitalism. In such context, access to housing, infrastructures and urban benefits may be taken into account. Nonetheless, the inclusion of refugees (and asylum seekers) in the production of their space – as a legitimate path for the collective construction of a complete form of citizenship – is lost due to the nature of the process. Harvey (2007; 2008) would surely reject this restrictive approach, also, whereas advocating the Right to the City both as a path and effect of the forging of an emancipated and a much more just mankind. This problem is far more relevant as we are confronted with the necessity to create both inclusive living (housing and urban) conditions for (and/or by) these migrants, in need, and their hosting societies. Countries with less border pressure (e.g. Portugal) and that are deprived of flourishing economies may constitute privileged ground for implementing new experiences and practices.

Perchance lesser controlling local governments articulated with grassroots communities and immigrants are now in a more favourable position to identify and implement more inclusive actions than European and/or national satellite administrations. If so, resistances and counteractions wouldn't have to happen in order to defend society and its vital collective needs, this being an indicator of systemic crisis as identified by Foucault ([1977/1978] 2008). Immigrants and civil society would, rather, participate in the constructing of an innovative European global culture having their necessities as priority. Žižek (2016) corroborates this thought by calling to all our human solidarity as opposed to the indifference of the capitalist system. Following an interrelated philosophy, Lefebvre ([1968] 2009; [1974] 2000) refers to spatial practices of inclusion that point to the production of inclusive spaces taking into consideration its use value. For its part, Harvey (2000) finds in the paradoxes and contradictions of the capitalist system the encouragement to overcome it, materialised in Spaces of Hope, these spaces also being what I would classify as “the right to the inclusion”.

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ID 1358 | SPATIAL INJUSTICE OF CENTRAL AREA PUBLIC SPACES AND ITS PRODUCTION MECHANISM: A CASE STUDY IN NANJING, CHINA

Yang Chen¹; Lili Fu²; Jianqiang Yang¹

¹The Department of Urban Planning, School of Architecture, Southeast University;

²Jiangsu Institute of Urban Planning and Design

cyseuup@163.com ; 14036609@qq.com ; yjqseuud@126.com

ABSTRACT: Like many other large cities in China, Nanjing central area has experienced a large scale urban regeneration since twenty-first Century, mega-retail-Led regeneration, which transforms the original residential land to commercial land, dominates the process. Large scale and huge volume flagship stores emerge on the regenerated land affected by the commercial building model coming from the developed countries. The emerging space form is also supported by the local government, because it can quickly make the image of the city catch up with the international standard, significantly enhance the level of physical space environment and bring considerable economic income. Nevertheless, more and more attention has been paid to the negative social effects brought by this space form. Taking the central area of Nanjing as the research object, based on 2000-2015 historical topographic maps, this paper reveals the